



Doncaster Council

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Wednesday, 16th February, 2022 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Thursday 17th February 2022

With the exception of Decisions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, which are all subject to Full Council approval on the 28th February, 2022, the end of the call-in period is 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 28th February, 2022. 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)
Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Business.)

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Jane Kidd, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Jane Nightingale and Councillor Andrea Robinson

PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS

Public Questions and Statements

No public questions or statements were submitted for the meeting.

Decision Record Forms from the meeting held on 2nd February, 2022 for noting (previously circulated)

The Decision Record forms dated 2nd February, 2022 (previously circulated), were noted.

DECISION 1.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

6. Corporate Plan 2022/23

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet endorsed the Corporate Plan and recommended its adoption to Full Council on 28th February, 2022.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Mayor Ros Jones introduced a report which proposed a revised Corporate Plan for 2022-23 for recommendation to full Council for adoption. The Plan detailed how the Council would contribute to the 'Great 8' priorities in the Doncaster Delivering Together (DDT) Borough Strategy, ensuring that the Council deliver quality services and continue to develop as an organisation.

The Plan outlined:

- The DDT Wellbeing Goals and Great 8 priorities
- The actions the Council will take during 2022-23 to contribute to the Great 8 priorities
- The key changes needed for the organisation to become a Regenerative Council, able to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Councillor Jane Kidd, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, was in attendance and confirmed that the Committee had considered and supported the Corporate Plan at its meeting on 10th February 2022. She explained that the Committee had welcomed the detail within the Plan on how the Council would contribute towards the Great 8 priorities within the Doncaster Delivering Together (DDT) Borough Strategy.

In welcoming the revised Corporate Plan, various Cabinet Members highlighted the sections of the Plan that were relevant to their respective portfolio areas and explained how these would contribute towards meeting the Great 8 priorities in the DDT Borough Strategy.

Mayor Ros Jones thanked Councillor Kidd for attending today's meeting and for providing the positive feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Continue with the format of the existing Corporate Plan.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

DECISION 2.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

7. Revenue Budget 2022/23 – 2024/25.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended to Full Council to approve the 2022/23 to 2024/25 Revenue Budget, as set out in the report. This includes: -

- (1) the Medium-term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including all proposals in the report, as set out in Appendix A;
- (2) a gross revenue expenditure budget of £524.9m and a net revenue expenditure budget of £219.4m, as detailed in Appendix A;
- (3) Council Tax increasing by 4.49% to £1,511.03 for a Band D property (£1,007.35 for a Band A) for 2022/23. This includes:-
 - i) 1.99% Council Tax increase, equating to an increase of £28.78 for Band D per annum, 55p per week (£19.18 for Band A per annum, 37p per week);
 - ii) 2.5% Government Adult Social Care precept, equating to an increase of £36.15 for Band D per annum, 70p per week (£24.10 for Band A per annum, 46p per week);
- (4) the revenue budget proposals for 2022/23, as detailed at Appendix B (pressures £19.0m) and Appendices C and D (savings £12.1m);
- (5) the 2022/23 Grants to 3rd Sector Organisations, outlined in paragraph 58 and Appendix F;
- (6) the fees and charges proposed for 2022/23 at Appendix G; and
- (7) to note the Chief Financial Officer's positive assurance statements (detailed in paragraphs 68 to 70).

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report introduced by Mayor Ros Jones, which formed part of the final stage of the Council's Revenue Budget proposals for 2022/23 to 2024/25 for recommendation to full Council on 28th February 2022.

Mayor Jones reported that, despite the significant financial challenges, the Council had continued to set a balanced budget whilst maintaining investment in the

Borough and protecting the most vulnerable in communities. The Council had continued to deliver on its commitments in the Corporate Plan, including being a financially well managed Council.

Since 2010, Councils had faced the position of reduced Government funding, strong demand, increasing costs and no reduction in their statutory obligations to provide services. Doncaster Council has 28% less to spend on services in real terms than it did in 2010/11, which represented a £335 reduction per resident, and compared nationally, is a reduction of 21%. Local spending is becoming more narrowly focused on Children's and Adult's Services, with over 65% being spent in these areas in 2021/22.

Following the Government's Spending Review presented to Parliament in October, covering the period 2022/23 to 2024/25, the Council had received details of the provisional settlement in December 2021, with confirmation of the final settlement expected in February. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which sets out the anticipated changes to the Council's funding and baseline expenditure levels for the next three years, had identified an overall funding gap of £21.7m over the next three years, with the biggest impact of £13.1m in 2022/23. This meant that although the provisional settlement includes additional grant funding for the period 2022/23, it does not provide long-term sustainable funding sufficient to meet the Council's ongoing budgetary pressures. A summary of the funding gap was provided in more detail at paragraphs 27 to 45, and Appendix A of the report.

Although the Council is currently forecasting a balanced position for 2021/22, with the use of one-off Covid-19 funding, there remains a number of service pressures expected to continue into 2022/23, and, in some cases, beyond. Further details of the service pressures by directorate were detailed at Appendix B of the report.

The proposed budget also includes an increase of Council Tax to 4.49% for 2022/23; 1.99% Council Tax increase and a further 2.5% increase through the Government's Adult Social Care precept, which was expected to generate £5.5m in order to meet service pressures, in particular the pressures in Adult Social Care to be funded from the Social Care precept. This will increase the Council Tax to £1,511.03 per annum Band D (£1,007.35 Band A) which means an additional £64.93 for Band D Council Tax per annum or £1.25 per week (£43.28 for Band A per annum or 83p per week). The Council has chosen to increase by the maximum 4.49%, allowed by government to provide the much needed additional income to fund public services during this challenging period.

The Mayor, on behalf of Cabinet, thanked Overview and Scrutiny for their response to the draft budget proposals. The Mayor invited Councillor Jane Kidd, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC), to formally present Overview and Scrutiny's response.

Councillor Kidd highlighted that Overview and Scrutiny had extensively considered the Mayor's budget at its meetings held on 27th January and 10th February, 2022. She thanked Officers who had given their time and had provided information, and also thanked all Members. In responding to the budget proposals, Councillor Kidd explained that OSMC had followed four lines of enquiry as part of their work. Councillor Kidd confirmed that a copy of Overview and Scrutiny's response had

been sent to the Mayor providing feedback on the four lines of enquiry. During consideration of the budget proposals, Overview and Scrutiny had acknowledged the hard work and the flexibility of staff who had responded to the Coronavirus pandemic over the past year. Overview and Scrutiny was pleased to have found a balanced budget that was able to deliver on the Council's priorities, and it also focused on some of the huge challenges and pressures that the Council faced. Overview and Scrutiny had also looked at the uncertainty and the volatility of the Council's costs and income going forward, whilst still having to deliver key savings.

Councillor Jane Kidd, on behalf of Overview and Scrutiny, confirmed that Overview and Scrutiny was supportive of the Mayor's budget proposals, but recognised the challenges faced by the Council. Overview and Scrutiny would continue to monitor the budget performance of the Council, on a quarterly basis.

The Mayor, on behalf of Cabinet, thanked the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for the work on the budget, and would formally provide a response.

Cabinet Members then spoke in support of the budget, which would continue to support residents and improve life in the Borough, despite the continuing financial constraints and challenges being faced by the Council as a result of underfunding by central government. In particular, Members welcomed the planned investment of £750,000 to expand the Council's apprenticeship programme, targeting hard to fill roles in the organisation. Members also highlighted the Council's ongoing commitment to protecting the most vulnerable residents through its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which would provide a much needed safety net for those on low incomes.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

A range of options has 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. Capital Strategy and Capital Budget 2022/23 – 2025/26.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended to Full Council to approve:-

- (1) The Capital Strategy as set out at paragraphs 36 to 71 of the report;
- (2) The Capital programme budget for 2022/23 to 2025/26, as detailed at paragraphs 11 to 35 of the report; and
- (3) That Directors, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder take responsibility for agreeing changes to the use of block budgets in the Capital Programme. The block budgets as identified in Appendix 1 of the report and include the retained buildings programme, school condition programme, and integrated transport block.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report introduced by Mayor Ros Jones that proposed the Capital Strategy and Capital Budget for 2022/23 to 2025/26, as set out in paragraphs 36 to 71 and 11 to 35 of the report, respectively.

The Mayor confirmed that the Capital Strategy outlined the principles and decision making process involved when approving Doncaster Council's capital programme, explaining how the Council prioritises, finances and manages capital schemes. The Strategy aimed to contribute to the achievement of the Council's priorities and objectives, through the regeneration of the Borough, improved infrastructure, improved efficiency and effective operation of services. This would be delivered via an affordable programme of capital investment, consistent with the Council's financial strategy.

It was reported that the Council continued to invest in the future of the Borough despite the tough economic climate, with an estimated £386.9m of capital investment over 2022/23 to 2025/26 that would continue to stimulate growth and prosperity, with £141.6m of spend estimated for 2022/23. Through this investment, the Council was investing in projects to further improve core services, such as Education, Housing, Infrastructure, Leisure and Culture, as well as attracting investors and visitors to the Borough. This included £196.8m investment in the Council's social housing stock over the next four years, covering maintenance, adaptations and the new build programme.

The report sought approval of additional schemes proposed for inclusion in the capital programme, totalling £36.1m, with £29.9m in 2022/23. Details of the value of capital bids received by directorate, as part of the budget setting process that required funding from Council resources, were set out in the table at paragraph 12 of the report. These schemes had been reviewed to prioritise essential spend required to maintain Council assets which were expected to be used in the long term. This included continued investment in leisure facilities, retained public buildings and fleet replacement with the acquisition of electric vehicles being prioritised where possible, and £6m additional investment for improving the condition of roads and road safety.

The Mayor then invited Cabinet Members to comment and Members made reference to specific proposals in the Capital Budget relevant to their respective

portfolios, including:-

- £5m funding towards energy efficiency works to respond to climate change;
- £6m additional allocation towards road improvements (£5m) and road safety interventions (£1m);
- £9.2m investment in 2022/23 towards Learning, Opportunities, Skills and Culture, including £1m for a range of improvements works in the Schools Condition Programme and £0.7m funding for Doncaster Children's Services Trust to support the future placements strategy;
- The fact that the Council had been successful in 2 town deals, a levelling up fund bid and some community renewal funding should be commended, but it was recognised this was not sufficient to level up Doncaster. The Council would be bidding for further levelling up funding for Doncaster, for both Doncaster North and for Don Valley. The launch of the Shared Prosperity Fund was still awaited, but from the initial information that had been released, it was likely to be less generous for Doncaster and South Yorkshire than the European Regional Development Funding that it was replacing.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do not support the Capital Strategy and proposal for the 2022/23 to 2025/26 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

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources.

DECISION 4.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

9. Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23.

2. DECISION TAKEN

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

- i. Rents are increased from 4th April 2022, by 4.1%, as detailed in paragraphs 7 to 10 in line with Government policy. This will result in an average weekly rent increase of £3.00, resulting in an average rent of approximately £76.06 per week. Rents will be charged every week of the year;

- ii. The budget proposals for the HRA for 2022/23, which are contained in Appendix A. These proposals set a balanced budget for the HRA and maintain a reserve of £4.0m; and
- iii. Fees and charges set out in paragraph 14.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, introduced a report which set out the Mayor's proposals for the 2022/23 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for the 2022/23 financial year, and the medium term financial forecast for the next three years.

The report focused on the following key areas:-

- the level of the Council's housing rents for 2022/23; the current average rent is £73.06 per week which is the lowest within South Yorkshire, rents will increase by 4.1% for 2022/23;
- the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget proposals for 2022/23;
- the medium term financial forecast for the HRA which includes estimated budgets for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26; the HRA budget follows the budget strategy as set out in previous years and maintains a reserve of £4.0m within the HRA, the budget for 2022/23 is a balanced budget (income equals expenditure); and
- the level of fees and charges for 2022/23, as detailed in paragraph 14.

The Deputy Mayor confirmed that it was proposed that housing rents were to increase by 4.1% in 2022/23. This increase was in line with Government policy. Average rent in Doncaster would be the lowest of all South Yorkshire Councils at £76.06 per week.

He stated that he was proud of the low rents in Doncaster, which made good quality homes affordable for over 20,000 households across the borough. However, he stressed the need to increase rents in this year and future years to enable the Council to continue to deliver day to day services for tenants, to continue to collect more rent as the changes to universal credit continued to be rolled out, and to invest in properties to maintain them at the Doncaster decency standard. He stated that the Council also wanted to invest over and above all of this, in continuing to retrofit properties to make them as energy efficient as possible, and in building new energy efficient council homes.

All other fees and charges would be increased by the appropriate rate of inflation.

Councillor Phil Cole stated that he was proud that rents in Doncaster were the lowest of all South Yorkshire Councils and 9th lowest in the Country based on the 2020/21 financial year. He stated that given that the Council was continuing to improve the quality and standard of the housing it provided, alongside the low rent levels, he felt that this was a remarkable achievement. He also highlighted the measures that had been undertaken, and ongoing work, to improve and enhance safety in high-rise properties and other homes at greater risk from any incidents of fire.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 2 – A rent increase which is lower than 4.1%. The impact of inflation on costs for the 2022/23 financial year is £3.6m and inflation is projected to remain high in the medium term. In addition, there are also higher expectations in terms of the standard of properties and in relation to building safety and compliance. A rent increase of less than 4.1% 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 5.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

10. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23 - 2025/26.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that:-

- (1) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23 – 2025/26 be approved along with the Prudential Indicators included; and
- (2) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy, as set out in paragraphs 39 – 40 of the report and detailed at Appendix B, be approved.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Mayor Ros Jones introduced a report which detailed the Strategy Statement for the management of the Council's finances 2022/23 - 2025/26 and provided a framework for the operation of the Treasury Management function within the Council.

It was noted that Treasury Management sought to optimise the Council's cash flow and secure the most effective arrangements to support long term funding requirements.

The report set out the key prudential indicators relating to borrowing limits, with the prudential indicators relating to affordability, as appended to the report at Appendix A.

The Mayor outlined the key messages from the report:

- a. Borrowing – the total borrowing requirement would increase during the period as set out in the report, but the Council would remain under-borrowed against its

total borrowing requirement to avoid the higher cost of carrying debt (Capital Financing Requirement 2022/23 £671m). As borrowing rates are forecast to rise gently over the next 3 years, the primary borrowing strategy for new and replacement debt would be to adopt a hybrid approach (known as the barbell approach) and take out both long term and short term loans. This would remove some interest rate risk, but also ensure we are still benefitting from interest savings over the period of the report. Paragraphs 26 to 70 of the report provided details regarding the borrowing strategy.

- b. Investments – securing the return of investment funds remains paramount when selecting counterparties and the strategy reflects this. The Investment Strategy would continue to manage the balances available and support cash flow requirements. The Investment Strategy is a low risk policy with minimal returns in value; this protects the Council from losses caused by financial institutions failing to repay investments when due. This policy allows the Council to spread the risk amongst a number of approved lenders, and financial instruments, as outlined in paragraphs 71 – 110 of the report.

The Council also had to approve the local policy for approach to debt repayment (Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP) which was detailed in Appendix B to the report.

The Mayor stressed how important the Treasury Management function was to the efficient running of the Council, and she wished to place on record the Cabinet’s thanks to the Treasury Management team for their sterling work. Councillor Phil Cole stated that he wished to echo the Mayor’s thanks and appreciation for the work that the officers had done in this regard.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Other options that have been considered when compiling the report, that would affect the investments and borrowing decisions are as follows: -

Options	Likely impact on Income and Expenditure	Likely impact on risk management
1. Invest in a narrower range of institutions and shorter terms	Interest income will be lower	Reduced risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any single loss could be magnified.
2. Reduce level of borrowing	Saving on debt interest is likely to exceed lost investment income. Premium to be paid if debt paid down (avoided if the reduction is done, as planned, by not replacing maturing debt).	Reduced investment balance leading to a lower impact in the event of default, however long term interest costs become less certain.
3. Borrow additional sums at long term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise, this is unlikely to be offset by higher investment income	Reduced interest rate risk. But higher investment balance could lead to a higher impact in the event of

		a default.
4. Increase level of borrowing	Additional cost of debt interest is likely to exceed additional investment income received.	Under-borrowing uses a combination of reserves and working capital. Any adverse changes to either could lead to cash not being available to fund expenditure. Leading to increased levels of borrowing.
5. Borrow sufficient funds for under-borrowed position	Additional interest costs of up to £1.3m per annum. It should be noted that a proportion of the under-borrowed position has been used to prepay the pension contribution recently.	Reduced interest rate risk, but significantly higher costs. In addition the higher investment balance could lead to a higher impact in the event of a default.

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 6.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

11. New Discretionary Business Rates Relief - Extension of Transitional Relief and Supporting Small Business Relief for Small and Medium Properties.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet approved the Extension of Transitional Relief and Supporting Small Business Relief for small and medium properties policy, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, which will potentially benefit around 75 local businesses with relief totalling around £221k.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Consideration was given to a report that sought Cabinet's approval to implement the proposed discretionary business rates relief scheme for the Extension of Transitional Relief and Supporting Small Business Relief for small and medium properties, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, which would potentially benefit around 75 local businesses, with relief totalling around £221k.

The Government, in its budget of 27 October 2021, had announced that it would extend the current transitional relief scheme and the supporting small business scheme for one year to the end of the current revaluation cycle. The scheme would restrict increases in bills to 15% for businesses with small properties (up to and including £20,000 rateable value) and 25% for medium properties (up to and including £100,000 rateable value).

Following an analysis of Business Rates records, the estimated number of eligible businesses qualifying for the extension of transitional relief or supporting small business scheme would be around 75, receiving support of around £221k.

The Government was not introducing new legislation for these reliefs. Instead, local authorities were expected to use their discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) to grant the relief, in line with the relevant eligibility criteria. Local authorities would be compensated for the cost of granting the reliefs through a Section 31 grant from Government.

The legislation stated that the Authority may only grant relief if it would be reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of Council Tax payers in its area. Given the Government had committed to reimburse local authorities for all the reliefs, it was deemed to be in the interests of local Council Tax payers to award them. Awarding these reliefs at such a difficult time in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak would also support the Council's priority outcome of supporting Doncaster businesses to flourish.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had issued guidance for the scheme. Local authorities were required to have regard to any relevant government guidance when deciding whether to grant relief.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, stated that he wished to commend this to Cabinet. He commented that it was great to see small and medium businesses, which were the bedrock of commerce, benefit from this scheme, as there was a need to assist Doncaster businesses to take every advantage to maintain and promote growth, thereby safeguarding jobs and promoting investment.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1: Do Nothing

The Government has not legislated for this relief scheme but has, instead, advised that local authorities can use their discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended, to grant relief. However, as Central Government is providing funding for the scheme, and they will support local businesses as they continue to deal with the coronavirus outbreak and contribute towards the corporate priority of supporting local businesses, this option is not recommended.

Option 2: Award relief under different criteria to the government Guidance and eligibility criteria

Using section 47 discretionary relief powers, the Council could decide on different criteria to award the relief other than that specified in the government guidance. However, this option is not recommended as the relief would not then be funded via Section 31 Central Government grant and the cost of the relief would have to be met by the Council.

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 7.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

12. New Discretionary Business Rate Relief - Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme 2022/23

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet approved the proposed Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief Scheme at Appendix 1 of the report, which would potentially benefit around 1,269 local businesses with relief totalling around £7.9M.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report that set out the proposed discretionary business rates relief scheme for retail, hospitality and leisure properties for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

Since 2019/20, the Government has provided a Business Rates Retail Discount for retail properties, which from 2020/21 was expanded to include the leisure and hospitality sectors.

The Government, in its budget of 27 October 2021, had announced the introduction of a new business rates relief scheme for retail, hospitality and leisure properties for 2022/23. The 2022/23 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief scheme would provide eligible, occupied, retail, hospitality and leisure properties with a 50% relief, up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business.

Following an analysis of the Council's Business Rates records, the estimated number of eligible businesses qualifying for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief Scheme would be around 1,269 receiving relief of around £7.9M.

The Government was not introducing new legislation for these reliefs. Instead, local authorities were expected to use their discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) to grant the relief in line with the relevant eligibility criteria. Local authorities would be compensated for the cost of granting the reliefs through a Section 31 grant from Government.

The legislation stated that the Authority may only grant relief if it would be reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of Council Tax payers in its area. Given the Government had committed to reimburse local billing authorities for all the reliefs, it was deemed to be in the interests of local Council Tax payers to award them. Awarding these reliefs at such a difficult time in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak would also support the Council's priority outcome of supporting Doncaster businesses to flourish.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had issued guidance for the scheme. Local authorities were required to have regard to any relevant government guidance when deciding whether to grant relief.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1: Do Nothing

The Government has not legislated for this relief scheme but has, instead, advised that local authorities can use their discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended, to grant relief. However, as Central Government is providing funding for the scheme, and they will support local businesses as they continue to deal with the coronavirus outbreak and contribute towards the corporate priority of supporting local businesses, this option is not recommended.

Option 2: Award relief under different criteria to the government guidance and eligibility criteria

Using section 47 discretionary relief powers, the Council could decide on different criteria to award the relief other than that specified in the government guidance. However, this option is not recommended as the relief would not then be funded via Section 31 Central Government grant and the cost of the relief would have to be met by the Council.

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