

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 24th February, 2021.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Mohammed Javed), Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Jacky Bright, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Luke Frost, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr David Minchella, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Lauriane Povey, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Matthew Vickers, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Julia Whitehill, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Julie Danks (MD); Margaret Waggott, Nigel Hart, Michael Henderson, Sarah Whaley, Peter Bell (DS); Beccy Brown, Jonathan Nertney (HR,L&C), Garry Cummings, Tony Montague (FDBS), Ann Workman (AS), Martin Gray (ChS), Reuben Kench (ECLE), Richard McGuckin (TCI), Jamie McCann (CS).

Also in attendance: Members of the Public.

Apologies: Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Tony Hampton, Cllr Tina Large and Cllr Mike Smith.

C **Welcome** **52/20**

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the arrangements for the meeting.

C **Declarations of Interest** **53/20**

Each of the Members present had a non-prejudicial interest in relation to setting the Council Tax and Members Allowances and a dispensation regarding any disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of agenda item 4 - Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy due to having beneficial interests in properties in the borough / being Council Tax Payers.

Councillor Nigel Cooke declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 4 - Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy as he was a non-remunerated board member of Tees Valley Music Alliance.

C **Medium Term** **54/20** **Financial Plan** **Update and Strategy**

Consideration was given to the final report in setting the Council's 2021/22 Budget and Council Tax and outlining the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position to 2025. The report also included an update on the financial performance for 2020/21.

The 2020/21 financial position had been significantly affected by the Covid Pandemic and the report showed significant financial pressures which had been funded by Government.

There were a range of pressures on the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021 onwards which were not necessarily related to the pandemic and these had

been reflected in the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan. The financial position over the medium term was extremely uncertain, and as previously outlined to Members, would be affected by a further Government Spending Review, a potential Fair Funding Review and future proposals around Business Rates Retention.

The proposals in the Report would mean that the Council would have a balanced budget in 2021/22 and place the Council in a good financial position heading into a period of financial uncertainty.

The MTFP for 2021/22 to 2024/25 was attached to the report.

The report also provided an update on the financial position for 2020/21, and in particular the impact of the Covid pandemic. The Council had incurred significant expenditure supporting the response to the pandemic, including:

- Covid Community Support Team, organising community response of food parcels, prescriptions and other kinds of help to the vulnerable during lockdown
- Leading the local public health response including the approach to testing and track and trace.
- Providing support to care providers
- PPE and other direct Covid-19 costs
- Organising grant payments and financial support for businesses

There had also been increased costs in maintaining vital services such as waste collection and there had been significant reductions in income.

The Report outlined the Council Tax proposals and Budget for 2021/22 and the indicative MTFP for the next three years.

It provided an update on the position from that reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2020 and in particular reflects implications arising from the Spending Round 2020 and the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22.

The Provisional and Final Financial Settlements had provided funding allocations for 2021/22 only. This meant that the position for 2022/23 onwards, outlined in the report, needed to be treated with some caution.

The Council had a long history of providing value for money and delivering strong financial management which had again been reinforced by the External Auditor in his report to the Audit and Governance Committee in January 2021. As part of this approach, there was a strong track record of delivering savings and efficiencies and the Council remained well prepared for the challenges ahead.

Section 25 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 required that when a local authority was agreeing its annual budget and setting its Council Tax, the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) must report to it on the following

matters:

- The robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the Council Tax requirement calculations
- The adequacy of the proposed financial reserves

The Council was required to have due regard to this report when making decisions on the budget and this was attached to the report.

Cabinet had considered this matter at its meeting held on 18 February 2021 and a copy of the relevant minute extract had been circulated to Members.

Moved by Councillor Bob Cook, seconded by Councillor Jim Beall:-

1. That in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, Members note that the Section 151 Officer confirms that the following recommendations:

- a) represent a robust budget which has been prepared in line with best practice;
- b) provide adequate working balances;
- c) that the controlled reserves and provisions are adequate for their purpose.

General Fund Budget

2. Approve a 2021/22 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council of £98,166,656.

3. Approve a 2021/22 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council inclusive of Parish Precepts (£872,636) of £99,039,292.

4. Approve the 2021/22 budget and indicative 2021/25 MTFP as outlined in paragraphs 51 – 52, the level of General Fund Balances set out in paragraphs 31 – 32 and the one-off pressures set out in paragraphs 54 – 58.

5. Approve prudential borrowing of £10m to fund the additional town centres investments in Stockton and Thornaby (£5m in each) as set out in the Report to Cabinet on 18 February 2021.

6. Approve prudential borrowing of up to £10m allow the Council to negotiate the acquisition of Billingham Town Centre and undertake any immediate repairs and remediation work as set out in the Report to Cabinet on 18 February 2021

Business Rate Relief System

7. Note that the Chancellor is expected to make announcements regarding business rates and reliefs in his March Budget.

Taxation

SBC

8. Approve the Council Tax for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council prior to Parish, Fire and Police Precepts be increased by 3.9%, which includes the Government Levy of 2% in respect of Social Care i.e. to £1,714.98 at Band D (£1,143.32 at Band A).

Fire, Police & Parish

9. The Council note the Police precept of £15,210,571 which equates to a Council Tax of £265.73 at Band D (£177.15 at Band A).

10. The Council note the proposed Fire precept of £4,598,145 which equates to a Council Tax of £80.33 at Band D (£53.55 at Band A).

11. The Council note the Parish precepts as set out in paragraph 78 of the budget report.

Capital

12. Approve the Capital Programme attached at Appendix A & B.

Organisational and HR

13. Council approve the Pay Policy Statement including the new pay and grading structure at Appendix C and C(1).

Members Allowances

14. Approve that Members allowances are frozen for 2021/22. This will mean that these allowances have been frozen since 2013/14.

Council Tax - Statutory Requirements

15. Members approve the statutory requirements for Council Tax as shown in Appendix D.

16. Cabinet recommend to Council that the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme is retained for the financial year 2021/22 (see paragraphs 81 - 83) and that the Director of Finance, Development and Business Services be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Leader, to make further adjustments should the Government issue revised publications with regards to these matters after 24 February to ensure that the intended alignment is maintained.

Capital Strategy

17. Approve the Capital Strategy as set out at Appendix E to the report, including the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Policy and the MRP Strategy.

Treasury Management/Prudential Code

18. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix F to the report.

Investment Strategy

19. Approve the Investment Strategy as set out at Appendix G to the report.

A recorded vote then took place on the motion.

For the motion:-

Councillors Helen Atkinson, Louise Baldock, Chris Barlow, Jim Beall, Pauline Beall, Carol Clark, Bob Cook, Nigel Cooke, Evaline Cunningham, Ian Dalgarno, Ken Dixon, Lisa Evans, Kevin Faulks, Luke Frost, Clare Gamble, Ray Godwin, Barbara Inman, The Worshipful the Mayor Mohammed Javed, Eileen Johnson, Paul Kirton, Ann McCoy, David Minchella, Mick Moore, Steve Nelson, Jean O'Donnell, Ross Patterson, Maurice Perry, Lauriane Povey, Andrew Sherris, Norma Stephenson OBE, Mick Stoker, Marilyn Surtees, Steve Walmsley, Sylvia Walmsley, Paul Weston, Bill Woodhead and Barry Woodhouse.

Against the motion:-

Councillors Jacqueline Bright, Lynn Hall, Stefan Houghton, Stephen Richardson, Tony Riordan, Ted Strike, Laura Tunney, Hilary Vickers, Matthew Vickers, Alan Watson, Sally Ann Watson and Julia Whitehill.

The motion was carried.

RESOLVED that:-

1. In accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, the Section 151 Officer confirms that the following recommendations:

- a) represent a robust budget which has been prepared in line with best practice;
- b) provide adequate working balances;
- c) that the controlled reserves and provisions are adequate for their purpose.

General Fund Budget

2. A 2021/22 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council of £98,166,656 be approved.

3. A 2021/22 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council inclusive of Parish Precepts (£872,636) of £99,039,292 be approved.

4. The 2021/22 budget and indicative 2021/25 MTFP as outlined in paragraphs 51 – 52, the level of General Fund Balances set out in paragraphs 31 – 32 and the one-off pressures set out in paragraphs 54 – 58 be approved.

5. Prudential borrowing of £10m to fund the additional town centres investments in Stockton and Thornaby (£5m in each) as set out in the Report to Cabinet on 18 February 2021 be approved.

6. Prudential borrowing of up to £10m allow the Council to negotiate the acquisition of Billingham Town Centre and undertake any immediate repairs and remediation work as set out in the Report to Cabinet on 18 February 2021 be approved.

Business Rate Relief System

7. It be noted that the Chancellor is expected to make announcements regarding business rates and reliefs in his March Budget.

Taxation

SBC

8. The Council Tax for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council prior to Parish, Fire and Police Precepts be increased by 3.9%, which includes the Government Levy of 2% in respect of Social Care i.e. to £1,714.98 at Band D (£1,143.32 at Band A) be approved.

Fire, Police & Parish

9. The Police precept of £15,210,571 which equates to a Council Tax of £265.73 at Band D (£177.15 at Band A) be noted.

10. The proposed Fire precept of £4,598,145 which equates to a Council Tax of £80.33 at Band D (£53.55 at Band A) be noted.

11. The Parish precepts as set out in paragraph 78 of the budget report be noted.

Capital

12. The Capital Programme attached at Appendix A & B of the report be approved.

Organisational and HR

13. The Pay Policy Statement including the new pay and grading structure at Appendix C and C(1) be approved.

Members Allowances

14. Members allowances be frozen for 2021/22. This will mean that these allowances have been frozen since 2013/14.

Council Tax - Statutory Requirements

15. The statutory requirements for Council Tax as shown in Appendix D of the report be approved.

16. The current Local Council Tax Support Scheme be retained for the financial year 2021/22 (see paragraphs 81 – 83 of the report) and that the Director of Finance, Development and Business Services be given delegated

authority, in consultation with the Leader, to make further adjustments should the Government issue revised publications with regards to these matters after 24 February to ensure that the intended alignment is maintained.

Capital Strategy

17. The Capital Strategy as set out at Appendix E of the report, including the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Policy and the MRP Strategy be approved.

Treasury Management/Prudential Code

18. The Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix F of the report be approved.

Investment Strategy

19. The Investment Strategy as set out at Appendix G of the report be approved.

At its meeting on 18 February 2021 Cabinet RESOLVED that:-

20. The Officer Appointments to outside bodies and governing bodies at Appendix C(1) be approved and noted.

C 55/20

Motion

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.40 by Councillor Kevin Faulks:-

“Civil servants department to relocate To Stockton on Tees

The government are currently looking at relocating civil servants to the north of England over the coming years. We think that Stockton on Tees would be the ideal Town to accommodate this move.

Over the coming years our High Street will see major changes and we are well ahead of the game with other Northern towns and cities.

I urge every Councillor to support this and also lobby both our MPs Stockton South Matt Vickers and Stockton North Alex Cunningham.”

The Legal Adviser informed the meeting that the above motion had been withdrawn by Councillor Kevin Faulks as since originally proposing the motion Councillor Kevin Faulks had been informed that the Leader had already written to the Secretary of State and the two local MPs on this matter.