

Nottingham City Council

Executive Board

Minutes of the meeting held remotely via Zoom -
<https://www.youtube.com/user/NottCityCouncil> on 19 January 2021 from 2.01 pm - 2.59 pm

Membership

Present Absent

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Sally Longford (Vice Chair)
Councillor Cheryl Barnard
Councillor Eunice Campbell-Clark
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor Rebecca Langton
Councillor Dave Trimble
Councillor Adele Williams
Councillor Sam Webster
Councillor Linda Woodings

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Councillor Kevin Clarke
Councillor Andrew Rule
Clive Heaphy - Strategic Director of Finance
Chris Henning - Corporate Director for Development and Growth
Malcolm Townroe - Director of Legal and Governance
Catherine Underwood - Corporate Director for People
Hugh White - Corporate Director for COVID Response and Recovery
Kate Morris - Governance Officer

Call-in

Unless stated otherwise, all decisions are subject to call-in. The last date for call-in is 29 January 2021. Decisions cannot be implemented until the working day after this date.

72 Apologies for absence

Mel Barrett – Chief Executive

73 Declarations of interests

None

74 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020 were confirmed as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chair.

75 Council Tax – Determination of the 2021/22 Tax Base

The Board considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre seeking approval of the tax base and collection rate determination for Council Tax in 2021/22, and an increase in the Council Tax Premium levied on long term empty properties from 200% to 300%.

Resolved to:

- (1) Approve a tax base of 66,396 for 2021/22**
- (2) Agree a collection rate of 97.5% be used in the determination of the 2021/22 tax base**
- (3) Determine an increase in the Council Tax Premium levied on long term empty properties that are vacant and substantially unfurnished for ten years or more from 200% to 300% from 1 April 2021 as part of these calculations**

Reasons for the decisions

The Council and precepting authorities (Police and Fire Authorities) use the tax base figure in their budget process in February 2021 to determine the level of Tax for 2021/22

The work of the Safer Housing team has reduced the numbers of long term empty properties over the last 12 months, but the number needs to be further brought down and an increase in the premium will help to do this.

Other options considered

The Council is legally required to set a Council Tax base using objective calculations. Not doing this would put the Council in breach of its legal obligations.

76 Treasury Management 2020/21 Half Yearly Update

This item does not contain any decisions that are subject to the call in.

The Board considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre setting out the Treasury Management activities for the period of 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020. The Portfolio Holder highlighted to the Board that no new long term borrowing had taken place in this period.

Resolved to note the treasury management actions taken in 2020/21 to 30 September 2020

Reasons for decision

The Treasury Management Code of Practice required the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) to submit 3 reports on treasury management each year, including this 6 monthly progress report, which ensures that Councillors are kept informed of the actions taken by the CFO under delegated Authority.

Other options considered

This report is required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice and to not produce it would mean that the Council is in breach of its obligations.

77 Nottingham City Council Recovery and Improvement Plan

This item does not contain any decisions that are subject to the call in.

The Chair of the Board agreed that this item, although not on the original agenda, could be considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, because the Recovery and Improvement Plan needs to be approved at the Extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 25 January 2021.

The Board considered the report of the Leader of the Council seeking endorsement of the Recovery and Improvement plan, developed in response to the findings of the recently completed Non-Statutory Review of Nottingham City Council. Subject to endorsement the plan will be considered by an Extraordinary meeting of City Council on 25 January 2021 and submitted to the independently chaired Improvement Board, established by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The following points were raised in discussion:

- (a) The plan has 8 themes and associated actions:
 - Budget – Achieve a balanced budget and medium term financial strategy.
 - Assets – Critical comments were made regarding level of debt. A programme of work has been started to look at its reduction by sale of assets.
 - Companies – each one will be examined and a clear future plan for it will be established.
 - Capital programme – Review and ensure its sustainability in the medium and long term
 - Constitution – ensure decision making is effective and accountable with clearly defined roles for Councillors and Officers.
 - Culture and Organisation – ensure resources are used effectively, and how the Council maintain values of inclusion and fairness and value contributions.
 - Delivery options – encourage more partnership working to produce good outcomes for citizens.
 - Policy Framework – refresh the council plan maintaining ambition and vision and reflecting what can be done in the current situation.
- (b) The review concluded that the current leadership of the Council should be trusted and supported in the improvement journey and Board members echoed support for the Leadership;
- (c) The creation of the Programme Management Office will be made up of a small core of Officers to carry out decision making in an efficient way;
- (d) Audit Committee have an important role in risk management as highlighted by the external auditors report earlier in the year as well as the Non-Statutory review report;
- (e) The Capital Board has not yet been established but will form an important part of the management structure and accountability for the Capital Programme;

- (f) The plan focuses on moving forward in an ambitious way, delivering the best quality services for the citizens. All local authorities are facing significant challenges following cuts in funding, increased pressure on services and the Covid pandemic, Nottingham City Council will continue to work towards offering the best possible services for the best possible cost;

Resolved to

- (1) Endorse the Recovery and Improvement Plan for submission to City Council with recommendation for approval**
- (2) Make provision for meeting the costs of the Improvement Board who are appointed by and accountable to the Secretary of State, but paid for by the Council. It is estimated that full year costs will be up to a maximum of £300,000 per annum for three years**

Reasons for decisions

The Recovery and Improvement plan is a required document in response to findings of the Non-Statutory Review undertaken by the MHCLG. The endorsement of the Plan for approval at the Extraordinary Council meeting on 25 January demonstrates commitment by the Council to address the issues raised by the review and provide assurance to stakeholders and the public that a robust action plan is in place.

Other options considered

Not accepting the findings of the review and implementing the Recovery Plan would lead to a Best Value Inspection of the Council and could lead to the appointment of Commissioners and loss of democratic control over policy and decision making at the Council. For this reason, this option was rejected.

78 Budget Consultation Report

This item does not contain any decisions that are subject to the call in.

The Chair of the Board agreed that this item, although not on the original agenda, could be considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, because the proposals need to be released for public consultation in order to allow sufficient time before the Medium Term Financial Plan is brought to the February 2021 Executive Board.

The Board considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre, setting out the draft proposals for the revenue element for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 - 2023/24. The Council wishes to consult with its citizens, businesses and its partners in order to finalise its proposals in February 2021. During discussion the following points were raised:

- (a) Councils across the country are operating in a challenging environment following sustained funding cuts, and the economic impact of the Covid pandemic. The impact of the Covid pandemic on Nottingham City Council is estimated to be £78.4million and despite government funding of £50million it leaves the Council with £28.4million additional costs, this is set to rise to £36million next year;

- (b) The need to transform how services are delivered and to modernise is clear, in order to reduce costs and streamline services. Lessons are being learned around how to improve services access for citizens as a result of the Covid pandemic;
- (c) There are a number of difficult decisions being proposed for consultation, the loss of a number of Community Protection Officers, the closure of a leisure centre and cuts to a number of services;
- (d) All efforts will be made to avoid compulsory redundancies and staff reduction will be managed through voluntary redundancy and redeployment where possible;
- (e) The adult social care precept on Council Tax will go towards funding social care for vulnerable adults. The government was due to make announcements on Adult social care funding in early 2020 however this was delayed as a result of the Covid pandemic. The Board also reiterated concerns around funding for Children's social care and the massively increased costs of placements throughout the Covid pandemic;

Board members paid tribute frontline staff who continued to work throughout the Covid pandemic offering support and services to the most vulnerable citizens, and offered thanks to Officers and Colleagues who have worked hard on producing proposals for a balanced budget.

Resolved to

- (1) Endorse the draft consultation proposals as set out in paragraph 3.13 and Table 8 of the published report and approve commencement of formal public consultation;**
- (2) Note the further details relating to individual consultation proposals contained in appendix 1a-j of the published report**

Reason for decision

Consultation with the public is an important part of the budget process. Endorsing the draft proposal will allow public consultation to begin.

Proposals that include workforce reduction will be subject to internal consultation and as such, details may be amended during the consultation period that may impact on the way identified proposals are delivered.

Other options considered

A number of different options have been considered throughout the budget process. The options proposed have been subject to detailed analysis and the draft proposals presented seek to balance levels of investment, income, cost reductions and appropriate level of council tax.