



GREAT YARMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council

Minutes

Tuesday, 21 February 2023 at 19:00

PRESENT:-

His Worship, The Mayor, Councillor Plant; Councillors Annison, Bensly, Bird, Borg, Candon, Cameron, G Carpenter, P Carpenter, Cordiner-Achenbach, Fairhead, Flaxman- Taylor, Freeman, Galer, Grant, Hanton, D Hammond, P Hammond, Jeal, Lawn, Martin, Mogford, Myers, Robinson-Payne, Smith, Smith-Clare, Stenhouse, Talbot, Thompson, Wainwright, Waters-Bunn, B Walker, C Walker, Wells, Williamson, A Wright & B Wright.

Ms S Oxtoby (Chief Executive Officer), Ms C Whatling (Monitoring Officer), Ms K Sly (Finance Director), Mrs S Wintle (Corporate Services Manager) & Mrs C Webb (Democratic Services Officer).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hacon & Price.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hanton declared a personal interest in item 15 as he was Chairman of the GY Community Safety Partnership which received funding from the Council.

Councillor Candon declared a personal interest in item 15 as he was Chairman of Bradwell Parish Council which received funding from the Council.

Councillor Grant declared a personal interest in item 15 as he was Chairman of

Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby Parish Council which received funding from the Council.

3 MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS

His Worship, The Mayor, gave thanks and a small token of appreciation to the following people in recognition for their work during the recent unexploded bomb incident in Great Yarmouth:-

Assistant Chief Constable Nick Davison
Superintendent Sonia Humphreys
Superintendent Nathan Clark
James Wilson, Head of Environment & Sustainability
Alan Goulder, Resilience Officer
Andrew Turner, Radio Norfolk.

The Leader of the Council and Councillor Wainwright also thanked them on behalf of the Council and all the residents of the Borough of Great Yarmouth.

4 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

His Worship, The Mayor, reported that there were no items of urgent business this evening.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Ms Spychel asked her question to Council as follows:-

Would the Borough Council give considered thought to the way in which they approach Levelling-Up in our borough? Please think carefully about the priorities which the residents, especially those least-well off and struggling in the current, difficult economic climate, will benefit from the most and which will result in a better place for them to live and work.

Please remember that the priorities are:-

- The up-skilling of our workforce,
- The renovation of our existing housing stock to exceed the Decent Homes Standard,
- The upgrading of play areas, play equipment and recreation areas for all residents of the borough to enable them to access free, local good quality and safe green spaces,
- Will the elected members work together to improve the lives of the residents and businesses of the borough and not be unduly influenced by Central Government dictate; and
- Will the Members and officers work in partnership and give an assurance that they will secure a gateway for a better life for all the residents of Great Yarmouth.

The Leader of the Council gave the following response:-

- The upskilling of our workforce.

A multi-agency skills partnership has been formalised as the Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce, co-ordinating efforts to improve access to – and enhance the visibility and uptake of – the various numerous local learning, upskilling and reskilling offers to a) maximise social inclusion and the accessibility of local opportunities, and b) ensure that the jobs that employers need to fill are aligned to pathways for residents to access them. This innovative approach draws directly upon the work of key learning from the Local Government Association (LGA) Skills Taskforce at a national level, applying a place-based model to coordinate and integrate policy and provision, locally.

Residents' interests are best served by skills and employability provision that not only provides access to the labour market, but supports mobility and progression throughout their working lives, drawing together employers, training providers, schools, colleges and universities to create high quality progression pathways. The Taskforce aims to make it easier for residents of all ages and all levels of attainment to navigate the support available to them in an ever more complex labour market.

Improving graduate and skilled-worker retention to service growth industries – along with work returners and other off-the-radar individuals – is a key priority and it is essential that disadvantaged communities are equipped and enabled to access better paid jobs. The Council is currently recruiting to a brand new Skills Manager post to champion skills and support the Taskforce. In addition, the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan has recently been approved by the Government, which includes funding of £280K for 'people and skills' in 2024/2025.

- The renovation of our existing housing stock to exceed the Decent Homes Standard.

The Council is committed to ensuring that all Council housing meets the Decent Homes Standard. Currently, approximately 15% of housing stock doesn't meet this standard. We are about to commence a full stock condition survey across the housing stock to identify compliance with that Standard. The information will be available at the end of the summer, when the Council will prepare a Housing Investment Plan, which will be organised to a) prioritise all capital works to ensure that the Council returns quickly to full compliance with the Decent Homes Standard, and b) ensure that, in future, properties no longer fall into non-compliance.

- The upgrading of play areas, play equipment and recreation areas for all residents of the borough to enable them to access free, local good quality and safe green spaces.

Children's playground and open space locations have been reviewed and a full audit undertaken. The play areas have been broken down into phases based on an annual safety audit, with the information gathered by the Council's Property and Assets Management team. An initial 5-year programme of capital works has been identified and requested as part of the budget. Repairs and maintenance works are ongoing, together with a programme of repair related works to extend and improve the facilities in a range of locations. The Property and Asset Management team continues to work with local councillors and other stakeholders to improve the play facilities and increase the inclusivity provision within the borough. For example, Levelling Up Parks Fund monies are being directed at improving Diana Way Community Park in Caister-on-Sea.

- Will the elected members work together to improve the lives of the residents and businesses of the borough and not be unduly influenced by Central Government dictate; and
- Will the members and officers work in partnership and give an assurance that they will secure a gateway for a better life for all the residents of Great Yarmouth.

Our residents and communities are at the heart of our ambitions to realise a vibrant and inclusive coastal economy that builds upon our successes and our strengths in clean energy and culture, capitalises upon our natural assets, heritage and attractions and responds to emerging cultural and technological challenges. Our ambition is that residents of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds can flourish and reach their potential. Inclusive, stakeholder-led groups like the Great Yarmouth Town Board are directly involved in developing and prioritising project and programmes, including those that are part of our major Future High Streets, Town Deal and Levelling Up programmes and ensure that careful checks are made so that the benefits accrue to residents and employers across the whole Borough. Formal 'Equality Impact Assessments' are also undertaken for key projects to make sure that they are as inclusive as possible and don't disproportionately disadvantage specific groups.

Ms Spychel asked a supplementary question of Council:-

The Community Marshalls are a huge asset to the Council and offer local residents a high level of support. Is the Council supportive of keeping, developing and increasing the numbers of these officers.

The Leader of the Council responded that the Community Marshalls were a real asset to the Borough, unfortunately, Central Government funding grants would come to an end on 31 March 2023 but the Council was working with the JPUH and ICS to ensure that some Marshalls were kept in post and an announcement would be made shortly.

6 MINUTES

That Council confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2022.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
 Secunder: Councillor Candon

CARRIED.

7 SERVICE COMMITTEE DECISION LIST

That Council note the Service Committee Decision List.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
 Secunder: Councillor Candon

CARRIED.

8 AMENDMENT TO THE APPOINTED MEMBER FOR THE NORFOLK PARKING PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

That Councillor Candon replace Councillor Plant on the Norfolk Parking Partnership.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
Secunder: Councillor Candon

CARRIED.

9 APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - PLACE

The Leader of the Council reported that under the Council's Constitution (Article 45 – Officer Employment Procedure Rules) the appointment of any chief officer shall be by resolution of the Council on the recommendation of the Employment Committee.

An extensive and thorough recruitment process was undertaken to enable the appointment of the new Executive Director – Place and the Employment Committee met on 30th January 2023 to undertake the final stage of the recruitment process.

An offer of employment as a Chief Officer shall only be made where no well-founded objection from any Member of the Council has been received.

Therefore, the Employment Committee recommends that Council agree the appointment of Natasha Hayes as Executive Director – Place.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
Secunder: Councillor Candon

That Council agree the appointment of Natasha Hayes as Executive Director - Place.

CARRIED.

10 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24

The Leader of the Council reported that Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to produce an annual pay policy statement for the start of each financial year. It is a legal requirement that Full Council formally sign off this statement and the responsibility cannot be devolved to any other person or committee and must be approved by the end of March each year. The Pay Policy Statement has therefore been updated for the 2023-24 financial year.

The Pay Policy Statement meets the statutory requirements of the Localism Act and it is therefore recommended to adopt the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 and to publish on the Council's website.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
Secunder: Councillor Candon

That Council adopt the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 and to publish on the Council's website.

CARRIED

11 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2023/24

The Leader of the Council reported that the investment strategy is the first of three finance strategy documents that are presented for approval alongside of the budget each year.

In particular it focusses on commercial and service investments and recognises the ongoing implications of related investment decisions now, and in the past, have on future revenue budgets. The strategy provides the framework for specific investment decisions that may be presented as part of a business case in the coming financial year.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
Secunder: Councillor Candon

That Council agree and approve the 2023/24 Investment Strategy.

CARRIED

12 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2023/24

The Leader of the Council reported that this report is presenting the Council's Capital Strategy for approval, again one of the strategies for approval alongside the budget.

This strategy provides an overview of capital expenditure and how it is to be financed recognising how capital spend contributes to local service provision and covers General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and commercial capital spend & financing.

The capital strategy is intrinsically linked to a number of strategies namely Treasury Management, Investment, Asset Management and also the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The last of these recognises the ongoing impact of capital financial decisions taken now on future budgets. In light of this the capital strategy also considers the risks around the capital spend and how these are mitigated, as well as the sustainability of the planned spend.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
Secunder: Councillor Candon

That Council agree and approve the 2023/24 Capital Strategy.

CARRIED

13 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023/24

The Leader of the Council reported that the final strategy which is presented for approval this evening alongside the setting of the annual budget is the treasury management strategy for the forthcoming financial year.

The strategy outlines the approach to the borrowing and investment activity and managing these in a prudent way that has regard to security and liquidity ahead of the highest rate of return and ensuring that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital expenditure plans.

The Treasury strategy covers both the borrowing for the general fund and the housing revenue account taking into account future borrowing requirements which are aligned to the approved capital programme for the Council as presented within the budget reports.

The strategy was considered by the Policy and Resources Committee earlier this month and will be monitored during the year with a half year report being made to Members later in the year.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
Secunder: Councillor Candon

That Council agree and approve:-

- (a) The Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24,
- (b) The Treasury Investment Strategy (section 4),
- (c) Prudential Indications (section 5); and
- (d) Operational Boundary and Authorised Limits (Appendix C)

CARRIED

14 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2023/24

Councillor Flaxman-Taylor reported that, as the landlord to approximately 5,800 dwellings and 368 leaseholder homes across the Borough, this report presents for approval the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2023/24 and reflects the spending and income plans for 2023/24 and the following 4 years for both the day to day revenue account and the longer term capital plans.

This report recommends the annual rent setting for the year at the cap at 7% which will enable the continued investment in the stock to provide accommodation at affordable rents. Across all properties, this will mean an average weekly rent of £104.75.

Service charges are increasing for next year again at the cap although this is completed on a cost neutral basis, reflecting increasing cost pressures.

The annual budget includes a provision of £9.6m for repairs in the year and just under £10.6 million of capital works to the properties and estates, a significant investment to homes within the borough.

In addition, the budget allows for an update to the HRA budget in the current year to recommend a revenue budget of £584k to address immediate Fire Risk Assessment Remedial works identified following the completion of new Fire Risk Assessments across the housing stock to be completed in the current year. A further £1 million has also been allowed for in the 2023/24 budget for the continuation of the works.

The budgeted works within the capital programme continue to reduce the existing level of non-decency identified within the stock, as well as addressing the newly arising need going forward.

To further support continuing works, the budget allows for a provision to undertake a further stock condition review which will be used to inform the future budget setting for the stock.

Councillor Williamson moved the following amendment:-

That Council recommend that the annual rent setting for the year be set at the cap of 3% which would also enable the continued investment in the stock to provide accommodation at affordable rents. This would be a great help to our tenants, especially those who were in receipt of Universal Credit, who were struggling with general inflation at a rate of 10.1% and food inflation at a rate of 16%. The increase in rents of 7% would tip our tenants into poverty and many would have to choose between heating and eating to ensure they could pay their rent which was disgraceful.

Proposer: Councillor Williamson.

Seconder: Councillor Fairhead.

His Worship, The Mayor, asked the Finance Director for her view on the proposed amendment. The Finance Director reported that she had not had the opportunity to go through the costings for the alternative proposal made by Councillor Williamson.

The Leader of the Council reported that Councillor Williamson's amendment would not be fully funded and outlined the assistance which had been given to all residents by Central Government to those who were in receipt of benefits and the £400 support to all residents via the Energy Bills Support Scheme. The Leader reported that in Norfolk this totalled £13.39m and he could not support the amendment and would be voting against it.

Councillor Wainwright reported that his party did not need clearance from the Finance Director prior to moving their amendment and the proposed 7% increase would affect 3,600 tenants who paid full rent.

Councillor Talbot reported that this report had made her very angry as she herself was a tenant and with three children to raise, this increase would cost her an extra £300 a year which might result in her being unable to buy Christmas gifts for them.

Councillors Jeal, Myers, B Walker & C Walker spoke in support of the amendment and urged all members to think of their ward constituents and how

this would affect them in these unprecedented, economic times.

Councillor Candon spoke against the amendment as it would not be a prudent use of taxpayers money.

Councillor Williamson summed up the rationale behind his proposed amendment.

Following a vote, the amendment was lost.

All those Members that voted for the minutes requested their vote to be recorded within the minutes as follows :-

For the amendment:-

Councillors Smith- Clare, Martin, Talbot, Borg, Williamson, Thompson, Myers, Jeal, Robinson-Payne, A wright, Fairhead, B Wright, Cordiner-Achenbach, Waters-Bunn, C Walker, B Walker & Wainwright.

Council now considered the recommendations as set out in the agenda report.

Proposer: Councillor Flaxman-Taylor

Secunder: Councillor Grant

That Council:-

(i) Approve a capped increase to rents of 7%, as set out in the New Direction on the Rent Standard and Policy Statement for 2023/24;

(ii) Approve the revenue budget for 2023/24, along with the forecast projections for the period up until 2027/28, including the extended borrowing to support the provision of additional HRA homes;

(iii) Approve the Capital budget for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28;

(iv) Approve the HRA Service charges for 2023/24;and

(v) Approve an increase to the Repairs and maintenance budget of £584,000 for immediate Fire Risk Assessment and remedial works in 2022/23.

CARRIED.

All those Members that voted against the proposal requested their vote be recorded within the minutes as follows :-.

Against the proposal:-

Councillors Smith- Clare, Martin, Talbot, Borg, Williamson, Thompson, Myers, Jeal, Robinson-Payne, A wright, Fairhead, B Wright, Cordiner-Achenbach, Waters-Bunn, C Walker, B Walker & Wainwright.

15 GENERAL FUND BUDGET REPORT 2023/24

His Worship, The Mayor, reminded Members that in line with Council Procedure Rule 31.15.6, a recorded vote was required to be taken as part of the budget setting.

The Leader of the Council reported that this report presented for approval the revenue and capital budgets for the General Fund for 2023/24.

Councillor Wainwright asked for a point of order, that Standing Orders be suspended for this agenda item only.

Proposer: Councillor Wainwright
Seconder: Councillor Jeal.

Following a vote, this motion was lost.

The Leader of the Council reported that the budget as presented, is the culmination of a significant amount work at a very challenging time financially, although very exciting in terms of the number of regeneration projects that are ongoing that are critical for the continued growth of the Borough.

This evening, Council was only being asked to approve the budget for 2023/24, the detail in the report does highlight the further financial challenges ahead. As we await the outcome of the fair funding review which we now know will not be before 2024/25, we continue to prioritise work aligned to the key themes of the Councils business strategy to reduce the forecast funding gap, which included:-

- ensuring that we operate in the most effective and efficient manner;
- delivering and facilitating growth be it new homes or business to deliver income from council tax and business rates,
- ensuring that our assets are being utilised in the most efficient way, for example, reviewing opportunities for income generation and also opportunities for disposals where capital receipts can be used to fund the capital programme and deliver ongoing savings to the revenue account and,
- regeneration.

Regeneration is key, not just from projects we continue to deliver as a Borough, but those being delivered by Norfolk County Council, for example the Operations and Maintenance development and the third river crossing which will see a direct benefit to the borough in years to come.

In the current year, we have seen the opening of the Marina Centre on the seafront following the investment by the Council and the continued work on the Marketplace in the town centre.

Council was continuing to deliver the projects for the Town Deal and Future High Street projects, many of which are facing increasing inflationary pressures and challenges and officers and members are continuing to be monitor these and take action as applicable through the governance structure.

The Leader of the Council presented the budget for 2023/24 to Council. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy as reported in November last year, predicted that there would need to be a reliance on reserves in the coming year of just over £1million. This was after allowing for planned savings of £1.35m and forecasts of assumed levels of grants and income, plus assumptions of spending pressures.

Since then, the finance settlement and funding for 2023/24 have been confirmed and the detail of the 2023/24 budgets now produced. This has resulted in a necessary use of reserves in the coming year of £1,143,503 from reserves, an additional £58,503 compared to the position as reported in November last year. The increased spending pressures and funding gap is largely in response to the rising levels of inflation, utilities and the impact of the nationally agreed pay award.

The budget process for 2023/24 has been challenging, the additional cost pressures that the council is facing from rising inflation has had a significant impact on the financial position, for example:-

- increases in utility costs have resulted in additional pressures of £460k for 2023/24;
- the impact of the 2022/23 pay award has had a cumulative impact on the budget for 2023/24, the 2023/24 budget reflects a 5% pay award which would total in the region of £1.2m, this will be subject to national negotiation for which initial claims have been made which are in excess of the level assumed in the budget – we cannot expect this to be confirmed until sometime in 2023/24;
- Other pressures on the revenue budget are from higher interest rates and the impact of financing the capital programmes from borrowing, which has partly been mitigated by an increase in interest receivable;
- Contract inflation on contracts that the council has, for example for provision of software and other services, whilst wherever possible annual increases are negotiated, some have increased by CPI or RPI of 11% to 13% again placing further financial challenge on the council;
- Furthermore the fall in the market for recyclable material has reduced the income from recycling credits by £250,000 in the coming year.

These pressures have meant that in order to present a balanced budget, savings and additional income have had to be put forward. The Policy and Resources Committee approved the new fees and charges for next year last week which will deliver in the region of £250,000 additional income. Other savings and additional income opportunities have been factored into the budget for next year totalling £1.1m increasing to £1.4m by 2024/25.

The savings are detailed within the budget report, and include:-

- Reviewing how we use our assets including a review of office accommodation to ensure we are working in the most efficient manner to make the best use of the space that we occupy and reducing our overhead costs;
- Reviewing establishment posts as they become vacant;
- At a time when increases in electricity costs are in excess of 100%, the budget recommends a saving from the turning off of footway lighting between the hours of 1am and 5am overnight to reduce electricity costs and also working towards carbon zero;

Whilst the revenue budget is recommending a saving in footway lighting costs, the capital budget is recommending continued annual provision in the footway lighting column replacements and upgrades to LED to deliver further efficiency savings. Further capital budgets for approval included:-

- a £735,000 in the capital programme for Hemsby rock provision which includes match funding of £500,000;
- £831,000 investment in outdoor play provision that will see use of S106 monies used over a three year programme of works;
- Seafront improvements in Gorleston.

The report makes recommendations for the setting of the council tax for the Boroughs element which is less than the capping limits for 2023/24 and will see an increase of £5 for a band D per annum, and £3.33 for a band A property.

Despite the current financial challenges, the budget continues to support delivery of vital services to the residents and businesses within the borough including:-

- waste and recycling,
- grounds maintenance,
- housing including support for homelessness
- essential support to households through local council tax support.

In summary, The Leader of the Council reported that he was confident that the budget as presented, continued to support the residents and businesses across the Borough, was achievable and supported the delivery of the corporate plan and I therefore recommend the budget for 2023/24 as detailed in the agenda report.

Councillor Wainwright gave the following speech in response to the proposed budget:-

The Conservative administration had claimed that Labour could gain control at the next election and take the Borough backwards again. Looking at the Conservative budget presented to us tonight, it was this Conservative administration that is taking the Borough backwards.

They also claimed that they were ripping up Labour's poorly thought out contract that led to neighbourhood neglect. Councillor Smith is shown in a photo on an "Intouch" Conservative news letter tearing up this non-existent and fake contract. Nothing like a bit of fake news, especially at election time. Perhaps the News Letter should read "Completely Out of Touch"

Did the Conservatives not realise that they have been in control for the past 8 years, and have had every opportunity to change things. In the same leaflet, the Conservatives take the credit for the new Marina Centre coming in on budget and on time, but they do not talk about the new Market Place being £1.5m over budget and way over time.

During those years, we have had Government Funding from the Future High Street Fund, Town Deal Fund and Levelling Up Fund, amounting to approximately £54m. These are all ring fenced amounts of money, which can only be used for the projects that they are intended for.

According to Councillor Smith, it would appear that none of this "massive" funding would have come to Great Yarmouth without the support of Brandon Lewis MP. Never mind the excellent work done by our officers to write the comprehensive Business Cases to support these bids, and never mind that Great Yarmouth has some of the most deprived wards in the UK.

Never mind, that life expediency is low compared to other areas, and 26% of our young people leave school without any formal qualifications. Never mind that residents are suffering. The highest inflation for 40 years, the highest taxation since the Second World War, the biggest drop in living standards since records began,

wages falling at their fastest rate for two decades, soaring food banks and poverty. A shocking indictment of this Tory Government.

Great Yarmouth deserves the money, but now apparently it's on the whim of Brandon Lewis, and not on its merit or need. All this funding failed to make up for the millions of pounds lost to Great Yarmouth from cuts to its Revenue Support Grant, over the last 12 years. Over these 12 years of Conservative austerity, the Government have ripped the guts out of Local Government. Local Government has endured central Government funding cuts of more than 50% since 2010. Between 2010 and 2020 councils lost 60p out of every pound they received from Central Government.

Council is now presented with a Budget which increases Great Yarmouth's share of Council Tax by £5.00 on a band D Property for 2023/24, raising approximately £150K. Once again asking residents to pay for the mistakes of this Tory administration.

The Budget also shows a deficit position for 2023/24 of £1,144m, 2024/25 of £2.513m and 2025/26 of £3.039 m. To help balance the budget, it proposed amongst other things a partial switch off of GYBC footway lighting, a review of communal bin rounds in residential areas and a review of the pest control service and contributions paid.

His Worship, The Mayor, informed Councillor Wainwright that he had thirty seconds remaining and asked him to sum up.

Councillor Myers reminded Council that it was the hard work of officers that had secured funding for officers, not the ruling party.

Councillor C Walker reported that when Labour had been in charge of the Council there had been no Foodbanks and very few charity shops in the Town.

Councillor Candon highlighted that Labour had opposed the Conservative budget but had not presented an alternative budget for consideration and that Labour had broken the country when they had last been in charge.

Councillor A Wright finished Councillor Wainwright's speech on his behalf as follows:-

This is a budget cobbled together by an administration who seem to know that they will not have control of it after the 4th May. It does nothing to help residents with the Cost of Living Crisis or their quality of life, it's all about cuts and additional income, with no real detail.

Labour will not be presenting an alternative Budget, as looking at the financial mess that the Tories have left us in, and the additional Income and savings proposals, Appendix D, page 133 details that a lot more detailed work is required.

The report states on page 104, at 9.2, provided an overview of the risks that are facing the Council in the short to medium term, whilst the report presented a balanced position for 2023/24, it was reliant on the use of reserves in the year which was not

sustainable. Early decisions on the base budget spend priorities for 2024/25 will need to be taken in the 2023/24 to inform an update to the medium-term financial plan. This work we will instigate on Day 1 of a Labour Administration. Residents of the Borough deserved better than this, and hopefully on May 4th, we would see a new Labour Administration who would put our residents first, and bring a sense of pride back into the Borough.

Councillor Smith-Clare, Cordiner-Achenbach, Williamson, Martin & Jeal spoke against the proposed Conservative budget which filled them all with sadness and anger and reported that they had not been able to prepare an alternative budget as they did not have access to officer time or financial reports to be able to formulate one.

Councillor Talbot asked why Councillors could not work together to produce a budget to benefit all residents of the borough.

Councillor Jeal asked for clarification as to where the £200k saving from the bin collection would come from.

The Leader began his summing up. Councillor B Walker asked a Point of Order as Councillor Jeal's question had not been responded to. Councillor Wells reported that although he was chair of the Environment Committee, he did not have all the details in front of him but the Council did have a very good track record of savings in respect of the bin collections and this was reviewed on an on-going basis.

The Leader reported that all the budget recommendations be moved and voted on en-bloc. Council agreed that proposals 1 to 10 be taken en-bloc.

Councillor B Walker raised a Point of Order that all the recommendations should be voted on individually. His Worship, the Mayor, reported that the question had been asked. Councillor B Walker informed His Worship, that he had had his hand up to indicate that he wished to speak but that he had not been noticed.

His Worship, The Mayor, asked the Monitoring Officer for clarification. The Monitoring Officer reported that the question had been asked and there had been no response. Councillor B Walker responded that this request had not been put to the vote.

The Chief Executive Officer informed Council that the Leader had referred to page 93 of the agenda report and that he would take all the recommendations en-bloc and that the recorded vote had been started as it had been made clear that the voting would be taken en-bloc and therefore, the vote stood.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
Secunder: Councillor Candon

That Council:-

- 1) The general fund revenue budget as detailed at Appendix A;
- 2) The Council Tax for 2023/24 for the Borough Council tax be £181.48 (for an average Band D);
- 3) That the demand on the Collection Fund for 2023/24 be:-
 - (a) £5,417,359 for the Borough Council purposes;
 - (b) £671,572 for Parish Precepts;

- 4) The new fees and charges as outlined at Appendix D1 and 3.5 be approved;
- 5) The reserves statement and movement on the reserves as detailed at Appendix E and within section 4 of the report;
- 6) The Policy framework for reserves as detailed at Appendix F;
- 7) The updated Capital Programme and financing for 2022/23 to 2023/24 as detailed at Appendix G;
- 8) An additional £328,314 be added to the capital programme for the asset purchase as outlined at 5.7;
- 9) The new capital bid proposals at Appendix H; and
- 10) The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2023/24 as included at Appendix I.

CARRIED.

A recorded vote was undertaken.

For the proposal:-

Councillors Candon, Plant, Smith, Stenhouse, Annison, P Carpenter, G Carpenter, Bird, Lawn, Freeman, Hanton, P Hammond, D Hammond, Flaxman-Taylor, Wells, Cameron, Bensly, Galer, Grant & Mogford.

Against the proposal:-

Councillors Smith- Clare, Martin, Talbot, Borg, Williamson, Thompson, Myers, Jeal, Robinson-Payne, A wright, Fairhead, B Wright, Cordiner-Achenbach, Waters-Bunn, C Walker, B Walker & Wainwright.

16 COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2023/24

His Worship, The Mayor, reminded Members that in line with Council Procedure Rule 31.15.6, a recorded vote was required to be taken as part of the budget setting.

Councillor Thompson declared a personal interest in the item as he was Chair of Filby Parish Council which received a parish precept from the Council. Councillor Wainwright declared a personal interest as he was a parish councillor on Bradwell Parish Council which received a parish precept from the Council.

The Finance Director presented for resolution the statutory calculations for the Council Tax Setting for 2023/24 in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The report also includes the Chief Finance Officer's report on the

robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves. This report should be considered alongside the budget report as presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 7 February 2023 for which the recommendations are included on this agenda.

The recommendations were set out on page 150 of the agenda pack as follows:-

It is recommended that having approved the Budget for 2023/24 as detailed in the earlier agenda item (Policy and Resources Committee Budget Report as outlined at Appendix A) and considered the Chief Financial Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of reserves, Members resolve to:-

- 1) Undertake the Council Tax and statutory calculations as set out in section 4 of the report and set the Council Tax for 2023/24; and
- 2) Approve the demand on the Collection Fund for 2023/24 be:-
 - (a) £5,417,359 for the Borough Council purposes;
 - (b) £671,572 for Parishes.

The Leader thanked the Finance Director and her team for all their hard work in producing a sound budget. This was seconded by Councillor Wainwright.

Councillor Wainwright highlighted the 329% increase in the parish precept for Somerton Parish Council which was an eye-watering increase. Councillor Wainwright highlighted that parish councils never reduced their parish precept charges.

Councillor P Hammond reported that Caister Parish Council had reduced their parish precept by 2.5%.

Councillor Myers reported that the parish councils maintained the essential services which the Borough Council did not provide.

Councillor Bensly thanked officers for the excellent work which they had provided to assist Hemsby Parish Council which had resulted in only a 2.5% increase in the Hemsby parish precept which had originally been published as an incorrect increase of 10.9%. His Worship, The Mayor, confirmed that the incorrect increase for Hemsby Parish Council had been incorrectly published but had now been amended.

Proposer: Councillor Smith
Secunder: Councillor Candon.

That Council:-

- 1) Undertake the Council Tax and statutory calculations as set out in section 4 of the report and set the Council Tax for 2023/24; and
- 2) Approve the demand on the Collection Fund for 2023/24 be:-
 - (a) £5,417,359 for the Borough Council purposes; and
 - (b) £671,572 for Parishes.

CARRIED.

A recorded vote was undertaken.

For the proposal:-

Councillors Candon, Plant, Smith, Stenhouse, Annison, P Carpenter, G Carpenter, Bird, Lawn, Freeman, Hanton, P Hammond, D Hammond, Flaxman-Taylor, Wells, Cameron, Bensly, Galer, Grant & Mogford.

Abstained :-

Councillors Smith- Clare, Martin, Talbot, Borg, Williamson, Thompson, Myers, Jeal, Robinson-Payne, A wright, Fairhead, B Wright, Cordiner-Achenbach, Waters-Bunn, C Walker, B Walker & Wainwright.

17 MOTION ON NOTICE

Council is asked to consider the following Motion on Notice from Councillors Smith-Clare; Cordiner-Achenbach, Jeal, Robinson- Payne, Waters-Bunn and T Wright:-

Streetlights across our Borough provide residents safe and visible access to roads, pavements and alleyways. It is therefore essential that all streetlights remain in full working order.

At present too many streetlights remain broken and un-repaired. The Council therefore resolves to:-

- (i) Ensure that all streetlights are regularly checked and maintained; and
- (ii) Work to repair any streetlight within 48 hours of a fault being reported.

Councillor Smith-Clare requested that his motion be withdrawn.

18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

His Worship, The Mayor, reported that there was no other business being of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration at the meeting.

The meeting ended at: TBC