



Doncaster Council

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decision was taken on Wednesday, 17th November, 2021 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Friday, 19th November, 2021

End of the call-in period is 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 30th November 2021. This decision will not be implemented until after this date and time.

Present:

Chair - Mayor Ros Jones (Mayor of Doncaster with responsibility for Budget and Policy)
Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Business)

Cabinet Member for:

Councillor Lani-Mae Ball	Portfolio Holder for Education, Skills and Young People
Councillor Nigel Ball Planning	Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Leisure, Culture and
Councillor Joe Blackham Enforcement	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Infrastructure and
Councillor Rachael Blake Communities and Equalities	Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care,
Councillor Phil Cole	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Trading Services
Councillor Mark Houlbrook	Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Waste
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources
Councillor Andrea Robinson	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care

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

The decision records from the Cabinet Meeting held on 20th October, 2021 (previously circulated) were noted.

PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS

DECISION 1

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

Updates to Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/23 – 2024/25.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet noted the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report for 2022/23 to 2024/25.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report introduced by Mayor Ros Jones, which sets out the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25, based on the current budget, the potential scale of the financial impact, and sensitivity of the assumptions.

The MTFS outlined the financial challenges for the Council and identified an estimated funding gap of £8.3m for 2022/23 and £12.2m over the next three financial years, based on modelling work undertaken and the most likely scenarios.

The details behind the forecast and rationale behind them, including the continued uncertainties in relation to forecasting costs and income over the medium term, were detailed in the report at paragraphs 11 to 40.

The Council is facing significant financial pressures across a number of Council services, in particular Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care, which is consistent with national trends. There are also pressures in relation to the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant, as outlined in paragraph 24 of the report.

Cabinet were presented with 3 possible future scenarios in terms of the Council's finances, ranging from the best to the worst case scenarios. The table at paragraph 33 of the report outlined the most likely scenario, with estimated pressures amounting to £13.7m for 2022/23, with on-going pressure to the baseline at the end of 3 years of £12.2m. Based on more optimistic assumptions, the pressures are £9.4m in 2022/23, with £6m ongoing pressure on the baseline over the 3 years. The worst case estimated position for the pressures increases to £20.8m in 2022/23, with £24.2m ongoing pressure on the baseline over the 3 years.

However, the Government's financial settlement will not be known until mid-December this year. The MTFS position will continue to be monitored closely and updated, and the assumptions and options will be considered as part of the budget setting process for approval by Council in February 2022.

Councillor Nigel Ball made reference to the government cuts and austerity since 2010. He was disappointed with the government's approach to supporting local authorities, whereby local authorities were having to compete against each other for one-off grant funding. He also said that the north of England had experienced a decade of austerity, and emphasised the need to have better funded public services.

Councillor Joe Blackham sought clarity with regard to how much additional revenue the local authority receives for new build housing, compared to the costs of providing additional services to those new properties. In response, the Head of Finance advised that the income received from Council Tax assumptions had been included for the baseline, and that this information had been included in the report, as part of the Council's budget setting process, agreed by Council in March 2021. It was noted that those assumptions had been based on the current Council Tax position which had been updated, and also included some additional funding in the assumptions. An update on the Council Tax base would be reported to Cabinet in December, setting out the projections for future years, which would be incorporated into the budget report for consideration by Council in March 2022.

Councillor Phil Cole commended the Mayor for her 3 year financial plan, which delivered a balanced budget and made improvements to Council services, despite there being a 29% reduction in funding from the government. He also commended the Mayor for committing to paying staff the Living Wage Foundation's Real Living Wage, and extending this, wherever possible, to Council contractors as well. Councillor Cole highlighted that other Local Authorities were in significant financial difficulties by not adopting such a prudent strategy.

The Mayor thanked Officers for their efforts in continuing to ensure that the Council kept within a balanced budget, despite the additional pressures faced by the Council. She highlighted the challenge for the Council in managing the budget, and stressed that one-off funding from government was not adequate to meet the financial pressures on the Council.

To conclude, the Mayor commented that she awaited the outcome of the government's review of the Council Tax system for those local authorities with a low Council tax base, to ensure a fairer system across the country.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

There were no other options considered.

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