



Council

Minutes

Tuesday, 23 February 2021 at 18:30

PRESENT:-

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

Ms S Oxtoby (Chief Executive Officer), Ms K Sly (Finance Director), Ms C Whatling (Monitoring Officer), Mrs P Boyce (Strategic Director), Ms K Watts (Strategic Director), Mrs N Turner (Housing Director), Mrs S Tate (Head of OD), Mrs M Burdett (Head of Inward Investment), Mrs S Wintle (Corporate Services Manager) & Mrs C Webb (Executive Services Officer).

Mr M Severn (IT Support).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Myers.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared at the meeting.

3 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

Hid Worship, The Mayor, reported that there were no items of urgent business for consideration.

4 MAYORS ANNOUCEMENTS

His Worship, The Mayor, Councillor Jeal, asked Members to observe a minutes silence following the recent passing of Captain Sir Tom Moore.

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 were confirmed by assent.

CARRIED.

6 SERVICE COMMITTEE DECISION LIST FOR THE PERIOD 5 NOVEMBER 2020 TO 9 FEBRUARY 2021

That the Service Committee Decision List for the period 5 November 2020 to 9 February 2021 be approved by assent.

CARRIED.

7 OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENT - WATER RESOURCES EAST (WRE) LIMITED

Council received and considered the report from the Strategic Planning Manager.

Councillor P Carpenter reported that at their meeting on 27 January 2021, the Environment Committee had recommended to Full Council that the Council became a member of the WRE Strategic Advisory Group.

The Leader of the Council reported that it was recommended that the appointed Council member should be the same as those appointed to the Coastal Partnership East body, and he therefore proposed that Councillors P Carpenter & Bensly be appointed.

Councillor Fairhead suggested that Councillor P Carpenter should be encouraged to join the Broads Internal Drainage Board. Councillor Fairhead had recently raised the issue at a recent meeting of the Environment Committee, of the splintered work undertaken by different agencies in Norfolk to tackle the threat of flooding not only from the sea but from the inland waterways as well.

Councillor Plant informed the Committee of a new initiative which was being led by Lord Dannett to join up all the local authorities and agencies in Norfolk who were responsible for keeping Norfolk safe from flooding.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith
SECONDER: Councillor Plant.

That Council endorse the report as set out and appoints Councillor P Carpenter, with Councillor Bensly as her deputy, as they currently sit on the Coastal Partnership East body to the membership of the Water Resources East (WRE) Strategic Advisory Group.

CARRIED.

8 OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENT - BROADLAND FUTURE INITIATIVE

The Leader of the Council proposed that Councillor P Carpenter be elected and Councillor Bensly be elected as her deputy, to be the Council's representatives on the Broadland Future Initiative.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith
SECONDER: Councillor Plant

CARREID.

9 CHANGE IN MEMBER APPOINTMENT

Council received and considered the report from the Monitoring Officer.

The Leader of the Council reported that Council, at its meeting on 20 February 2020 approved a Governance review which proposed appointments to the Council's joint venture company, Great Yarmouth Borough Services (GYBS) Liaison and Company Boards. These changes proposed that different Members should be appointed to sit on the Company Boards and the Liaison Boards respectively.

The Governance review proposed that the Vice Chair of the Environment Committee be appointed to the Company Board, with the Chair being appointed to the Liaison Board, to separate the functions and provide a more effective method for oversight and scrutiny.

PROPSER: Councillor Smith
SECONDER: Councillor Plant

That Council appoint the Vice Chair of Environment Committee to the GYBS Liaison Board and the Chair of Environment Committee to the GYBS Company Board.

CARRIED.

10 REVISION TO LIST OF STATUTORY PROPER OFFICERS

Council received and considered the report from the Monitoring Officer.

The Leader of the Council reported that it was recommended that the list of Statutory Officers listed within Article 24.8 of the Council's Constitution be revised to the following posts; Chief Executive Officer, Monitoring Officer and Finance Director.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith
SECONDER: Councillor Plant

That Council note and approve the revision to the list of Statutory Proper Officers and give delegated authority to the Council's Monitoring Officer to make any consequential revisions to the Constitution.

CARRIED.

11 CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

Council received and considered the report from the Monitoring Officer.

The Leader of the Council reported that the Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) appeared as Article 34 of the Council's Constitution. There were several associated Articles: a Glossary of Terms at Article 35, a table of Procurement Authority Thresholds at Article 36 and an Exemption/ Waiver Form at Article 37. Although more complete revision of the CSO's was originally contemplated, on 15 December 2020 the Government published a green paper: 'Transforming Public Procurement' with the aim of speeding up and simplifying procurement processes, which would lead to revisions to the procurement legislation post-Brexit. It had therefore been decided that the full revision of the CSOs would be deferred pending action from Central Government.

However, the Leader of the Council reported that the Procurement Authority Thresholds currently set by the Constitution were restrictive to the extent that they impeded transactions supporting basic operational functions, and the waiver/exemption procedure does not support current business needs. This report proposed updates to those sections to make the Council more agile in its procurement processes pending full review of the CSOs.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that the threshold for Contract standing Orders had been raised from £20,000 to £25,000 as highlighted on page 48 of the report.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith
SECONDER: Councillor Plant

That Council approve and adopt updated Articles 34.10 and 36 as they appear within the body of this report; and delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make any further consequential amendments to the Constitution, including updates to the Glossary of Terms at Art 35.

CARRIED.

12 ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL POLICY

Council received and considered the report from the Monitoring Officer.

The Leader of the Council reported that the policy provided the framework for decision making in relation to acquisitions and disposals of property with the exception of Right to Buy related transactions.

Councillor Plant reported that he welcomed the changes to the policy which

gave officers a clearer and swifter route moving forwards and would allow them to act in a more entrepreneurial manner.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith
SECONDER: Councillor Plant

That Council adopt the updated Acquisitions and disposals Policy at Appendix 1 to this report and give the Monitoring Officer delegated authority to make any consequential revisions to the Constitution.

CARRIED.

13 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

Council received and considered the report from the Head of Organisational Development.

The Leader of the Council reported that section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 required the Council to produce an annual pay policy statement for the start of each financial year. it was a legal requirement that Council formally sign off this statement and the responsibility could not be devolved to any other person or committee.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith
SECONDER: Councillor Plant

That Council adopt the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 and to publish it on the Council's website.

CARRIED.

14 2019/20 PERIOD 10 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Council received and considered the report from the HRA Service Accountant.

His Worship, The Mayor, Councillor Jeal reminded the Committee that an updated report had been circulated to Members since the publication of the agenda and respectfully reminded Members to refer to that report.

Councillor Grant reported that the report set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget 2021/22 to 2025/26, HRA Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2025/26, HRA Rent and Service Charge proposal 2021/22 and the revised HRA revenue and capital forecasts for 2020/21.

PROPOSER: Councillor Grant

SECONDER: Councillor Flaxman-Taylor

That Council agree:-

(a) the increase in rents of CPI + 1% as set out in the new Rents for Social Housing policy for 2021/22. For 2021/22, this equates to 1.5%;

(b) the Revenue budget for 2021/22, together with the forecast projections for the period up until 2025/26, including the extended borrowing to support the provision of additional HRA homes;

(c) the Capital budget for the period 2021/22 to 2025/26;

(d) the HRA Services Charges for 2021/22; and

(e) the revised HRA Capital and Revenue forecasts for 2020/21.

CARRIED.

16 2021/22 GENERAL FUND BUDGET REPORT

Council received and considered the report from the Finance Director.

His Worship, The Mayor, Councillor Jeal reported that paragraph 31.15.6 of the Council's Constitution stated that a recorded vote shall be taken on the setting of the budget.

The Leader of the Council presented for approval the general fund budget for 2021/22. The report included the detail of the budget for 2021/22 together with the capital programme and forecast reserves statement for the same period. The budget reflected the one-year local government finance settlement for 2021/21 which was announced in December 2020 and confirmed earlier this month and included the funding that was announced in the settlement.

The Leader of the Council reported that the settlement included announcements of one-off funding for next year including a further £746,000 to support the ongoing impact of Covid19. The report only covered the 2021/22 budget and made recommendations for the setting of the council tax for the Boroughs element which was in line with the national assumptions of council tax increases which amounted to a £5 increase for a band D property per annum, and £3.33 for a band A. When taken into account with the level of parish precepts for the Borough, Great Yarmouth would continue to be the lowest for Norfolk and one of the lowest nationally.

The Leader of the Council reported that the Council continued to hold a number of earmarked reserves which together with the general reserve provided some financial stability. Whilst the transfers from reserves should

only be seen as a one-off source of funding, the use of reserves in this way could provide one-off upfront funding for projects and schemes that could deliver future savings and efficiencies.

The Leader of the Council reported that the budget, as presented for recommendation, had been set within the context of current pandemic which had had and would continue to have an impact on the Council's financial position for the short to medium term. Despite these significant challenges, the budget continued 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.

The Leader of the Council reported that maintaining the essential day-to-day services, the Council had played a critical role in the multi-agency response to coronavirus and I am hugely proud of the way the Council and its staff have worked flexibly with our partners over the past year and taken on extra duties in order to keep our residents safe, especially the most vulnerable, and to support our local businesses during a challenging time.

Our priority work to assist the community had included:

- Running a community helpline
- Resident welfare checks
- Helping food banks, including delivery of food parcels
- Medicine delivery
- Administering Government hardship funding
- Delivering and supporting communications campaigns to aid public safety & well-being and to signpost people to help if needed
- Assisting homeless people into suitable temporary accommodation.

Our coronavirus marshals continue their good work in the community, seven days a week, including helping with the vaccination programme roll-out, the trial of symptom-free testing, contact tracing, as well as providing high-visibility advice and reassurance.

To support businesses and the local economy through the pandemic and into recovery:

- The Council had already handed out more than £42m in Government support grants to businesses, including targeted extra support for our important tourism and hospitality sectors, alongside running a dedicated business helpline.
- Officers have continued to provide the latest Covid guidance and support for businesses, including signposting to funding opportunities, and advice on reopening and operating safely.
- During the summer, the Council ran a promotional campaign with the 2 local Business Improvement Districts to support footfall in our key shopping and tourism locations, while encouraging responsible visitor behaviours.
- In December, we switched on our new lighting to decorate those key areas and encouraged people to come and see the new magical illuminations for themselves, to back their local traders, shop locally and shop safe.
- Looking ahead, the Council had secured a 50-metre tall observation wheel for Great Yarmouth seafront, in order to provide an additional Covid-

safe draw, as part of supporting the important visitor economy this summer. The Leader of the Council reported that all of this work had all been delivered at the same time as continuing to pave the way for significant capital investment that would help to facilitate and support continued economic growth within the Borough which was key to our longer-term recovery and regeneration of the area. With our ambitious plans focused around Great Yarmouth town centre and seafront, the Council had continued to invest in some of the Borough's significant assets to support and regenerate the area. These and other key projects have been possible due to the Council making investments in its assets and also successfully drawing down external funding, either from national funding, or locally from the Local Enterprise partnership and from business rates.

The Leader of the Council reported that in the Town Centre:

- We have secured an offer of £13.7m investment from the Government's Future High Streets Fund towards our vision to transform and revive Great Yarmouth town centre as a vibrant economic, cultural and community hub. As part of this, work will soon start on the first phase of our new £4.6m Market Place redevelopment.
- Work has now begun on the new £120m Third River Crossing, led by Norfolk County Council, which supports our ambitions for investment and regeneration in the town centre and wider borough, connecting the port area and Enterprise Zone directly to the A47 while cutting congestion in and around the town centre.

The Leader of the Council reported that on the seafront:

- Following the successful Waterways restoration, the Council broke ground in January on the new Marina Centre, scheduled for opening in summer 2022. The Council's £26m investment would be a major boost to the economy and community for decades to come, acting as a catalyst for potential further investment and seafront regeneration, whilst supporting health and well-being for the whole borough.
- We were about to submit the next stage of our bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for our project to save, restore and reimagine the Winter Gardens at the heart of Great Yarmouth's regeneration and daily life, as a year-round visitor attraction that makes the most of the unique building.
- We have also applied for nearly £25m of Government investment, known as a 'Town Deal', to help deliver an exciting £60m vision supporting economic regeneration, recovery, jobs and growth across the borough's main urban areas.

Key projects for which Town Deal funding was sought included:

- A new Learning Centre and University campus, co-located with a new town centre library, offering more ways and opportunities for people of all ages to take their learning and job prospects to the next stage.
- A new operations and maintenance centre of excellence with business incubator units at South Denes, unlocking and enabling further inward investment by the energy sector.
- Restoration and sustainable repurposing of a number of historic buildings, including restoration of the Winter Gardens as a year-round seafront attraction and restoration and adaptation of the Ice House as a National Centre for Arts and Circus.
- Enhancements to the rail station gateway and North Quay to improve

the accessibility and attractiveness of this key point of entry for commuters and visitors, as well as improved pedestrian and cycle links between the town centre and seafront, along with enhanced digital connectivity.

The Leader of the Council reported that with a focus on attracting further investment, driving economic regeneration and recovery, the ambition was to take Our Place to the next stage: to re-invent public places, to tap into and grow a thriving arts and cultural scene, to support new homes, nurture new jobs, businesses and new opportunities to learn and grow, to make our people, businesses and visitors proud.

The Leader of the Council reported that the budget, as presented this evening, reflected the continued investment and proactive work that the Council was undertaking to support the economy and public priorities. This would be achievable due to the Council's priority to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible and identify opportunities to generate additional income and retain growth within the Borough. Whilst there were still financial challenges ahead, and at this time we do not know what the outcome of the funding reviews would be from 2022/23 onwards, the key themes of our business strategy including:

- regeneration,
 - delivering and facilitating growth be it new homes or business, and
 - ensuring that we operate in an effective and efficient manner
- would all remain a priority in the medium term.

The Leader of the Council reported that to ensure that we were able to plan for 2022/23 in a timely manner, work on the future financial planning for the Authority would commence early in the new financial year and would be updated once outcomes of the spending review and fair funding review were announced. In the meantime, I am confident that the budget as presented was achievable and supported the delivery of the Corporate Plan and I therefore recommend the budget for 2021/22 as detailed on the agenda on page 143.

Councillor Wainwright reported the concerns of his group regarding the proposed budget and highlighted the level of need of many residents resulting from Covid19 and subsequent loss of employment which they felt had not been adequately addressed in the proposed budget.

Members then voiced their support or concerns regarding the proposed budget.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith

SECONDER: Councillor Plant

That Council approve:-

(a) the General Fund Revenue Budget as detailed at Appendix A;

(b) the Council Tax for 2021/22 for the Borough Council tax be £171.48 (for an average Band D); that the demand on the Collection Fund for 2021/22 be (a)

£4,865,925 for the Borough Council purposes; and (b) £519,506 for Parish Precepts;

(c) the statement of and movement on the reserves as detailed at Appendix D and within section 6 of the report;

(d) the Policy Framework for Reserves as detailed at Appendix E;

(e) the updated Capital Programme and Financing for 2020/21 to 2021/22 as detailed at Appendix F; and

(f) the new Capital Bid proposals at Appendix G and Minimum Revenue Provision Statement at Appendix H.

CARRIED.

15 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2021-22

Council received and considered the report from the Finance Director.

The Leader of the Council recommended to Council the 2021/22 Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith

SECONDER: Councillor Plant

That Council approve:-

(a) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22;

(b) the Annual Investment Strategy (section 4 of the report); and

(c) the Operational Boundary and Authorised Limits (Appendix C).

CARRIED.

17 COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2021/22

Council received and considered the report from the Finance Director.

The Leader of the Council reported that the report presented for approval the statutory calculations for the Council Tax Setting for 2021/22 in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set the Council Tax for 2021/22 and should be considered alongside the budget report to the Policy & Resources Committee dated 9 February 2021. The report also included the

Chief Finance Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith
SECONDER: Councillor Plant

That Council approve:-

(a) to undertake the Council tax and statutory calculations as set out in section 4 of the report and set the Council Tax for 2021/22; and

(b) approve the demand on the Collection Fund for 2020/21 be (a) £4,868,925 for the Borough Council purposes; and (b) £519,506 for Parish Precepts.

CARRIED.

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.

19 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED:-

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act.

CARRIED.

20 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

That the Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 be approved by assent.

CARRIED.

21 CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE COMMITTEE DECISION LIST FOR THE PERIOD 5 NOVEMBER 2020 TO 9 FEBRUARY 2021

That the Confidential Service Committee Decision List for the period 5 November 2020 to 9 February 2021 be approved by assent.

CARRIED.

The meeting ended at: 20:30