



City of Doncaster Council

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Wednesday, 7th February, 2024 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Thursday, 8th February, 2024

With the exception of Decisions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, which are all subject to Full Council approval on the 26th February, 2024, the end of the call-in period is 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 20th February, 2024. Therefore, decisions 6 and 7 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 Early Help, Education, Skills and Young People
Councillor Nigel Ball	Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Communities, Leisure and Culture
Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Infrastructure and Enforcement
Councillor Rachael Blake	Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care and Equalities
Councillor Phil Cole	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Traded Services and Planning
Councillor Mark Houlbrook	Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Waste
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources
Councillor Sarah Smith	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care

Apologies:-

Apologies were received from

PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS

Public Questions and Statements

No public questions or statements were made at the meeting.

Decision Record Forms from the meeting held on 17th January, 2024 for noting (previously circulated)

Decision records date 17th January, 2024 be noted.

DECISION 6.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

6. Council's Corporate Plan 2024/25.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet approved the Council's Corporate Plan for 2024/25 prior to its final approval at Full Council on 26 February 2024.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Cabinet considered the Corporate Plan for 2024/25, which is a document setting out the Council's priorities and headline activity for the coming year. It links closely to the Team Doncaster borough strategy, Doncaster Delivering Together (DDT), and its Great 8 priorities. Within the plan, 10 Corporate Priorities are identified with a selection of key actions for each and are grouped into Organisational, People-focused, and Place-focused priorities, plus a general priority representing the Council's contribution to the Team Doncaster tier one strategies (e.g. economy, education and skills etc. These priorities are detailed below:-

Priority 1: Cultivate a Dynamic, Diverse, Informed & Empowered Workforce Priority

2: Think Local, Act Personally

Priority 3: Create a fairer, kinder, more inclusive city

Priority 4: Improve outcomes in adult social care

Priority 5: Co-deliver an impactful NHS partnership

Priority 6: Improve outcomes for children through a high-performing Children's directorate

Priority 7: Develop our South Yorkshire Airport City Priority 8. Deliver Major Projects

Priority 9: Create safer, stronger, cleaner neighbourhoods

Priority 10: Deliver council contributions to Team Doncaster strategies

The Council's Corporate Plan has been developed using input from the elected and corporate leadership teams, and the directorate leadership teams that will be responsible for delivering the plan.

Cabinet gave their full support to the report and welcomed the progress that had been made in the past year.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 2 (not recommended). Do not approve the Council's 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 7.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

7. Capital Strategy and Capital Budget 2024/25 - 2027/28.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended that Council: -

(1) approves the Capital Strategy at Appendix 3;

(2) approves the Capital programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 at paragraphs 13 to 33;

(3) notes that Directors in consultation with the portfolio holder take responsibility for allocating the block budgets to specific schemes in the capital programme. The block budgets are identified in Appendix 1 and include the retained buildings programme, school condition programme, and integrated transport block.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Capital Strategy outlines the principles and decision-making process involved when considering new bids and the monitoring of Doncaster Council's capital programme. The aim is to ensure alignment with the Council's priorities and objectives, support the regeneration of the borough and improve infrastructure, and the efficiency and effectiveness of service operations. Set within a context of being affordable and within available finances, as set out in the Council's Medium-term Financial Strategy.

Doncaster Council continues to invest in the future of the Borough despite the tough economic climate, with an estimated £506.6m of capital investment over 2024/25 to 2027/28 that will continue to stimulate growth and prosperity, with £193.1m of spend estimated for 2024/25. The Council is investing in projects to further improve core services such as Education, Housing, Infrastructure, Leisure and Culture.

Additional schemes are proposed for inclusion in the capital programme totalling £59.8m, with £36.5m in 2024/25. However, given the continued financial challenges faced by the Council, all schemes have once again been reviewed to prioritise essential spend and to maintain our operational assets and buildings which will be used in the long term. This includes continued investment in our leisure facilities, retained public buildings and infrastructure across the city including street lighting,

footpaths and signage, ensuring the assets required to deliver Council services are adequately maintained.

The capital programme considered by Members included £227.8m investment in the Council's social housing stock over the next four years, as well as the commitment to the ongoing refurbishment of Doncaster's leisure centres.

The Cabinet, supported the Capital Strategy which would thus enable the Council to carry out the 4-year Capital programme, financed with available resources. This would look bring about the investment required for the regeneration and improvements across the borough as highlighted within the report.

Members commended the report, and welcomed the positive impact that the Capital Strategy would have on the borough, with reference made to the impact the Sustainable Transport Scheme would have on Mexborough Town Centre, the benefits of the investment in flood prevention and the money being spent to further improve social housing across the Borough, as well as the continued commitment to the re-opening of Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do not support the Capital Strategy and proposal for the 2024/25 to 2027/28 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

DECISION 8.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

8. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25- 2027/28.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended that Council approves: -

(1) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 – 2027/28 report and the Prudential Indicators included; and

(2) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy as set out in paragraphs 41- 42 (details in Appendix B).

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered the Treasury Management Strategy which detailed the strategy for management of the council finances and provided a framework for the operation of the treasury management function within the Council.

Treasury management sought to optimise the council's cash flow and secure the most effective arrangements to support long term funding requirements.

The key messages constrained within the report included the following:-

- Borrowing – the report informed Members that whilst borrowing would increase over the period, the Council would remain under borrowed to avoid the higher cost of debt. As borrowing rates are currently at high levels due to the Bank of England base rate increases that have taken place throughout the last two years, the primary borrowing strategy would remain the same as previous years, and the Council would only borrow in the short term, primarily for cash flow purposes until the rates start to decrease again. This would minimise the impact on the revenue budget (not only in 2024/25 but in future years), throughout this period of high interest rates.
- Investment - The Investment Strategy will continue to manage the balances available and support cash flow requirements. The Investment Strategy is a low-risk policy with relatively low returns in value; this protects the Council from losses caused by financial institutions failing to repay investments when due.

The Treasury Management Strategy allowed the Council to spread the risk amongst a number of approved lenders, and financial instruments as outlined in the body of the report. This Strategy ensures that the Council's Capital Programme borrowing requirement continued to be affordable and further ensured that the borrowing to support the Programme takes place at the best time to protect the on-going revenue budget for the Council. By ensuring that the effectiveness of the treasury management function, the Council could ensure that the right resources were available at the right time to enable the delivery of services.

Members of the Cabinet welcomed the report and felt it demonstrated how efficiently and responsibly the Council was run in ensuring that it remained under borrowed. Members commended the work of staff across the Council who continued to work efficiently with considerably less resources and ensure that services continued to be provided.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Options considered were identified within the table at paragraph 115 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

DECISION 9.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

9. Revenue Budget 2024/25 - 2026/27.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet recommended that Council approves the 2024/25 to 2026/27 Revenue Budget as set out in this report. This includes: -

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

(2). a gross revenue expenditure budget of £636.5m and a net revenue expenditure budget of £259.6m, as detailed in Appendix A;

(3). Council Tax increasing by 4.99% to £1,649.73 for a band D property (£1,099.82 for a band A) for 2023/24. This includes:-

i) 2.99% Council tax increase, equating to an increase of 90p for band D per week, £46.98 per annum (61p for band A per week, £31.32 per annum);

ii) 2% Government Adult Social Care precept, equating to an increase of 60p for band D per week, £31.43 per annum (40p for band A per week, £20.95 per annum);

(4). the revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 detailed at Appendix B (pressures £8.7m) and Appendices C and D (savings £10.9m);

(5). the 2024/25 Grants to 3rd Sector Organisations outlined in paragraph 56 and Appendix F;

(6). the fees and charges proposed for 2024/25 outlined in paragraphs 50 to 52 and at Appendix G;

(7). note the Chief Financial Officer's positive assurance statements (detailed in paragraphs 64 to 83);

(8). Cabinet delegated the acceptance, and spend decision, of any 2024/25 Household Support Fund grant allocation to the Director of Corporate Resources (in consultation to the Mayor);

(9). Cabinet delegated approval of a spending plan for the estimated £3.1m - 3.7m additional social care funding to the Director of Corporate Resources and the Assistant Director Finance & Technology (Section 151), in consultation

with the Mayor (as detailed in paragraph 38); and

(10). Cabinet delegated the approval to change fees and charges in year, as a result of increases or decreases in energy costs, to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, as detailed in paragraph 52.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Mayor Ros Jones introduced a report which set out her Revenue Budget proposals for 2024/25 to 2026/27, for recommendation to full Council for adoption on 26th February 2024. The Council must set a balanced budget, ensuring that the resources are sufficient to meet the Council's proposed spending plans.

The Mayor outlined that despite the significant financial challenges and ongoing uncertainty regarding government funding, the proposals set a balanced budget whilst maintaining investment in the City and protecting the most vulnerable people in communities, whilst continuing to deliver on the Council's commitments as detailed within the Corporate Plan.

City of Doncaster Council (CDC) had seen its core Government funding reduced by 25% over the past 14 years, which equated to a reduction of £344 per resident, and as a result, local spending was becoming more narrowly focused on Children's and Adults Services in order to ensure that those in critical need were supported.

The Government's Medium Term Financial Strategy was presented to Parliament on 22 November 2023, with the provisional statement identifying a funding gap of £17.2 million over the next three years, meaning there would be budgetary pressures not met by funding and as a result services would have to be delivered in a very different, and much leaner way.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) outlined how the Council's finances would be structured and managed to ensure that this supported, the delivery of the Council's well-being goals and eight crosscutting priorities ('Great 8'), with the overall aims of the Council's Financial Strategy detailed as outlined below: -

- To ensure that effective financial planning and management contributed to the Council achieving our central mission and well-being goals;
- To direct resources as required to support the achievement of our well-being goals and provide the funding required to deliver the 'great 8' priorities;
- To maximise the income from Council Tax and Business Rates revenue;
- To maximise income from regeneration and commercial opportunities adding value to the economy;
- To evaluate budget performance to assess the effectiveness of resource allocation;
- To continue to improve value for money - managing people and money more efficiently, streamlining processes and systems, getting better value from commissioning and procurement, whilst seeking to minimise the impact of budget savings on priority services;
- To ensure the Council's financial standing was prudent, robust, stable and sustainable.

Following consideration of the report, Members of the Cabinet were given the

opportunity to comment, and acknowledged that looking forward, there was a great deal of uncertainty and volatility, with difficult times ahead and difficult choices to be made. However, it was pleasing to see that CDC were not facing the same economic difficulties as many other local authorities across the country and remained in a relatively stable position, with the ability to provide services as required. Particularly pleasing to see, it was noted, was the investment in Universal Youth Provision, with parents supported in 29 areas across the borough with holiday activities and meals, engaging with 10,000 young people through this scheme. This was hugely beneficial to families and highlighted Doncaster's commitment to children and young people.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

A range of options have been considered over the preceding months to arrive at these 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

DECISION 10.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

10. Housing Revenue Account Budget 2024/25 - 2027/28.

2. DECISION TAKEN

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

- (1). Rents are increased from 1st April 2024, by 7.7% as detailed in paragraphs 8 to 11 in line with Government policy. This will result in an average weekly rent increase of £6.30, resulting in an average rent of approximately £88.16 per week. Rents will be charged every week of the year;
- (2). The budget proposals for the HRA for 2024/25, which are contained in Appendix A. These proposals set a balanced budget for the HRA and maintain a reserve of £3.5m;
- (3). Fees and charges set out in paragraph 15; and

(4). Cabinet delegated the approval to change district heating charges in year, as a result of increases or decreases in energy costs, to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, detailed in paragraph 15.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones presented a report to Cabinet which set out the Mayor's proposals for the 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget.

The Council provides housing to almost 20,000 residents through the housing stock within the HRA. The majority of these properties are let at social rents, which are currently the lowest within South Yorkshire, and they will continue to be after this increase. The proposals within this report mean that the existing tenants of these properties will pay higher rents in 2024/25. Increasing the rents in line with the Government's policy "Policy statement on rents for social housing" ensures that there is sufficient funding to continue to provide quality social housing maintained to the Doncaster decency standard and compliant with Building Safety standards. It also provides sufficient funding to support an ambitious investment programme, which will deliver significant numbers of additional properties over the next 4 years

The report focused on a number of key areas: -

- the level of the Council's housing rents; the current average rent is £81.86 per week which is the lowest within South Yorkshire, rents will increase by 7.7% for 2024/25, and are expected to remain the lowest.
- the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget proposals for 2024/25;
- the medium-term financial forecast for the HRA which includes estimated budgets for 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28;
- It is proposed that the resources generated from 1% of the rent increase will be used to acquire further additional properties, in addition to the current budgets. The additional rent of £0.84m will be combined with £3.4m of prudential borrowing.

The Authority is required to approve the Housing Revenue Account budget for each financial year and monitor spending throughout the year and HRA budget information is reported quarterly to Cabinet. The HRA must make a provision for depreciation on Council dwellings as specified by the Government (as a minimum). It must also pay the necessary charges due on all its loans (loan charges - interest), any expenditure over and above this is discretionary but all expenditure must be funded from rent income. The recommended rent increase of 7.7% allows the Council to fulfil its financial obligations in relation to the HRA in both the short and long term. ng to acquire approximately 26 additional properties in 2024/25.

Councillors welcomed the report and commended the content, which provided huge benefits and support to the people of Doncaster.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 2 – A rent increase which is lower than 7.7%. The impact of inflation on costs for the 2024/25 financial year and the fact that inflation has been much higher than budgeted in 2023/24 is £3.7m. In addition, there are also higher expectations in terms of the standard of properties, in relation to building safety and compliance and as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. A rent increase of less than 7.7% 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

DECISION 11.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

11. Retail, Hospitality and Leisure scheme for Business Rates 2024/25.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet approved the proposed Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief scheme at Appendix 1, which will potentially benefit around 1,057 local businesses with relief totalling around £8,614,105.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet gave consideration to the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Scheme for Business Rates 2024/25. At the Autumn Statement 2023 the Chancellor announced an extension of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) Scheme for Business Rate Relief to apply for the year 2024/25. The 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief scheme would look to provide eligible, occupied, retail, hospitality and leisure properties with 75% relief, up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business.

The Government is not introducing new legislation for this relief and 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 reliefs 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.

In Doncaster, around 1,057 local businesses would be eligible for Business Rate relief in 2024/25 under this proposal. In addition to the eligible businesses who would receive financial support under these schemes, the citizens of Doncaster would also benefit due to the support these businesses and, in turn, the local economy would receive. This was especially important at this time following the

Covid pandemic and current cost of living crisis and would provide support to local businesses where needed.

Members of Cabinet commented that this would be welcome relief for many of Doncaster's businesses, as within the City Centre it was clear to see the financial difficulties many were facing. However there was concern that whilst provision for this was made through a Government Grant, there would be additional work placed on Doncaster Council to deliver this scheme which would be at some cost.

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 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

DECISION 12.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

12. Capital investment & service enhancements at the Doncaster Dome and Thorne Leisure Centre.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet:-

(1) agreed capital investment of £14.427m and revenue support of £1.1m to enable refurbishment and enhancement works to take place that will return the Dome to a high-quality leisure offer and at the same time support CDC's ambitions to reduce the service underwriting support moving forward from 2025. Works to include:

- Lagoons refurbishment and enhancement including all ancillary areas
- Entrance Refurbishment
- Building fabric improvements
- Mechanical and electrical system replacement;

(2) agreed implementation of the scheme, subject to approval of the capital programme at Full Council on 26 February 2024;

(3) allocated £1.1m from the Service Transformation Fund to provide revenue support whilst the Lagoons is closed;

(4) delegated to the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer acceptance of £1.21m grant funding from Sport England to enable phase two of Thorne leisure centre to be completed as intended with works including install of mezzanine floor, bowling alley, soft play facilities and two wellbeing studios, 55 station gym and flexible "bumping space" for local services to use; and

(5) agreed to receive further reports in relation to the investment requirements for Leisure facilities and the options appraisal in relation to Edlington Pool.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

City of Doncaster Council has over the past 4 years undertaken a programme of significant capital investment to its leisure facility stock with an investment of over £18m across several facilities, with work completed at Askern Leisure Centre and currently underway at Thorne Leisure Centre.

As part of this approach to the investment in the City's leisure facility stock, it was proposed that refurbishment works at the Dome were commenced which would look to bring much needed investment, support the long-term service provision at this location and in turn the viability of Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust.

City of Doncaster Council (CDC) has an ongoing commitment of investment, enabling Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust to deepen its work to support the health and wellbeing of the residents. The report as part of our investment approach, is proposing we undertake the following actions that were outlined in depth within the body of the report:-

- Agree capital funding for the Dome;
- Delegate acceptance of funding from Sport England for Thorne Leisure Centre refurbishment;
- Undertake and report upon the option appraisal of CDC's in relation to

Edlington pool.

Cabinet noted that the restoration of the Dome's as a premier leisure facility in the Borough would look to provide a notable, place making destination in Doncaster, offering an attraction worthy of a city, retaining, and increasing jobs and employing locally. This refurbishment would look to meet the needs of the families and young people in the City and would address changing social expectations to 30 years ago whilst restoring the aesthetic of a historic, grade II listed building. Additionally, the work carried out would look to address energy and carbon emission expectations bringing the running costs down and working to offer attractions and services at reasonable prices.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not to provide capital investment and revenue underwriting to allow works to progress to improve Dome the areas highlighted in point 7 of the report.

Not accept offer of grant monies for Thorne leisure centre resulting in not achieving the full wellbeing offer needed by the community.

Not agree to undertake options appraisal for Edlington pool resulting in inability to progress development of the pool.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Signed.....Chair/Decision Maker