

Minutes of a meeting of the Council

At 10.00 am on Thursday 22nd February, 2024 in the
Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Barbara Jenney (Chair)	Councillor Lora Lawman (Vice Chair)
Councillor Jean Addison	Councillor Matt Keane
Councillor Tim Allebone	Councillor Graham Lawman
Councillor Valerie Anslow	Councillor Anne Lee
Councillor Ross Armour	Councillor Paul Marks
Councillor Paul Bell	Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
Councillor Matt Binley	Councillor John McGhee
Councillor Jennie Bone	Councillor Zoe McGhee
Councillor David Brackenbury	Councillor Andy Mercer
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury	Councillor Gill Mercer
Councillor Cedwien Brown	Councillor Macaulay Nichol
Councillor Leanne Buckingham	Councillor Steven North
Councillor Lyn Buckingham	Councillor Dr Anup Pandey
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood
Councillor Jon-Paul Carr	Councillor Mark Pengelly
Councillor Robin Carter	Councillor Harriet Pentland
Councillor Melanie Coleman	Councillor Elliot Prentice
Councillor William Colquhoun	Councillor Russell Roberts
Councillor Dez Dell	Councillor Mark Rowley
Councillor Scott Edwards	Councillor Geoff Shacklock
Councillor Jonathan Ekins	Councillor Jason Smithers
Councillor Emily Fedorowycz	Councillor Joseph John Smyth
Councillor Jim Hakewill	Councillor Sarah Tubbs
Councillor Clive Hallam	Councillor Michael Tye
Councillor Ken Harrington	Councillor Malcolm Ward
Councillor Larry Henson	Councillor Andrew Weatherill
Councillor Helen Howell	Councillor Keli Watts
Councillor David Howes	Councillor Lee Wilkes
Councillor Bert Jackson	

Officers

Adele Wylie – Chief Executive
Kamila Coulson-Patel – Chief Lawyer, Governance and Litigation
Janice Gotts – Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer)
Sanjit Sull – Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Ben Smith – Head of Democratic Services

302 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlie Best, Scott Brown, John Currall, Alison Dalziel, Mark Dearing, Helen Harrison, Martin Griffiths, Philip

Irwin, Ian Jelley, Richard Levell, Peter McEwan, Simon Rielly, David Sims, Christine Smith-Haynes, Malcolm Waters and Cllr Kevin Watt.

303 **Declarations of interest.**

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda.

The following interests were declared.

Name of Councillor	Minute Number	Interest	Reason for Declaration
Cllr Cedwien Brown	309	Personal	Member of Save Rothwell Green Space Working Party
Cllr Jim Hakewill	309	Personal	Member of Save Rothwell Green Space Working Party
Cllr Joseph Smyth	309	Personal	Member of Save Rothwell Green Space Working Party

304 **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 for the meeting.

In order to ensure that all of the business of the meeting was completed, it was moved by Councillor Lora Lawman and seconded by Councillor Matt Keane that the Guillotine (Procedure Rule 10.1) be suspended until conclusion of all of the business on the agenda.

The vote was unanimously carried.

Resolved:-

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

305 **Minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2023**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 7th December 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

306 **Public Participation**

The Chair noted that Council had received a request from one member of the public, Mr Michael Blissett, to address the meeting.

Mr Blissett made a statement to the meeting with reference to the Capital Programme report, item 8 on the agenda, speaking against the construction of a temporary stopping site for travellers at Junction 3 of the A14, Rothwell.

Mr Blissett believed the site was too expensive and would be detrimental to the wildlife area on which it was to be situated. He proposed using one of the disused areas of road on the A43 between Kettering and Northampton instead.

The Chair thanked Mr Blissett for his contribution and attendance.

307 Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan

Council considered a report setting out the revenue budget proposals 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan to 2027/28 for North Northamptonshire Council, including the proposed Council tax level for 2024/25. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda for the meeting, marked 'Item 6'.

The motion setting out the recommended draft budget, medium term financial plan and proposed council tax level was moved by Councillor Lloyd Bunday and seconded by Councillor Lee Wilkes.

In introducing the budget, the main outline assumptions were conveyed:-

- i) A balanced general fund budget for 2024-25, with funding supporting net spend requirements of £375.3m (excluding the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of £388.4m);
- ii) Further investment of circa £62.6m to both protect vital services and invest in service change and improvement. This allowed for demand and cost increases in services, most notably investment in Adult Social Care (£28.7m) and Children's Services (£15.1m);
- iii) Cost pressures and service investment were, in part, offset by savings, efficiencies and income generation of £23.8m, this included the continuation of savings already included as part of the 2024-25 medium term financial plan and which remained deliverable, with the remainder being met through improved business rates income, council tax income and Government grants;
- iv) An investment in Social Care which recognised a 9.8% increase in the National Living Wage from 1 April 2024 to £11.44 per hour;
- v) An increase in Council Tax 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 £1,740.22, an average weekly increase of £1.59 (based on Band D equivalent);
- vi) No change to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme which would continue at 25%;
- vii) Inclusion of a contingency to mitigate against unforeseen cost pressures totalling £4.1m. This was equivalent to over 1% of the Council's net budget and recognised the risks posed by the wider economy and rising demand;
- viii) The use and retention of reserves to support investment in service improvement, fund time limited projects, pump-prime schemes and to help manage risk and associated cost pressures both in-year and across years;
- ix) That officers would continue to seek efficiencies in order to help address the budget requirement from 2025-26 and into future year; and
- x) A Dedicated Schools Grant settlement of £388.4m.

The process of budget scrutiny was welcomed which had taken place over two phases, the first to consider the in-year position for 2023-24 and any implications for 2024-25 and the second to consider the detailed proposals for 2024-25. The first

phase having taken place during November 2023 and the second phase in January 2024.

A budget amendment on behalf of the Labour Group was moved by Councillor Matt Keane and seconded by Cllr Lyn Buckingham, in the following terms:-

- i) That one-off expenditure of £15k funded from reserves during 2024/25 should be made to organise an event to recognise the volunteers who had made a huge difference to help residents in the Covid period;
- ii) That on a cost neutral recurring basis the Council show that it values employees by marking traditional anniversaries of years in service with payments already provided for in existing budgets;
- iii) That on a cost neutral recurring basis an existing SEND Information Advice Support officer spend one day a month at the respective Family Hubs to make this specialist advice more readily available to parents of children with Special Educational Needs, together with making the SEND Information Advice Support service phone number more widely well known.

Following debate, the Labour Group amendment was voted upon, with 16 members voting in favour, 0 abstaining and 39 against. The amendment was lost.

A budget amendment was then moved on behalf of the Green Alliance Group by Councillor Emily Fedorowycz in the following terms:-

- i) That time limited expenditure funded from reserves of £55k in 2024/25 and £40k 2025/26 be made for a bid writer inclusive of £15k onboarding costs included for the first year. This would be to leverage the climate change budget to ensure the Council had prepared bids ready for emerging funding for climate change work, including electric bus funding.

Following debate, a recorded vote was requested on the proposed amendment. With the requisite number of councillors standing, the vote was recorded as follows:-

In favour (17)

Councillors Valerie Anslow, Ross Armour, Lyn Buckingham, Leanne Buckingham, William Colquhoun, Emily Fedorowycz, Dez Dell, Matt Keane, Jim Hakewill, Anne Lee, Jean Addison, John McGhee, Zoe McGhee, Mark Pengelly, Joseph Smyth, Sarah Tubbs and Keli Watts.

Abstaining (1)

Eliot Prentice

Against (35)

Tim Allebone, Paul Bell, Matt Binley, Jennie Bone, David Brackenbury, Wendy Brackenbury, Cedwien Brown, Lloyd Bunday, Jon-Paul Carr, Robin Carter, David Howes, Jonathan Ekins, Scott Edwards, Ken Harrington, Clive Hallam, Helen Howell, Graham Lawman, Lora Lawman, Dorothy Maxwell, Paul Marks, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Macaulay Nichol, Tim Allebone, Anup Pandey, Tom Partridge-Underwood,

Harriet Pentland, Russell Roberts, Mark Rowley, Geoff Shacklock, Jason Smithers, Michael Tye, Malcolm Ward, Larry Henson and Lee Wilkes.

The amendment was lost.

Following debate of the main motion, a recorded vote was undertaken on the budget proposals, inclusive of the setting of council tax, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014. The names of the councillors voting for the decision, against the decision or abstaining from voting were as follows:-

In favour (41)

Councillors Tim Allebone, Valerie Anslow, Paul Bell, Matt Binley, Jennie Bone, David Brackenbury, Wendy Brackenbury, Cedwien Brown, Lyn Buckingham, Lloyd Bunday, Jon-Paul Carr, Robin Carter, Scott Edwards, Jonathan Ekins, Clive Hallam, Larry Henson, Helen Howell, Ken Harrington, David Howes, Bert Jackson, Graham Lawman, Lora Lawman, Steven North, Dorothy Maxwell, Paul Marks, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Macaulay Nichol, Anup Pandey, Tom Partridge-Underwood, Harriet Pentland, Eliot Prentice, Russell Roberts, Mark Rowley, Geoff Shacklock, Jason Smithers, Joseph Smyth, Sarah Tubbs, Malcolm Ward, Keli Watts and Lee Wilkes.

Abstaining (2)

Councillors Dez Dell and Emily Fedorowycz.

Against (10)

Councillors Jean Addison, Ross Armour, Leanne Buckingham, William Colquhoun, Matt Keane, Jim Hakewill, Anne Lee, John McGhee, Zoe McGhee and Mark Pengelly.

The motion was carried.

Resolved:-

That Council:

- a) approves the 2024-25 revenue budget as set out in the Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan report, which includes and sets:
 - i. a budget requirement of £763.773m including a Dedicated Schools Grant of £388.440m and a net revenue budget requirement of £375.333m as set out in **Appendix A**.
 - ii. a total Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes of £201.599m as contained in paragraph 5.25.
 - iii. An average Band D Council Tax of £1,740.22 for North Northamptonshire Council, representing a 2.99% increase in the 'core' Council Tax and a further 2% for the Adult Social Care Precept, and as set out within the separate Council Tax Resolution Report attached at **Appendix K**.
 - iv. the detailed proposals of savings, pressures and income generation for 2024-25 as set out within the report and **Appendix B**.

- v. the Dedicated Schools Grant budget of £388.440m for 2024-25, as detailed in **Appendix C**, and summarised in paragraphs 5.41 – 5.55.
 - vi. the planned use of, contribution to, and movement in, reserves as identified in paragraph 5.56, section 9 and **Appendix D** of this report, subject to the final call on reserves as a result of the Final Financial Settlement or other changes.
 - vii. the corporate budget requirements as set out in paragraph 8.1, including a contingency sum of £4.101m as set out in paragraph 8.2.
 - viii. the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024-25 as set out in **Appendix H**, including the Authorised Borrowing Limit of £907m and to note a further update to the Strategy will be provided once the disaggregation of the former Northamptonshire County Council's Balance Sheet has been finalised.
 - ix. the recommended Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in Section 10 and **Appendix J**.
- b) delegates authority 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 2024.
 - c) delegates authority 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 2024-25.
 - Transformation Reserve
 - Public Health Reserve
 - Waste Management Reserve
 - Adult Social Care Reserve
 - Budget Delivery Reserve
 - Business Rates Retention Reserve
 - General Risk Reserve
 - d) notes the forecast financial position for 2025-26 to 2027-28, noting that this will be reviewed as further information becomes available and updated as part of the budget process for 2025-26 onwards.
 - e) notes that the financial position has been based on the Final Local Government Finance Settlement announced on 5th February 2024.
 - f) considers the consultation feedback as summarised in the report and attached at **Appendix E**.
 - g) notes the Equality Impact Screening Assessment as at **Appendix F** as having been taken into consideration.
 - h) considers the outcome from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, as detailed at **Appendix G** and any separate representations to Executive.

- i) considers the Section 25 Report of the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer) as set out in Section 15, including her review of the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the reserves.
- j) delegates authority to the Executive Member for Children, Education and Skills and the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Director for Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (and Children's Services – Interim) and the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer) to approve North Northamptonshire's Schools Funding Formula and to finalise the funding allocation for schools, in line with North Northamptonshire's Schools Funding Formula.
- k) delegates authority to the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer) to draft the recommended budget resolution for Council in accordance with the necessary legal requirements and to take into account the decisions of the Executive and any final changes and other technical adjustments that may be required.

Council Tax Setting

- l) Notes the legal background to setting the budget and Council tax as set out in **Appendix I**.
- m) approves the Council Tax Resolution attached as **Appendix K** to the report which is based on the budget proposals, and which:
 - Calculates the Council tax requirement in accordance with Section 31A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
 - Calculates 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.
 - Sets 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.

Reason for Decision:-

To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution and legislative requirements in setting the budget for North Northamptonshire Council from 2024-25.

Alternative Options Considered:-

The budgets have been subject to a formal budget consultation and scrutiny and the feedback has been considered as part of this process.

308 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Draft Budget 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Plan

Council considered a report setting out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2024/25 and its Medium Term Financial Plan proposals. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda for the meeting, marked item 7.

Councillor Lloyd Bunday moved and Councillor Mark Rowley seconded the motion setting out the recommendations in the report.

It was noted that the HRA was a separate ring-fenced account within the Council for the income and expenditure associated with its housing stock, and also that the HRA did not directly impact on the Council's wider General Fund budget or on the level of council tax.

It was further noted that income to the HRA was primarily received through the rents and other charges paid by tenants and leaseholders. As required by the Housing Act 1985, council tenants in Kettering and Corby had been consulted via the Tenants Advisory Panel (TAP), with a proposed rent increase of 7.7% in rent levels for 2024/25.

Following debate, the motion was voted upon, with 41 councillors voting in favour, 0 abstaining and 9 against.

The motion was carried.

Resolved:-

That Council:

- a) Approves the 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budgets consisting of the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account as set out in **Appendix A** to the report.
- b) Approves an increase in dwelling rents for 2024/25 of 7.7% which adheres to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) formula on rents for social housing for both the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account.
- c) Approves the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan consisting of the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account, for 2025/26 to 2028/29 as set out in **Appendix B**.
- d) Notes the forecast reserves for the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account up to 2028/29 as set out in **Appendix C**.
- e) Notes the comments from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as detailed at **Appendix D**.

Reason for Decision:-

To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution in setting the budget for North Northamptonshire.

Alternative Options Considered:-

These HRA Budgets have been subject to a formal budget consultation and comments from the consultation have been considered as part of this process.

309 Capital Programme 2024-28

Council considered a report setting out the baseline Capital Programme for 2024-25 and the indicative Medium-Term Financial Plan which identified the key factors and challenges influencing the development of North Northamptonshire Council's for 2024/25 and beyond. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda for the meeting, marked as item 8.

The motion to approve the Capital Programme 2024 to 2028 was moved by Councillor Lloyd Bunday and seconded by Councillor David Brackenbury.

In introducing the Capital Programme, the key principles underpinning a total capital programme of £171.8m (General Fund £113.1m, HRA £58.7m) over the four-year period 2024-28 were conveyed:-

- i) A General Fund Baseline Programme totalling £113.1m including key projects such as highways, disabled adaptations, school improvements and extensions, and various property and environmental projects across North Northamptonshire, together with significant investment in the highway's infrastructure network over and above the integrated transport grant funding;
- ii) A Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Baseline Programme totalling £58.7m across Kettering and Corby housing stock, together with significant investment of £20.2m proposed for the Housing Development and New Build Programmes.

A development pool of £169m was also proposed, projects within it being an indicative area of future investment, which would be subject to completing a satisfactory business case prior to Executive consideration for approval and inclusion within the formal programme.

A capital programme budget amendment on behalf of the Labour Group was moved by Councillor William Colquhoun and seconded by Cllr Anne Lee, in the following terms:-

- i) A one-off capital provision of £150k in 2024/25, offset by revenue in future years, to procure a traffic camera in Newland Street, Kettering, to enforce the existing prohibition on private cars driving through, to make Newland Street safer for pedestrians;
- ii) A further one-off capital provision of £200k in 2024/25, offset by unallocated HRA funding, for the Corby Neighbourhood Account's sheltered housing scheme improvement fund - which would double the funding for this programme during 2024/25.

Following debate, the Labour Group amendment was voted upon, with 15 members voting in favour, 0 abstaining and 35 against. The amendment was lost.

A budget amendment was then moved on behalf of the Green Alliance Group by Councillor Emily Fedorowycz in the following terms:-

- i) Removal of the proposed budget funding of £164k in 2024/25 and £1.136m in 2025/26 to fund the Temporary Travellers Stopping Place, the effect of which was to allow both permanent and temporary to be considered as part of the published timescale for the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan Policy.

Following debate, a recorded vote was requested on the Green Alliance Group amendment. With the requisite number of councillors standing, the vote was recorded as follows:-

In favour (16)

Councillors Ross Armour, Jean Addison, Cedwien Brown, Leanne Buckingham, William Colquhoun, Dez Dell, Matt Keane, Jim Hakewill, Anne Lee, John McGhee, Zoe McGhee, Mark Pengelly, Joseph Smyth, Sarah Tubbs, Valerie Anslow, and Keli Watts.

Abstaining (2)

Councillors Tim Allebone and Lyn Buckingham

Against (32)

Councillors Matt Binley, Jennie Bone, David Brackenbury, Wendy Brackenbury, Lloyd Bunday, Jon-Paul Carr, Robin Carter, Melanie Coleman, David Howes, Bert Jackson, Scott Edwards, Jonathan Ekins, Clive Hallam, Larry Henson, Helen Howell, Graham Lawman, Lora Lawman, Dorothy Maxwell, Paul Marks, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Macaulay Nichol, Steven North, Anup Pandey, Tom Partridge-Underwood, Harriet Pentland, Elliot Prentice, Russell Roberts, Mark Rowley, Jason Smithers, Malcolm Ward, and Lee Wilkes

The amendment was lost.

Following subsequent debate on the main motion, it was voted upon, with 34 councillors in favour, 3 abstaining and 11 against.

The motion was carried.

Resolved:-

That Council:

- a) Approves the General Fund Capital Programme 2024-28 and HRA Capital Programme 2024-28.
- b) Delegates authority 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 2024.

Reason for Decision:-

To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution and legislative requirements in setting the budget for North Northamptonshire Council for 2024-25.

Alternative Options Considered:-

Any comments from the consultation have been considered as part of this process.

310 Municipal Calendar of Meetings 2024/25

Consideration was given to a report setting out the proposed municipal timetable for 2024/25. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda for the meeting, marked as item 9.

Councillor Jason Smithers moved and Councillor Helen Howell seconded the motion to approve the draft North Northamptonshire Council municipal timetable for 2024/25.

In presenting the report to members, it was noted that Council was required to approve a calendar of meetings prior to the commencement of each new municipal year. Whilst the vast majority of formal meetings were included in the timetable, because some meetings were ad hoc in nature they would be called as and when required, as in previous years.

It was further noted that 2024/25 would be an election year. The number of meetings during the pre-election (purdah) period from mid-March 2025 had therefore been reduced compared to the previous municipal year, although some meetings that were expected to require business to be transacted remained in the diary.

The motion was voted upon, with 47 councillors voting in favour, 1 abstaining, and 0 against.

The motion was carried.

Resolved:-

That Council approves the Municipal Timetable for 2024/2025.

Reason for Decision:-

To provide for approval of the municipal timetable in accordance with the Council's Constitution and to allow for timely planning of meeting dates for members, officers and the public.

Alternative Options Considered:-

To not to produce a municipal timetable for approval, however this would be contrary to the requirements of the Constitution and contrary to effective planning.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm