



Doncaster Council

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Tuesday, 11th February, 2020 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Thursday, 13th February, 2020

End of the call-in period is 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 24th February, 2020. These decisions will not be implemented until after this date and time.

Present:

Chair - Mayor Ros Jones (Mayor of Doncaster with responsibility for Budget and Policy Framework).

Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities).

Cabinet Member for:

Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services
Councillor Rachael Blake	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care
Councillor Nuala Fennelly	Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools.
Councillor Chris McGuinness	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment.
Councillor Bill Mordue	Portfolio Holder for Business, Skills and Economic Development
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio Holder for Customer and Corporate Services.

Apologies:-

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Nigel Ball

PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS

Public Questions and Statements

There were no public questions or statements made at the meeting.

Decision records dated 14th January, 2020, be noted.

DECISION 1.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

6. School Admissions Arrangements for 2021/22 Academic Year.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet approved the following admission arrangements for the 2021/2022 school year:-

- (1) Community School Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 13 to 14);
- (2) Community School Nursery Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 13 to 14);
- (3) Primary Co-Ordinated Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 15 to 17);
- (4) Secondary Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 15 to 17);
- (5) Notification of parents of the arrangements for admission including those to the Doncaster University Technical College (paragraph 18); and
- (6) Determine the geographical area covered by Doncaster Borough Council as the relevant area for consultation on school admission arrangements (paragraphs 26 and 27)

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report introduced by Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools on the School Admissions Arrangements for 2021/2022 Academic Year.

The report outlined the Council's duty to determine the arrangements for the admission of children to schools and nurseries across the Borough on an annual basis. Co-ordinating year of entry admissions is a statutory function of the Council and this co-ordinated arrangement applies to all types of schools in the Borough including academies and the free schools.

It was reported, that the Council has an important role to ensure that parents are given every opportunity to apply for a place at their preferred schools. This is best achieved through the Council co-ordinating and monitoring the process through an on-line application and paper based system. 93% of applications are received on-line.

In 2019, over 86% of secondary admissions were offered their first choice, in primary this was over 95% and across both sectors over 95% were offered one of their three preferences.

The report emphasised that the arrangements agreed by Cabinet in March 2012 had been retained and the report continues this commitment to co-ordinate in year

admissions.

It was noted that the Council is responsible for setting admission arrangements for just over one quarter of the schools in Doncaster, the remainder are the responsibility of church schools and academies. The criteria is applied when a school is full. They reflect the requirements to give first priority to children in care, and are followed by catchment area children and a recognition of the importance of children attending the same school as elder siblings.

Cabinet were advised that arrangements are reviewed annually and updated as necessary to take into account relevant legislation, guidance and local changes.

Support for parents throughout the admission process is crucial to minimise any disruption to a child's time in education. The support provided through the Admissions Service has been reviewed, and a number of actions have been taken to ensure smooth transition into and between schools. It was also advised that the Council now has dedicated support staff for each phase of education minimising complaints and allowing the processing of applications in a timely manner.

Cabinet welcomed the report and approved the recommendations set out at paragraph 5 of the report.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Options considered were highlighted within paragraphs 20 to 27 of the report.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Riana Nelson, Director of Learning Opportunities, Skills and Culture

DECISION 2.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

7. Revenue Budget 2020/21 - 2022/23.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended to Council to approve the 2020/21 to 2022/23 Revenue Budget as set out in the report. This includes:-

- (1) the revenue budget proposals for 2020/21 detailed at Appendices B and C (pressures £14.0m) and Appendices D and E (savings £7.0m);

(2) Council Tax increasing by 3.9% to £1,405.35 for a Band D property (£936.90 for a Band A) for 2020/21. This includes:-

- 1.99% Council tax increase equates to an increase of £26.89 for Band D per annum, 52p per week (£17.93 for Band A per annum, 34p per week);
- 2.00% Government's Social Care precept equates to an increase of £27.03 for Band D per annum, 52p per week (£18.02 for Band A per annum, 35p per week).

(3) the 2020/21 Grants to 3rd Sector Organisations outlined in paragraph 37 and Appendix G;

(4) the fees and charges proposed for 2020/21 at Appendix H;

(5) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including all proposals in this report as set out in Appendix A;

(6) a gross revenue expenditure budget of £494.9m and a net revenue expenditure budget of £223.9m, as detailed in Appendix A; and

(7) note the Chief Financial Officer's positive assurance statements (detailed in paragraphs 45 and 50).

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet received a report introduced by Mayor Ros Jones which set out the draft revenue budget proposals for 2020/21 to 2022/23.

The Mayor made reference to the on-going financial constraints within which the Authority were still required to operate under and the proposals show that the journey ahead is still a challenging one with ambitious savings that need to be achieved to meet an overall budget gap of £17.7m over a three year period.

She stated that the Council would continue to protect jobs and frontline services where it can, help the vulnerable and wherever possible continue with the services that matter most to residents. The recent community engagement exercise Doncaster Talks, identified being a cleaner and greener borough as a key priority, and as part of the budget for 2020/21 the plan is to allocate further financial resources to our cleansing, grounds maintenance and enforcement services. This will include investment in equipment, additional resources and improved methods of operation within services.

Cabinet were advised that the budget includes an increase in Council Tax of 1.99% in 2020/21 and a further 2% increase through the Government's Social Care "precept" which continues towards the pressures for adults, health and wellbeing. These will generate £4.6m to help meet the budget gap. The overall increase equates to an additional 69p per week for Band A and £1.04 per week for Band D.

Doncaster will continue to have one of the lowest council taxes in councils of Doncaster's size in the country, 11th lowest in 2019/20 and the lowest in South Yorkshire.

It was noted that the Council have had to make difficult decisions about what services it can fund, whilst it continues to protect vulnerable people. It is clear that spending is becoming more narrowly focused on social care due to growing demand, and this has left the Council with no choice but to apply the Government's 2% Adult Social care precept.

The Mayor commented on communities across the borough being devastated in recent floods, highlighting that action was needed now in tackling climate change. The Council will continue to invest in reducing its carbon footprint and encourage clean and green growth and must act now to protect the planet for generations to come.

In conclusion, to her introduction, the Mayor thanked all staff, partners and colleagues who continue to help the Council to deliver successes, in often difficult circumstances.

Councillor Rachel Blake commented that residents have welcomed the investment for a cleaner, greener borough. She agreed that the Council have no choice but to include the social care precept. She also went on to state that the Government had still not addressed the national social care problem and whilst Doncaster was not unique, it was unfair that Central Government's solution is to require Local Government to levy the precept. However, she welcomed paragraphs 9-11 of the report highlighting the continued support for communities within the borough.

Councillor Glyn Jones highlighted that the actual Council Tax increase is 1.99% and the Adult Social Care Precept adds a further 2% which will cause added pressure and impact on residents. However, he commented that residents appreciate what the Council are doing under the current funding restraints. Councillor Joe Blackham also spoke of the immense financial pressure that the Council was having to work under while ensuring that services were maintained.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

A range of options have been considered over the preceding months to arrive at the budget proposals.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources.

DECISION 3.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

8. Housing Revenue Account Budget 2020/21.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet noted and recommended to Council to approve the Housing Revenue Account budget proposals as set out in the report and including:-

- (1) Rents are increased from 6th April 2020, by 2.7% as detailed in paragraphs 7 to 10 in line with Government Policy. This will result in an average weekly rent increase of £1.88, resulting in an average rent of approximately £71.63 per week. Rents will be charged every week of the year;
- (2) the budget proposals for the HRA for 2020/21, which are contained in Appendix A. These proposals set a balanced budget for the HRA and maintain a reserve of £4.0m; and
- (3) Fees and charges set out in paragraph 14.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report introduced by Councillor Glyn Jones setting out the Housing Revenue Account budget for the 2020/21 financial year and the medium term financial forecast for the next three years, the account sets a balanced budget.

It is proposed that housing rents are to increase by 2.7% in 2020/21 and this increase is in line with Government policy and follows four years of rent reductions. Average rent in Doncaster will be the lowest of all South Yorkshire Councils at £71.63 per week.

Councillor Jones stated that the other recommendations in the report are for inflationary increases in the charges for garage and enclosed gardens. He reported that the recommendation for the increase in garage sites is above inflation, an increase of 6p per week from 94p to £1 per week but these charges will be frozen for three years.

He went on to state that there will be increases for the heating charges at the Council's two district heating schemes, this proposed increase is 6.6%. The authority have seen significant increases in gas bills and an increase in biomass charges. Investment in these schemes and other efficiencies have enabled the Council to keep these proposed increases at 6.6% and these schemes continue to provide excellent value for money to the tenants that use them.

Councillor Joe Blackham made a comment, which followed on from the previous report highlighting that the Council would continue to provide the best services they can to the residents whilst working under the current budget constraints.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 2 – A rent increase which is lower than 2.7%. Over the last four years costs have increased by approximately 10% while rent income has reduced by 1% each year. The last four years have also seen higher expectations in terms of the standard of properties and in relation to Health and Safety and compliance. A rent increase of less than 2.7% could result in reductions in services to tenants at a time when the demand for services and investment is higher than ever before.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources.

DECISION 4.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

9. Capital Strategy and Capital Budget 2020/21 to 2023/24.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended to Full Council to approve:-

- (1) the Capital Strategy at paragraphs 38 to 76;
- (2) Capital Programme Budget for 2020/21 to 2023/24 at paragraphs 15 to 37;
- (3) Directors in consultation with the Portfolio Holder take responsibility for agreeing any significant changes to the Schools Condition Programme and the Local Transport Plan funding and that they are agreed in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder; and
- (4) note that capital bids will be approved as in year additions to the capital programme in line with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report introduced by the Mayor on the Capital Strategy and Capital Budget for the next four years 2020/21 to 2023/24.

The Mayor stated that the Council continued to invest in the future of the Borough, despite the tough economic climate, with over £300m capital spend planned over the next four years. Through this investment residents across the Doncaster borough will benefit from projects to further improve education, housing, infrastructure, retail, leisure and culture, as well as attracting investors and visitors to the borough.

She reported that 2020 will see the completion of the new library and museum and delivery of the new cinema with six screens and five family restaurants. The cinema alone will provide 102 new jobs, adding to local employment opportunities for Doncaster and enhancing the Civic and Cultural Quarter leisure offer.

In addition, £135m will be invested in the Council's social housing stock over the next four years. This will include maintenance, adaptations and the start of a 10 year new build programme. It is estimated that 560 new homes will be built over 10 years with an overall budget of £100m. This investment will be the largest council house investment in Doncaster for many years.

In conclusion, the Mayor reported that there would be further capital schemes to invest in community facilities across Doncaster, details of which will be shared when the funding is agreed. She commented that Doncaster is ready and waiting for the investment, and the schemes are at the ready. Doncaster has benefited over the years from the European Regional Development Fund, and it now awaits the detail around the proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which the Council hope will favour northern areas of the country.

Cabinet welcomed the report and recommended it to Full Council for approval.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 2 – Do not support the Capital Strategy and proposal for the 2020/21 to 2023/24 Capital budget.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Matt Smith, Head of Financial Management

DECISION 5.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

10. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21 to 2023/24.

2. DECISION TAKEN

(1) Cabinet recommended to Council to approve the following:-

(a) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21 – 2023/23 and the Prudential Indicators included;

(b) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy as set out in paragraphs 29-30 (details in Appendix B); and

(2) Cabinet noted the Treasury Management Annual review report for 2018/19 at Appendix F.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet received a report introduced by the Mayor which set out the strategy for management of the council finances and provides a framework for the operation of the treasury management function within the Council. Treasury management seeks to optimise the council's cash flow and secure the most effective arrangements to support the long term funding requirement.

She stated that the Council's finances have been managed extremely well, which has enhanced the authority's ability to move forward. The advantage of using internal resources has enabled the Council to continue to manage finances prudently, providing the capacity to bring about the regeneration of the whole of the borough.

Cabinet welcomed the report and recommended it to Full Council for approval.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Options considered were highlighted at paragraph 104 of the report.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources.

Signed.....Chair/Decision Maker