



Doncaster Council

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Tuesday, 16th February, 2021 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Thursday, 18th February, 2021.

The following decisions are all subject to Full Council approval at its meeting on the 1st March, 2021 and therefore are not subject to Call-In.

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 Nigel Ball	Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Leisure and Culture.
Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services.
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:-

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rachael Blake, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools.

Public Questions and Statements

No public questions or statements were submitted for the meeting.

Decision Record forms dated 9th February, 2021 (previously circulated), were noted.

DECISION 1

1. **AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE**

6. Corporate Plan 2021/22.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet noted the Corporate Plan and recommended its adoption to Full Council on 1st March, 2021.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report which provided an update on the Council's Corporate Plan for 2021/22. The report reflected the Council's transition to a new Borough Strategy replacing the previous 'Doncaster Growing Together Plan', as outlined in Annex 1 of the report.

The Mayor introduced the report and made the following statement:-

"I am pleased to propose a new Plan to set out the Council's priorities for the next financial year.

It is presented here today alongside the budget proposals.

Responding to the Covid pandemic has dominated the past year.

In the face of an unprecedented health and economic crisis, we have delivered for all our communities, as part of an incredible 'Team Doncaster' effort, to save lives, provide care and stop the virus spreading.

We have been supportive and proactive in ensuring children, young people and families have the support they need, for example, through a bespoke free school meal offer, good practice that has been recognised nationally by the Department for Education.

We have got financial support out to those whose businesses and livelihoods have been affected, and used the employment hub to support those who have found themselves out of work, or at risk of redundancy.

We continued to deliver key services, new homes and major projects.

I am pleased to see that exhibits are being added to our new Danum Gallery, Library and Museum, which is due to open this year, in particular, the 'Atlantic' locomotive No. 251, which was built here in Doncaster, at the Plant in 1902, a key part of our Rail Heritage Centre.

In addition, close by, we have a new University Technical College, providing opportunities for our young people to develop the digital and engineering skills needed for the jobs of the future.

It is also great to see the completion of the Junction 5 link to Stainforth and Unity. This will help unlock many thousands of jobs and homes.

Responding to, and recovering from the pandemic, will be our priority in 2021, and possibly in future years.

The new Corporate Plan reflects this imperative, whilst continuing to provide Council services and protect our most vulnerable residents, but we do need to also look ahead.

Our ambitions for the Borough must respond to a number of challenges. The climate and biodiversity crisis remains a profound and pressing emergency. Flooding is an example of how this impacts on the wellbeing of residents and businesses.

The pandemic has worsened inequalities in society, for example, for vulnerable people with underlying health conditions, or for those on low incomes.

We must also support residents of all ages, to catch up on lost learning.

The Corporate Plan marks the transition to a new Borough Strategy. At its centre, is the need to balance the wellbeing of people and the planet. We cannot have one without the other.

The Strategy will build on the successes of the 'Doncaster Growing Together' Plan and the partnership working that has been so crucial to the effective response to the pandemic.

The Corporate Plan sets out the six emerging wellbeing goals for the Borough.

There's a focus on creating a greener and cleaner Borough, together with:-

- supporting economic prosperity and connecting residents to jobs;
- developing a safer and resilient place;
- developing a more compassionate approach to improving health and wellbeing; and
- improving skills and supporting creativity.

All these are underpinned by the need to create a fair and inclusive Borough.

There is cause for optimism for the future. For example, we have the opportunity:

- To develop a more regenerative Borough, for example, a circular economy that keeps finite resources in a loop of use and reuse locally, for as long as possible;
- To create new green jobs and businesses
- Also to invest in our local communities to enhance local assets, strengths and community engagement; and
- To develop the 'foundational economy' that delivers the essential goods and services, including health and social care, so essential to the Covid response and for a thriving, inclusive economy and place.

I am grateful to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for considering the Plan and providing their feedback and support.

I now ask for Cabinet's support for the updated Corporate Plan as a major turning point in the Borough's drive to improve well-being for current and future generations."

Councillor Chris McGuinness, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment, reported on progress on meeting the Council's Climate and Biodiversity Challenge, citing some examples of initiatives being made by the Council, and made reference to the £14m funding set aside to retrofit and

implement thermal efficiency on housing, and the plans to provide 100 electric charging bays. Councillor McGuinness also drew Members' attention to the Priority 1 in the Revenue budget, where £0.5m had been earmarked for tree planting. He reported that there were a lot of initiatives currently taking place across the Council, in respect of the 'Cleaner and Greener' Doncaster Wellbeing goal, which would be brought together this month.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities, made reference to the Council's 'People', 'Place' and 'Planet' theme's strategic approach to housing, and its renewed focus on bringing houses in the private sector up to standard, in particular, houses in the rented sector. He added that the Council had provided support particularly to those people who were at risk of losing their homes due to the economic impact of Covid-19. The Deputy Mayor highlighted that St. Leger Homes of Doncaster was working towards improving energy efficiency in Council owned properties and the Council was applying for grants from the Government to achieve this. The Deputy Mayor also spoke of the need for the Council to encourage all people across the Borough to improve energy efficiency in their homes.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- b) A plan focused on building the 'Connected Council' capacity to deliver quality services and an effective place-shaping role.
- c) A plan that combines 'Connected Council' capacity with the actions needed to deliver the existing DGT priority themes, given that a new Borough Strategy has not yet been agreed.

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 2

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

7. Revenue Budget 2021/22 - 2023/24,

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended to Council to approve the 2021/22 to 2023/24 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 £501.3m and a net revenue expenditure budget of £199.6m, as detailed in Appendix A;
- (3) Council Tax increasing by 2.9% to £1,446.10 for a Band D property (£964.07 for a Band A) for 2021/22. This includes:-
 - i) 1.4% Council tax increase, equating to an increase of £19.67 for Band D per annum, 38p per week (£13.12 for Band A per annum, 25p per week);
 - ii) 1.5% Government Adult Social Care precept, equating to an increase of £21.08 for Band D per annum, 40p per week (£14.05 for Band A per annum, 27p per week);
- (4) the Revenue Budget proposals for 2021/22, as detailed at Appendix B (pressures £10.2m) and Appendices C and D (savings £10.0m);
- (5) Delegate the allocation of the additional £2.975m Social Care funding to the Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills and Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Skills, as outlined in paragraph 39 of the report;
- (6) the 2021/22 Grants to 3rd Sector Organisations outlined in paragraph 48 and Appendix F;
- (7) the fees and charges proposed for 2021/22 at Appendix G; and
- (8) noting the Chief Financial Officer's positive assurance statements, as detailed in paragraphs 58 to 63 of the report.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Mayor introduced a report which set out the draft Revenue Budget proposals for 2021/22 to 2023/24.

In introducing the report, the Mayor highlighted that despite the significant financial challenges, a balanced budget was proposed for the next 3 years, which continued to support residents, communities and the local economy, maintaining a strong focus on supporting vulnerable people and improving the environment.

The Mayor explained that since 2010 the Council's spending power had been reduced by £107m (29%), which represented a £350 cut per Doncaster resident. She emphasised that this was a significant amount of money. The Mayor stated that the Covid19 pandemic had placed unprecedented stress on Council services and this ultimately impacted on the budget through increased costs and reduced income streams. The additional funding provided by Government had helped ease the financial pressures. However, the future financial position remained extremely uncertain.

Cabinet was informed that the budget included £11.7m funding over the next 3 years for service budget pressures. This provided additional funding for Children

and Adult Services, to meet the increasing demands on these services, support for partners Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust, and increasing the funding for the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which continued to provide a much needed safety net for those on low incomes, who were more likely to have been badly impacted by the current pandemic at no fault of their own.

Furthermore, it also provided additional funding to target fly-tipping, it supported the continuation of the Advance Employment Support Programme and further targeted investment to tackle climate change through the creation of a sustainability unit.

The Mayor stressed that overall the Council was facing a budget gap of £18.9m over the next 3 years, with the biggest impact of £15.2m in 2021/22.

The budget was balanced over the 3 years once Covid-19 funds were used, ensuring that sufficient general uncommitted reserves were maintained for unforeseen events in the future, such as flooding.

The Mayor reported that the budget included an increase in Council Tax of 2.9% in 2021/22, which would generate £3.3m to help meet the pressures identified. This included a 1.4% Council Tax increase and a further 1.5% increase through the Government's Social Care "precept", which supported elderly and vulnerable residents. She explained that this was below the maximum allowable increase of 5% which the Government had encouraged the Council to implement. This equated to an additional 52p per week for Band A properties and 78p per week for Band D, and meant that Doncaster would continue to have one of the lowest Council taxes in Councils of Doncaster's size in the country (11th lowest in 2020/21) and the lowest in South Yorkshire.

It was explained that the budget also included a freeze on the vast majority of the Council's fees and charges.

The Mayor pointed out that the overall gross Revenue Budget proposed for the Council in 2021/22 was £501m.

The Mayor explained that although the Council had set a balanced budget over 3 years, the financial position remained uncertain over the medium-term. The Council was facing significant volatility in its costs and levels of income, in addition to uncertainty in relation to funding from Government. The focus on finance was never-ending and the Council needed to keep working hard to maintain a strong and sustainable financial base to provide resources for priorities and to ensure a smooth as possible transition from the Covid pandemic".

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 present Overview and Scrutiny's response to the budget proposals.

Councillor Kidd highlighted that Overview and Scrutiny had extensively considered the Mayor's budget at its meetings held on 1st and 11th February, 2021. 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 flooding, and 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.

The Deputy Mayor reaffirmed that the Council was trying to help the most vulnerable people in Doncaster, through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council had put in an additional £1.25m funding into the Scheme this year, as the Council had acknowledged that some people would be financially challenged through Covid-19 and through other pressures.

Councillor Nigel Ball, Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Leisure and Culture, spoke of how he was proud of the Danum Gallery, which had brought together the gallery, library and museum and archives under one roof. He commented that this was mainly due to the work of Directors, senior managers, and Council staff on the ground, who had carried the vision for Doncaster forward and he gave thanks to everyone involved.

Councillor Joe Blackham, Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services welcomed the additional allocation of funding of £446k to address fly-tipping across the Borough. Councillor Blackham commented that although the Council had received additional funding to address this issue, he spoke of how the people of Doncaster had their role to play in reporting fly-tipping and hoped that they would assist the Council in finding the people responsible.

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 2021/22 - 2024/25.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet supported the Capital Strategy and Capital Budget budget proposals for 2021/22 to 2024/25 and recommended to Full Council, the Capital Strategy and Capital Budget 2021/22 to 2024/25 for approval:-

- (1) The Capital Strategy, at paragraphs 39 to 79 of the report;
- (2) Capital Programme Budget for 2021/22 to 2024/25, at paragraphs 13 to 38 of the report; and
- (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.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Mayor introduced a report which set out the Capital Strategy and Capital Budget for the next four years, 2021/22 to 2024/25.

The Mayor highlighted that the Council continued to invest in the future of the Borough, despite the tough economic climate, with over £340m capital spend planned over the next four years. Through this investment, residents across the Borough would benefit from continued investment in schools, leisure centres, roads, markets and affordable housing.

Furthermore, following the Council's declaration of a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in 2019, and the subsequent actions undertaken through the establishment of a Doncaster Climate Commission, production of a new environment and Sustainability Strategy and Net Zero Carbon Masterplan; the Council proposed to commence a programme of activities to decarbonise its buildings, operations and energy supply, beginning with a £2.6m investment in 2021/22. The budget also provided £0.5 million for tree planting, as well as the naturalisation of some grassed areas with wildflowers and continuing investment in electric vehicles as part of the Council fleet.

The Mayor spoke of how £174.1m would be invested in the Council's social housing stock over the next four years, covering maintenance, adaptations and the ambitious New Build Programme. This also included energy efficiency

improvements to respond to climate change, reduce the Borough's carbon footprint and helping to keep Council tenants warm, whilst also saving them money.

The Mayor explained that the budget included £3.2m to improve parks across the Borough and £2.0m for a phased investment in leisure facilities to continue to provide access to swimming, indoor sports and gymnasium facilities.

The Deputy Mayor, in welcoming the report, pointed out that a significant amount of money was being invested into the housing programme for Doncaster and £174.1m investment in the Council's housing stock coming forward.

The Deputy Mayor highlighted some of the schemes in relation to Housing and Sustainability which included:-

- £7.1m of the budget which had been committed for the Council House Building Programme, approved by Cabinet in December 2019.
- The Council House Building Programme new major investment scheme, totalling over £70.2m over the 4 year programme, earmarked to deliver additional new, quality, energy efficient homes across the Borough.
- The Council House Improvement and Maintenance Programme to be spent on maintaining and improving the existing Council housing stock, with regard to energy efficiency improvements, the refurbishment of void properties and roof, fascia and soffit replacements.

Cabinet was informed that the programme of works would include:-

- Electrical Works
- Fire Safety Improvements
- Energy Efficiency Works
- Net Zero Carbon

To conclude, the Deputy Mayor highlighted that this was a major and positive move for Doncaster.

The Mayor endorsed the Deputy Mayor's comments and spoke of the need to bring about improvements for residents of the Borough, which the Council always endeavoured to do.

Councillor Joe Blackham, Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services, observed that there had not been a reduction in the highways budget, which he welcomed. However, he pointed out that there was still approximately £150m of highways work that needed to be carried out. Councillor Blackham recognised the difficulties associated with maintaining the highways budget during a time of significant budget reductions. He also welcomed that the Council had set aside £1m for the replacement of lighting columns across the Borough, to replace lighting columns that needed replacing as required in statute. Councillor Blackham added that the Council was also looking at the biodiversity of the Borough, which may bring about more land being returned back to its natural form, which would benefit biodiversity.

Councillor Nigel Ball spoke of the importance of recognising that what the Council was doing was both inspirational and aspirational. Councillor Ball made reference to the amount of work that had been carried out in his Portfolio area, in respect of the refurbishment of leisure centres and parks. He highlighted that 'Get Doncaster Moving' was aimed at getting the Borough's residents geared towards a more healthy lifestyle, so that they could live longer, be healthier and help to deliver Public Health outcomes.

Councillor Chris McGuinness made reference to the external funding coming in to the Council in relation to re-development schemes. He was pleased that the Capital and Major Projects Board were looking at the future projects, and as part of this, it was expected that the master plans that had been commissioned for Thorne, Rossington and Mexborough, would provide opportunities to identify further external funding opportunities, to bring in external monies to start to bring forward some of the major schemes across the Borough.

The Mayor, in concurring with Councillor McGuinness's comments, spoke of the need for the Council to talk to residents and to listen to what they had to say, and involve them to be part of the Council's master plan. She also spoke of Doncaster doing what was right for its residents collectively together and working as part of 'Team Doncaster'. She pointed out that it was not just the Council working on its own, but it was about the Council working alongside colleagues and utilising budgets for the best advantage of Doncaster residents, which she welcomed.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do not support the Capital Strategy and proposal for the 2021/22 to 2024/25 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. Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22 - 2024/25.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet:-

(1) Noted the report and recommended to Council the Treasury Management

Strategy Statement 2021/22 to 2024/25 report, and the Prudential Indicators included; and

- (2) Recommended to Council the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy, as set out in paragraphs 39 – 40, as detailed in Appendix B.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report which detailed the Strategy for the management of the Council's finances and provided a framework for the operation of the Treasury Management function within the Council.

The Mayor, in introducing the report, outlined that the Treasury Management Strategy sought to optimise the Council's cash flow and secure the most effective arrangements to support the long term funding requirement.

The Mayor highlighted that the key prudential indicators relating to borrowing limits, were detailed in the report.

To conclude, the Mayor emphasised that the Council was a prudent Council and would continue to be so. Doncaster would also be an aspirational Council, and the Treasury Management Strategy was a key part of delivering for the people of Doncaster.

The Mayor wished to place on record her thanks to the staff who worked on the Treasury Management function on a daily basis, for maximising the benefits for Doncaster.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Other options that have been considered that would affect the investments and borrowing decisions were detailed in paragraph 111 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.

DECISION 5

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

10. Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet noted the report 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 5th April, 2021 by 1.5% as detailed in paragraphs 7 to 10 of the report, in line with Government policy. This will increase average weekly rent by £1.08, resulting in an average rent of approximately £72.89 per week. Rents will be charged every week of the year;
- (2) The budget proposals for the Housing Revenue Account for 2021/22, which are contained in Appendix A to the report. These proposals set a balanced budget for the Housing Revenue Account and maintain a reserve of £4.0m; and
- (3) Fees and charges, as set out in paragraph 14 of the report.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, introduced a report which set out the Mayor's proposals for the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for the 2021/22 financial year, and the medium term financial forecast for the next three years.

The Deputy Mayor reported that the HRA had a balanced budget. He advised that the Council was proposing that housing rents be increased by 1.5% in 2021/22. The Deputy Mayor explained that the increase was in line with Government policy. He highlighted that average rent in Doncaster would be the lowest of all South Yorkshire Councils at £72.89 per week. All other fees and charges would remain unchanged.

To conclude the presentation of the report, the Deputy Mayor sought Cabinet's approval to note the report and recommend to the Council for approval the HRA budget and rent increase proposals.

Councillor Nigel Ball stated that he was gratified to know that Doncaster had the lowest rents within the South Yorkshire authorities, which matched the lowest Council Tax in South Yorkshire. He hoped that Doncaster tenants would take some comfort from this.

The Mayor stressed that the Council would always endeavour to provide the most cost effective and efficient housing. The Mayor highlighted that she was pleased to observe all the differing measures being put forward to provide warm and suitable homes for families, and for individuals alike, as these people were part of Doncaster's future. She spoke of how the Council needed to ensure that it delivered on providing the right housing for the right people, and ensuring that the Council was at the forefront of technology to bring about improvements.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 2 – A rent increase that was lower than 1.5%. Over the four years from 2016 to 2020, costs increased by approximately 10% while rent income reduced by 1% each year. The last five years had 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 1.5% could result in reductions in services to tenants at a time when the demand for services and investment was higher than ever before.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Jane Nightingale declared an interest by virtue of being a Council tenant.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt.

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources.

To conclude, the Mayor thanked all those present for their attendance and input at the meeting.

Signed.....Chair/Decision Maker