

Full Council

North Northamptonshire Council

Thursday 23rd February 2023

At 10:00 am in the Council Chamber, The Cube, George Street, Corby.

Prior to the formal opening of the meeting, the Chair welcomed Councillor Keli Watts to Full Council. Councillor Watts had recently been elected following the by-election held on 2nd February 2023.

Present:

Members: Councillors Larry Henson (Chair), Barbara Jenney, Jean Addison, Tim Allebone, Valerie Anslow, Ross Armour, Charlie Best, Paul Bell, Matt Binley, Jennie Bone, David Brackenbury, Wendy Brackenbury, Cedwien Brown, Scott Brown, Leanne Buckingham, Lyn Buckingham, Lloyd Bunday, Jon-Paul Carr, Robin Carter, William Colquhoun, Mark Dearing, Dez Dell, Scott Edwards, Jim Hakewill, Clive Hallam, Ken Harrington, Helen Harrison, Helen Howell, David Howes, Philip Irwin, Bert Jackson, Matt Keane, King Lawal, Graham Lawman, Lora Lawman, Anne Lee, Richard Levell, Paul Marks, Dorothy Maxwell, John McGhee, Zoe McGhee, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Macaulay Nichol, Anup Pandey, Tom Partridge-Underwood, Mark Pengelly, Harriet Pentland, Roger Powell, Mark Rowley, Geoff Shacklock, Jason Smithers, Christina Smith-Haynes, Mike Tebbutt, Sarah Tubbs, Michael Tye, Malcolm Ward, Keli Watts, Andrew Weatherill, Lee Wilkes.

Officers in Attendance:

Rob Bridge (Chief Executive), Sanjit Sull (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Janice Gotts (Executive Director of Finance and Performance), Paul Goult (Interim Democratic Services Manager) and Ben Smith (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager).

202. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Currall, David Sims, Malcolm Waters, Elliot Prentice, Steven North, Russell Roberts, Joseph Smyth, Jan O'Hara, Ian Jelley, Kevin Watt, Kirk Harrison, Jonathan Ekins, Simon Rielly, Peter McEwan, Alison Dalziel, Emily Fedorowycz, Martin Griffiths.

203. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jean Addison declared a person and prejudicial interest in relation to the proposed Labour Group Amendments to the General Fund Budget report, namely the amendment relating to the Pen Green Maintained Nursery.

Councillor Graham Lawman declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to any discussion specifically regarding Croyland Primary School of which he was a Governor.

Councillor Harriet Pentland declared a personal interest in relation to the reports before Council, as items for discussion may have arisen in her place of work, however stressed that she would be considering each item on the merits of the report and subsequent debate.

204. Chair's Announcements

Members attention was drawn to the Meeting Procedure Rules applicable to the Budget discussions, approved by Full Council at its meeting on the 26th January 2023 and circulated with the agenda.

In order to ensure that all of the business of the meeting was completed, it was MOVED by Councillor Jim Hakewill and SECONDED by Councillor John McGhee that the Guillotine (Procedure Rule 10.1) be suspended until conclusion of all of the business on the agenda.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The Guillotine (Procedure Rule 10.1) be suspended until the conclusion of the business stipulated on the published agenda.

205. Public Participation

The Council had received requests from five members of the public to address the meeting, with reference to the General Fund Budget report, specifically in relation to Pen Green Maintained Nursery. Dr M Whalley CBE, Ms A Prodger, Ms T Gallagher, Mr A Cooper & Ms D Gallagher addressed Council.

206. General Fund Budget 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The report before Council set out the final revenue budget (2023-24) and Medium-Term Financial Plan for North Northamptonshire Council. The draft budget proposals were considered by the Executive on 22nd December 2022 along with an Addendum to the main budget report which provided an update to Members following the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which was published on 19th December 2022, following a written statement from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The budget consultation period commenced on 22nd December 2022 and ended on 27th January 2023. The draft budgets had been subject to scrutiny by the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The consultation provided residents, local partners and other stakeholders the opportunity to review the budget proposals and provide feedback during the five-week consultation period.

The budget was further updated for the latest position and presented to Executive at its meeting on 9th February, for approval and recommendation on to Council.

The Final Local Government Settlement was announced on 6th February 2023 (after the report to Executive on 9th February had been published) and had resulted in additional funding of £95k; the Services Grant had been increased by £90k and the Rural Delivery Services Grant had been increased by £5k. To maintain a balanced position the corporate contingency budget had been increased by £95k – the final budget proposals included this change.

The report set out the revenue budget for 2023-24 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan for North Northamptonshire Council, including the proposed Council Tax level for 2023-24, for approval at this meeting.

The Revenue Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan formed part of a full suite of budget reports being presented to the Council at the meeting. These included the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023-24, the Capital Strategy, Capital Programme, and the Treasury Management Strategy. These reports together would provide a framework for revenue and capital planning for 2023-24 and into the medium term. The Council Tax Resolution for 2023-24 was included within the report.

The main headline assumptions within the draft budget proposals were:

- A balanced budget for 2023-24.
- Further investment of circa £57m to both protect vital services and invest in service change and improvement. This included requirements set out within the 2022-23 medium term financial plan that remained in place for 2023-24. The overall investment allowed for demand and cost increases including Home to School Transport, Adult Social Care and the Children's Trust. The Trust was also seeking further one-off investment of £2.2m county wide (c£1m from North Northamptonshire) to help deliver further service improvements and generate efficiencies.
- These pressures were offset, in part, by savings, efficiencies and income generation across Council Services of £17m which included new direct service grants. This figure also included the continuation of savings already included as part of the 2022-23 medium term financial plan and which remained deliverable. The remainder of the resource requirement had been met through improved business rates income, council tax income and Government grants.
- The use and retention of reserves to support non-recurring investment in service improvement, fund time limited projects, pump-prime invest to save schemes and help manage risk.
- The investment in Social Care recognised the increase in the National Living Wage from 1 April 2023 to £10.42 per hour and the reversal of a 1.25% increase in national insurance contributions for care providers, following the changes put forward by Government.
- Changes following the reversal of the 1.25% National Insurance charge more widely had been matched with a reduction in Government grant funding.
- An increase in Council Tax of 4.99%, consisting of 2.99% for the "core" council tax and 2% for the Adult Social Care precept, which resulted in a new Band D equivalent Council Tax of £1,657.51, an average weekly increase of £1.52 (based on Band D equivalent) from the previous year.
- No change to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023-24, which would continue at 25%.

- Inclusion of a contingency to mitigate against uncertainty, which totalled £3.7m and was equivalent to around 1% of the Council's Net Budget. This recognised that there remained uncertainty in funding and spending predictions.
- An allowance for a pay award of 4% in 2023-24 which would be subject to final determination as part of national pay negotiations.
- Officers would continue to seek efficiencies in order to help address the budget requirement from 2024-25 and into future years.

Appendix A set out the summary position for 2023-24 and the indicative forecast for 2024-25 and 2025-26.

Work had been undertaken to review the budget requirement across all service headings and seek mitigating actions (or savings) in order to remain within the funding envelope and set a balanced budget for the Council in line with statutory requirements. The content of the report, along with the detail in Appendix B, outlined the pressures and savings for each of the Directorates. These had been the subject of scrutiny by the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the budget strategy and timeline paper that was presented to Executive on 10th November 2022.

As part of the 2023-24 budget setting process a number of Budget Challenge Sessions were held to help inform the budget process, these consisted of Officers and Executive Members and the objective of these sessions were:

- To remind all service areas of the financial position of the Council and the need to ensure value for money.
- To understand the risks and pressures in the budget, including any new risks for 2023-24 and identify any efficiencies to offset against these.
- To review the existing medium term financial plan for 2023-24 onwards including the pressures and savings already included and whether these remained valid for inclusion in the budget.
- To utilise the information gathered to date during 2022-23 monitoring to inform the budget planning for 2023-24.
- To understand the planned service developments, alongside the associated costs/benefits and timing. This will include the continuing disaggregation of former County services between North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils, as well as service change.

The outcome was to achieve an agreed way forward on the service proposals for 2023-24 and beyond for consideration as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and this formed the basis of the contents of the report.

As part of the budget process, scrutiny was undertaken over two phases through the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The first phase, during late

October/early November 2022, considered the 2022-23 in-year position based on the forecast as at Period 6. This was to enable scrutiny members to question and understand the underlying financial position and its potential impact in to 2023-24. Building on this, the second phase, which was held in January 2023, considered the detail of the 2023-24 budget proposals.

Each phase of Scrutiny required a separate budget task and finish scrutiny session for each of the following main service areas:

- Children's and Education Services – including the Children's Trust
- Place and Economy
- Enabling and Support Services – Finance, Performance, Communications, ICT, Customer and Governance
- Adults, Communities and Wellbeing Services, including the HRA.

The Children's Trust were also subject to a two-phase scrutiny process which completed in December 2022, to enable the sum to be agreed in January 2023 in line with the contract requirements.

A full Member Budget Briefing Session was held prior to the publication of the draft budget in December and the budget proposals were also discussed with Trades Union representatives in January (as part of the Joint Consultative Forum). Separate budget sessions were also offered to the recognised political groups.

Councillor Lloyd Bunday MOVED the report's recommendations. These were SECONDED by Councillor Mark Rowley.

Councillor Bunday noted the difficult national and international factors that were impacting on the Council's budget setting process for 2023/2024, particularly citing rising fuel and utility costs. Cost of living increases and increased salary costs also had a significant impact on the Council. These factors had also impacted on the Council's contractors and partners.

Council also noted that there was limited scope for the Council to increase its income streams, and it continued to be heavily reliant on Council Tax, Business Rates and Government grants.

Councillor Bunday stressed that although a balanced budget was being proposed for 2023/24 there was currently a projected gap of £18m in 2024/25 rising in subsequent years. These projections would be made worse should the Council not increase Council Tax to the maximum permitted without reference to a local referendum.

Measures to protect vulnerable households would continue, and it was noted that additional Government support to assist residents on low incomes had been received.

Councillor Bunday stressed the hard work over a number of months that had resulted in the proposals before Council and thanked both officers and fellow members for their time and resource.

The importance of ensuring that the Council retained a healthy level of reserves was further stressed by Councillor Bunday. This was particularly appropriate given that the Council was still relatively new. The importance of the Council's Treasury Management Policy and the continued need to keep this under review was also cited.

The following amendments to the report received from the Labour Group were MOVED by Councillor Matt Keane and SECONDED by Councillor John McGhee: -

- *That an additional £2m is allocated to staff pay, which will either contribute to or pay for any pay award that is agreed by the NJC. This will mean that the amount set aside for a potential pay award at NNC is 6% rather than 4%. This will be funded from contingency budget.*
- *We would like to give Pen Green Nursery in Corby a one off £250k Grant. To help them mitigate the loss of core funding. This will be financed from smoothing reserves. We will move that council recommends this and it is passed to executive to endorse.*
- *We would like to use £69k from the general reserve to fund a concession to those on council tax support who have been hit hardest by the green waste charge. We would like a 25% reduction. This will be for one year based on position you are in on day you sign up.*
- *We would like to use £60,000 out of general reserves to fund one educational psychologist with the specific aim of prevention. This educational psychologist will have a specific aim of prevention and as such will be available for educational settings to purchase hours. The average educational psychologist in the UK earns between £38,000 £50,000 pounds per year. I'm looking at an entry level of £50,000 for the salary with on costs that will cost in the region of £60,000 per annum. On a calculation of £60,000 / 48 weeks of the working year that gives us a weekly cost of £1250 to recoup per week. Broken down into 30 working hours leaving 10 hours for reports that would be an hourly cost of £41 pounds per hour to sell to a school to break even. The average hourly cost for a private educational psychologist is around £180 per hour rising to £210 per hour. If we were able to sell 30 hours per week at £180 we would have an income of £5400 per week. Removing the £1250 for outlay gives us an overall profit per week of £4150 pounds. Over the year this will translate into £199,200 profit a year.*

In introducing the amendments, Councillor Keane stated that these had resulted from listening to the concerns of local residents. Councillor Keane stated the amendments had been fully costed and if approved would improve the lives of residents in North Northamptonshire. In seconding the amendments, Councillor Colquhoun paid particular attention to the proposal of a one-off grant of £250k to the Pen Green Integrated Centre, which was vital for the important and valued work of the Centre to continue serving local residents.

Following debate a vote was taken on the amendments. The amendments fell.

Those voting for the amendments: - Councillors Anslow, Armour, Best, Leanne Buckingham, Lyn Buckingham, Colquhoun, Dell, Hakewill, Keane, Lee, J McGhee, Z McGhee, Pengelly, Tubbs, Tye, Watts.

Those voting against the amendments: - Councillors Allebone, Binley, Bone, D Brackenbury, W Brackenbury, C Brown, S Brown, Bunday, Carr, Carter, Dearing,

Edwards, Hallam, H Harrison, Howell, Howes, Irwin, Jackson, Lawal, G Lawman, L Lawman, Levell, Marks, Maxwell, A Mercer, G Mercer, Nichol, Pandey, Partridge-Underwood, Powell, Rowley, Shacklock, Smithers, Smith-Haynes, Tebbutt, Ward, Weatherill, Wilkes.

Those abstaining: - Councillors Addison, Bell, Harrington, Henson.

(There was a 10-minute adjournment in the meeting. Councillor Anslow left the meeting at this point.)

Councillor Hakewill on behalf of the Green Alliance Group provided a response to the budget proposals within the report.

Following debate of the substantive motion, a recorded vote was taken as required by statute.

RESOLVED that: -

- a) the 2023-24 revenue budget as set out in the report be approved, which included and set:
 - i. a budget requirement of £691.553m including Dedicated Schools Grant of £354.963m resulting in a net revenue budget requirement of £336.590m as set out in Appendix A.
 - ii. a total Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes of £189.419m as contained in paragraph 5.27.
 - iii. An average Band D Council Tax of £1,657.51 for North Northamptonshire Council, representing a 2.99% increase in the 'core' Council Tax and a further 2% for the Adult Social Care Precept, as set out in paragraph 5.31, noting the separate Council Tax Resolution Report attached at Appendix K.
 - iv. the detailed proposals of savings, pressures and income generation for 2023-24 as set out within the report and Appendix B.
 - v. the provisional dedicated schools grant budget of £354.963m for 2023-24, as detailed in Appendix C, and summarised in paragraphs 5.47 – 5.58.
 - vi. the draft planned use of, contribution to, and movement in, reserves as identified in paragraph 5.60 – 5.65 and section 9 and the reserves strategy as set out in Appendix D
 - vii. the corporate budget requirements as set out in paragraph 8.1, including a contingency sum of £3.746m as set out in paragraph 8.2.
 - viii. the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023-24 as set out in Appendix H, including the Authorised Borrowing Limit of £798.12m with a further

update to the Strategy to be provided once the disaggregation of Northamptonshire County Council's Balance Sheet has been finalised, subject to the external audit of the former County Council's accounts.

- b) delegated authority be granted to the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer) to agree any necessary variations to the budget prior to 1st April 2023.
- c) delegated authority be granted to the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer) to agree the use of the following reserves which will provide the flexibility to manage the overall budget during 2023-24.
 - Social Care Reserve
 - Transformation Reserve
 - Public Health Reserve
 - Waste Management Reserve
 - General Risk Reserve
- d) the forecast financial position for 2024-25 and 2025-26 be noted and that this would be reviewed as further information became available and updated as part of the budget process for 2024-25 onwards;
- e) that the financial position had been based on the Final Local Government Finance Settlement announced on 6th February 2023;
- f) the consultation feedback as summarised in the report be noted as attached at Appendix E;
- g) the Equality Impact Screening Assessment as at Appendix F be noted as having been taken into consideration;
- h) the outcome from the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, as detailed at Appendix G and the representations to Executive be noted;
- i) the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts strategy as set out in Appendix J be approved.
- j) the Section 25 Report of the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer) as set out in Section 15 be noted, including the Executive Director's review of the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the reserves;

- k) delegated authority be granted to the Executive Member for Children, Education and Skills and the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer) to approve North Northamptonshire's Schools Funding;
- l) the transfer of £3.879m from reserves be noted, relating to a timing issue in respect of Business Rates Reliefs. This was a timing issue which recognised that these reliefs were awarded and accounted for in the General Fund in 2022-23 but the reduced yield in Business Rates was not reflected in the Collection Fund until 2023-24;

Council further RESOLVED that: -

- j) the legal background to setting the budget and Council Tax as set out in Appendix I be noted.
- k) the Council Tax Resolution attached as Appendix K to the report, which was based on the budget proposals be approved, and which:
 - Calculated the Council tax requirement in accordance with Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
 - Calculated a basic amount of Council Tax and an amount of tax for each valuation band (the Council element) in accordance with Sections 31B and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, as amended.
 - Set an amount of Council Tax for each category of dwellings in each valuation band in accordance with Section 30 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992.

Those voting in favour of the recommendations – Councillors Allebone, Bell, Binley, Bone, D Brackenbury, W Brackenbury, C Brown, S Brown, Bunday, Carr, Carter, Dearing, Edwards, Hallam, Harrington, H Harrison, Howell, Howes, Irwin, Jenney, Lawal, G Lawman, L Lawman, Levell, Marks, Maxwell, A Mercer, G Mercer, Nichol, Pandey, Partridge-Underwood, Pentland, Powell, Rowley, Shacklock, Smithers, Smith-Haynes, Tebbutt, Ward, Weatherill, Wilkes.

Those voting against the recommendations – Addison, Armour, Best, Leanne Buckingham, Lyn Buckingham, Colquhoun, Keane, Lee, J McGhee, Z McGhee, Pengelly, Watts.

Those abstaining – Dell, Henson, Tubbs.

(There was a 45-minute adjournment in the meeting. Councillors Nichol, Lawal, Harrington, Bell & Pengelly left the meeting at this point.)

207. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Draft Budget 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The Government introduced a rent setting formula which covered a 5-year period (2020/21 to 2024/25). The rent setting formula was based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for September (of the previous financial year) + 1%. This was introduced following four years of consecutive rent reductions of 1%.

When the current rent policy was set in 2019, inflation was forecast to be around 2% in 2022 and 2023. In July 2022 CPI was 10.1% and DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up Housing Communities) issued a consultation on the basis that if CPI were to remain at or above this level in September 2022, this would permit social housing rent increases from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 of 11.1% or more. CPI in September was at the same level as in July 2022 which would have resulted in rent increases of 11.1% had government continued with the current rent setting formula.

The increase in inflation was placing considerable pressure on many households, including those living in social housing. Providers of social housing had to consider both the pressures facing the tenants and pressures facing the financial sustainability of the HRA, when looking at setting rent levels for 2023/24.

In the face of these exceptional challenges, the Government issued a consultation to make a temporary amendment to the CPI+1% policy for 2023/24. This new Direction would require the Regulator to amend its Rent Standard so that the current CPI+1% limit on annual rent increases would be subject to a ceiling from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. By law, the Government were required to consult on a draft direction, and they issued a consultation on 31st August 2022.

The consultation sought views on having an upper limit on the maximum permitted annual rent increase a Registered Provider is allowed to implement and the consultation considered three options at which rents could be capped these were 3%, 5% and 7%.

The Autumn Budget was made on 17th November 2022 and the Chancellor announced that Social Housing Rents would be capped at 7% for the financial year 2023/24.

To help maintain and protect levels of service provision and to continue investment into the housing stock the Council consulted on an average rent increase of 7% for 2023/24. Both the Corby and Kettering Neighbourhood Accounts had increased rents in line with the maximum amount permissible in previous years and this approach continued with this strategy. Taking this into account the draft Neighbourhood Accounts showed a balanced position for 2023/24.

The scrutiny process for the Draft HRA Budget Proposals was undertaken by the Finance & Resources Committee at a meeting on the 23rd January. This was reported to the Finance & Resources Committee meeting on 30th January for ease of reference Appendix D provided a summary of comments made from the scrutiny meeting.

The draft HRA Budget had been discussed and debated with the TAP over a series of 3 meetings (as detailed in Section 1.4). The final budgets reflected a rental increase of 7% which was agreed by the TAP.

Beyond 2023/24, the Medium-term position (2024/25 to 2027/28) for the Corby Neighbourhood Account showed a deficit of £1.385m whilst the Kettering

Neighbourhood Account shows a surplus of £1.750m. The main reason for the difference between the two Neighbourhood Accounts resulted from how the loans for self-financing were structured. The Corby Neighbourhood Account was increasing its contribution for the repayment of the loans whereas the Kettering Neighbourhood account was reducing its repayments, and this was as a result of how the loans were structured.

The Medium-Term position assumed that rent increases of 4% would be applied each year over the Medium-Term. Rent increases would be subject to an annual consultation with tenants and the rent levels would be dependent on the rent setting formula for 2024/25 which was based on the CPI in September of the previous year plus 1%. The final year of the current five-year rent setting policy would be 2024/25 – this could be subject to change depending on the levels of CPI – such announcements would likely be made in summer 2023.

Councillor Lloyd Bunday MOVED the report's recommendations. These were SECONDED by Councillor Lee Wilkes.

Councillor Bunday reminded Council that currently two neighbourhood accounts were in operation for Corby and Kettering however work was underway towards consolidation and the development of a 30-year business plan and a Housing Strategy.

Councillor Bunday highlighted the key elements of the HRA proposals, including the requirements to set a prudent level of reserves.

The following amendments to the report received from the Labour Group were MOVED by Councillor Lyn Buckingham and SECONDED by Councillor Ross Armour:

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- *The issue - The HRA Budget Report outlines some risks to this year's budget because of the cost-of-living crisis, we understand the pressures on our tenants and our services, however the response to this perceived problem is to increase the bad debt provision across the district by £137k in Corby and £27k in Kettering (although we do not understand the disparity between these figures)*

As a forward-thinking proactive council, we think that instead of just putting money into bad debt that there is a need to work alongside the government's proposal for numeracy education programme by helping vulnerable tenants understand and engage with financial budgeting, this would also have a positive impact both socially and on other services in the long term and increase wellbeing especially in our left behind areas. This would also assist the councils work with the poverty truth commission set up last year.

Proposal: It is proposed that a fund of £44k be put aside for this proactive work taken from the dedicated reserves.

By repurposing parts of the budget on proactive measures rather than reactive measures we still maintain a balanced budget but that by investing in building skills and capacity we aim to have tenancies that can become sustainable, we all understand what the impact and cost of evictions are on families and the more education we can give to our tenants on being able to help themselves the better.

Whilst we understand there is a raft of organisations that can advise and assist tenants like Money management advice which is available from external agencies such as Citizen's advice. The Council also employs a number of staff to assist with financial inclusion which includes 2 Full time financial inclusion officers in Corby and 2 Full time equivalent Tenancy Support Workers in Kettering, all funded by the HRA, however 4 members of staff and whilst they do an amazing job, will be overwhelmed with a tenant pool of 8,000 tenants many of whom will be struggling.

- *The correlation between Health and poor Housing has long been understood, and when those conditions are seriously affecting the health of our children and adding to our health inequalities, then we must respond quickly and decisively if we don't, and something happens we could all be culpable of Corporate manslaughter.*

Many of our properties have problems including that of mould and damp which has been ignored for years, all this proposal does is make sure that there is a dedicated programme around the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme which will take into consideration a full assessment and the speed in which hazards are resolved and clears the problem up once and for all.

*The proposal is that we as a council have a targeted programme of seeking out those Category One hazards that occur in our social housing stock but are responded to on an ad hoc basis at the moment: to fund this element of a targeted programme **it is proposed that:** -*

£250,000 be repurposed from the repairs and maintenance budget across both areas, £150,000 for Corby £100,000 Kettering, to ensure full assessments are put in place at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Lyn Buckingham moved the Labour Group amendments. In doing so, Councillor Buckingham thanked Housing staff for their work during the previous year in difficult circumstances and increasing demand. Councillor Buckingham felt that it was important that the Council provided as much support as possible to its tenants during the current difficult economic climate.

Following debate a vote was taken on the amendments. The amendments fell.

Councillor Hakewill on behalf of the Green Alliance Group provided a response to the budget proposals within the report.

Following debate of the substantive motion, a vote was conducted.

RESOLVED that: -

- a) The 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account Budgets consisting of the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account as set out in Appendix A be approved.
- b) An increase in dwelling rents for 2023/24 of 7% be approved which adhered to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) amended Policy statement on rents for social housing for both the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account.

- c) The Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan consisting of the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account, for 2024/25 to 2027/28 as set out in Appendix B be approved.
- d) the forecast reserves for the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account up to 2027/28 as set out in Appendix C be noted.

208. Capital Programme 2023-26

The report before Council set out the baseline Capital Programme for 2023-24 and the indicative Medium-Term Financial Plan for North Northamptonshire Council. The draft budget proposals were considered by the Executive on 22nd December 2022.

The budget consultation period commenced on 22nd December 2022 and ended on 27th January 2023. The draft budgets had been subject to scrutiny by the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The consultation provided residents, local partners and other stakeholders the opportunity to review the budget proposals and provide feedback during the five-week consultation period. The final budget proposals were reported to the Executive at their meeting on 9th February 2023.

The report set out the baseline Capital Programme and identified the key factors and challenges influencing the development of North Northamptonshire Council's commitments for 2023-24 and beyond.

The report presented the General Fund Capital Programme for 2023-26, the Baseline Development Pool and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 2023-26.

The key principles underpinning the current Capital programme were set out in the report and were designed to support the delivery of the capital programme which would be affordable and sustainable.

The total capital programme was £109.1m, consisting of the General Fund baseline programme of £65.4m and HRA baseline programme totally £43.7m. There was also a Development Pool of £190m which included schemes awaiting formal business cases.

Councillor Lloyd Bunday **MOVED** the report's recommendations. These were **SECONDED** by Councillor Bert Jackson.

(Councillor Lee left the meeting at this point.)

The following amendment to the report received from the Labour Group was **MOVED** by Councillor William Colquhoun and **SECONDED** by Councillor Matt Keane: -

We would like to use £2.5m (to cover the backlog) paid from the capital receipts to assist with North Northamptonshire's pothole issues. On to many occasions some pot holes are patched up and receive multiple repairs. We want a get it right first-time policy to prevent repeat jobs and keep our roads in better conditions for taxpayers.

In introducing the amendment, Councillor Colquhoun felt it was important for the Council to provide additional resource to keeping local highways maintained and that

investment now would result in savings in the future and would be appreciated by local residents.

Following debate a vote was taken on the amendment. The amendment fell.

Councillor Hakewill on behalf of the Green Alliance Group provided a response to the budget proposals within the report.

Following debate of the substantive motion, a vote was conducted.

RESOLVED that: -

- a) the General Fund Capital Programme 2023-26 and HRA Capital Programme 2023-26 be approved.
- b) the Capital Strategy as set out in Appendix D for 2023-24 be approved.
- c) delegated authority be granted to the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer) to agree any necessary variations to the capital budget prior to 1st April 2023.

209. Urgent Items

There were no Urgent Items on this occasion.

210. Close of Meeting

Meeting closed at 3:18 pm.