

## **MINUTES**

### **CABINET**

**11 FEBRUARY 2020**

**Councillors:** Williams (Leader)  
Griffiths (Deputy  
Leader)  
Elliot  
G Sutton  
Anderson  
Banks

<b>Officers:</b>	Mark Brookes	Assistant Director - Corporate and Contracted Services
	James Deane	Corporate Director - Finance and Operations
	Mark Gaynor	Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration
	Nigel Howcutt	Assistant Director - Finance and Resources
	Sally Marshall	Chief Executive
	Katie Mogan	Corporate and Democratic Support Lead Officer
	Matt Rawdon	Group Manager - People
	Fiona Williamson	Assistant Director - Housing

#### **Also Attendance:**

Councillor John Birnie  
Councillor Terry Douris  
Councillor Adrian England  
Councillor Garrick Stevens  
Councillor Ron Tindall

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

#### **CA/12/20 MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2020 were agreed by Members present and signed by the Chair.

#### **CA/13/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **CA/14/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**CA/15/20     PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**CA/16/20     REFERRALS TO CABINET**

There were no referrals to Cabinet.

**CA/17/20     CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The forward plan was noted.

**CA/18/20     BUDGET 2020/21**

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

**General Fund Revenue Estimate**

- a)     set a Dacorum Borough Council General Fund Council Tax requirement of £12.086m, and a provisional amount of £13.058m for the combined Borough Council and Parish Councils' requirement for 2020/21;
- b)     approve a Band D Council Tax increase of £5 (2.48%) for Dacorum Borough Council;
- c)     approve the base estimates for 2020/21, as shown in Appendix A1, and the indicative budget forecasts for 2020/21 – 2023/24, as shown in Appendix A2;
- d)     approve the forecast balances of Revenue Reserves as shown in Appendix J, and approve section 10 of this report as the updated Reserves Strategy;
- e)     approve increases in Fees and Charges for 2020/21 as set out in Appendices C3, D3, and E3;
- f)     approve and adopt the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21, attached at Appendix K;
- g)     approve and adopt the Capital Strategy for 2020/21, attached at Appendix L;
- h)     note that this budget paper, if approved by Council, will form part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**Capital Programme**

- i) **approve the Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix I and Appendix M respectively;**
- j) **approve the financing proposals in Appendix I subject to an annual review of the financing options by the Corporate Director (Finance & Operations), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, during the preparation of the Statement of Accounts.**

#### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

- k) **set dwelling rents according to the new MHCLG Rent Standard, which provides for a rent increase of CPI+1% (2.7% in total). The average dwelling rents is proposed to increase to £103.12 in 202/21, from its current level of £100.47(based on 52 weeks);**
- l) **approve the HRA estimate for 2020/21 as shown in Appendix F.**

#### **Employer Terms & Conditions**

- m) **note that the hourly rate of all Council employees continues to exceed the rate proposed by the rates of the Living Wage Foundation, for 2019/20 (to be reviewed annually thereafter).**

#### **Statement by Chief Finance Officer**

- n) **approve the statement by the Chief Finance Officer regarding the robustness of the budget estimates and level of reserves as set out in Appendix M.**

#### **Corporate objectives**

All of the Council's corporate objectives are reflected in the Budget proposals.

#### **Monitoring Officer:**

Under the Council's Constitution it is the responsibility of Cabinet to draw up firm proposals for the Budget, having regard to the responses to the consultation, and to present those proposals to full Council for approval. Once full Council has approved the Budget it is the responsibility of Cabinet to implement it.

#### **S.151 Officer:**

Comments contained in body of report. Chief Finance Officer Statement contained in Appendix N of the report.

#### **Advice**

Councillor Elliot introduced the report and said he was pleased to present the council's budget proposals for next year. All elements of the budget have been through a rigorous scrutiny process and the content of the report should be familiar to members. The headlines that are worth noting:

- achieved a General Fund savings target of £780k whilst maintaining front line services.
- The proposed capital programme will provide £320m of investment over the next five years.
- The HRA new build programme will provide £115m of development for affordable housing.

This budget proposal represents a culmination of several months of hard work from officers across the council.

Councillor Birnie said the report was the clearest and most comprehensive report he had read for a long time so congratulated officers. He referred to page 23 and the sum of money that had been put aside funded by negative RSG to fund future investment and questioned whether this would be enough in light of the complaints received from residents about the website and the planning system. He said suggestions had been made at SPAE OSC and the Task and Finish Group about the recruitment of a marketing officer to look at viability of the general website and complaints had been made about the hardware that had been bought for planning.

Councillor Williams said this was a reserve the council didn't have before.

J Deane said there was a technology reserve in the past. The RSG is for one-off benefits like further investment of the IT systems. This works hand in hand with the management of change reserve. There is a clear idea of investment and could create a reserve to cover all eventualities but this would be at the expense of another service.

Councillor Birnie said the matter needs immediate consideration as it is so important to residents.

S Marshall said she would like to speak to Councillor Birnie outside the meeting as this is the first time she has been made aware of website issues. There was a website refresh a year ago. The council have implemented a new planning system and there has been hiccups as we are in the implementation period. It would be premature to look at a complete review now.

Councillor Williams said he raised this issue with the service and has been assured the teething problems have been addressed. There have been some recruitment problems in the website team but now have three team members in place.

Councillor Griffiths said most comments on the budget had been made at the different Overview and Scrutiny Committees or will be raised at Full Council.

Recommendations agreed

## **CA/19/20     BUDGET MONITORING Q3**

### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

1. **Consider the budget monitoring position for each of the above accounts;**

- 2. Recommend to Council approval of the revised capital programme to move £4.956m slippage identified at Quarter 3 into financial year 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix C;**
- 3. Recommend to Council approval of supplementary revenue budgets funded from reserves:**
  - Supplementary budget of £40k in the Neighbourhood Delivery service, funded from the Management of Change reserve, to fund interim resource to support delivery of new service initiatives**
  - Additional budget of £30k in the Elections service, funded from drawdown of £30k from the Election reserve**
  - Supplementary budget in the Planning service of £103k to fund the revenue costs of implementation of new Planning software, funded from the Planning & Regeneration reserve**
  - Supplementary budget of £170k to fund costs relating to the Hand Arm Vibration legal case, to be funded from the Litigation Reserve.**
  - Supplementary budget of £28k in Waste Services to fund consultancy work to support service improvements, funded from the Management of Change reserve**
  - Supplementary budget of £80k in the garages employees budget to fund interim resource, funded from the Invest to Save reserve**
  - Supplementary budget of £60k to fund one-off expenditure for a garage stock condition survey, funded from the Invest to Save reserve**
- 4. Recommend to Council approval of supplementary capital budgets required to deliver several service changes as set out below:**
  - A capital budget of £66k to fund replacement boilers at Berkhamsted Leisure Centre**
  - A capital budget of £55k to fund new poolside flooring at Berkhamsted Leisure Centre**
  - Additional capital budget of £598k in the Affordable Housing Development fund, funded from Housing one-for-one ('1-4-1') receipts**

5. **Recommend to Council additional reserves drawdowns as set out below:**
  - **Drawdown of £1,750k from the Vehicle Replacement Reserve to fund capital investment in the Council's waste fleet**
  - **Drawdown of £8k from Tring Swimming Pool reserve to fund capital works at the site.**
6. **Approve a capital virement of £900k to reallocate budget for the acquisition of Eastwick Row from the HRA New Build General budget to the Eastwick Row budget**
7. **Agree the annual update of the Council's flexible use of capital receipts strategy at Appendix D of this report.**

**Deputy Section 151 Officer:**

Comments included within the body of this report.

**Monitoring Officer:**

No comments to add to the report.

**Advice**

Councillor Elliot introduced the report. There is a pressure of £148k forecast in the general fund but this is projected to balance out in Q4.

Recommendations agreed.

**CA/20/20     FLEXIBLE TENANCY REVIEW**

1. That the revert back to using Secure Periodic Tenancies for all Dacorum Borough Council tenants and cease the use of flexible tenancies from 1 April 2020 be approved.
2. The introduction of mandatory five year visits to all general needs Dacorum Borough Council tenants be approved.
3. That a review of the secure tenancy agreement and delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing to approve new documents once updated be approved.

**Corporate objectives**

Affordable Housing  
Building Community Capacity  
Modern and Efficient Council

## **Deputy Monitoring Officer**

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a power for local authorities to offer flexible tenancies however it is not a mandatory requirement.

## **Deputy S.151 Officer**

The costs of implementing the recommendations are expected to be cost neutral with the reduced costs of no longer managing flexible tenancies met by an increased cost of enhanced mandatory visits.

## **Advice**

Councillor Griffiths introduced the report. Flexible tenancies were introduced by the government and were compulsory. At the time, it was deemed a sensible approach with limited housing stock. The government has changed the rules and it is now up to individual councils whether they revert back to secure tenancies. After reviewing tenancies, it was found the flexible ones were not doing what it hoped it would do. This report recommends that the council revert back to secure tenancies for April 2020. There is now also a mandatory requirement for officers to visit every home owned by the council so issues can be kept on top of. Some council homes have never been visited because there hasn't been a reason too.

Councillor Elliot said he fully supported the proposal. Visiting all tenants will allow the council to identify any vulnerable tenants or that need any assistance.

Councillor Anderson said he fully supported the proposal but would like to know how many introductory tenancies have failed.

F Williamson said introductory tenancies last for a year. The review looked at 337 flexible tenancies in total. 299 have been granted another tenancy, in the majority of cases the tenants circumstances had not changed dramatically. 18 were identified as living in a home that was too small so they have been allocated additional points based on the allocations policy. 11 were identified as living in a home that was too large so the team have worked with them to find them a smaller home through transfer or mutual exchange. Two had savings over £16k or have a joint income over £60k resulting in one tenant putting in a request under the Right to Buy and the other tenant appealed the decision due to medical conditions and equalities issues so have now been allowed to stay. Seven were joint tenancies where one tenant has now left the home and legal work has been undertaken to create a sole tenancy.

Councillor Tindall asked if all officers visiting the homes of tenants are given domestic abuse training to spot the signs.

F Williamson said all front line staff were trained in safeguarding which includes domestic and financial abuse. In a joint tenancy, both signatures are required to convert to a sole tenancy.

Councillor Birnie asked about those families who lived in a house that was too large and if they had been given new accommodation or were still waiting and what the status of their tenancies is.

F Williamson said they were granted a new tenancy. They have been given points so they can apply for a new home under the choice based lettings system.

Recommendations agreed.

## **CA/21/20     SENIOR OFFICER PAY POLICY**

### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

- 1. The adoption of the Pay Policy for 2020/21 as set out in appendix 1 to the Cabinet report.**
2. That any amendments to the Pay Policy throughout the financial year 2020/2021 which may be required as a result of legislative changes can be approved by the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Council's Monitoring Officer.

### **Corporate objectives**

The Council's policies in respect of pay and terms and conditions support all five of the Council's strategic objectives as part of ensuring that services to the community can be delivered to the required standards and with due regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness

### **Deputy Monitoring Officer:**

The Senior Pay Policy is required by virtue of section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 and this Pay Policy complies with the statutory requirement and associated guidance.

### **Deputy S.151 Officer:**

No further comments to add to the report.

### **Advice**

Councillor Williams introduced the report. This was an annual report.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 200 and the footnote to paragraph 5.7 that mentions lease car allowances are consolidated within basic pay and raised concerns about this.

S Marshall said this was looked at 2 or 3 years ago and consulted with the trade union. It was a collective agreement after negotiations. It was a compromise to



protect both parties' interests. The key reason for change was that it was a historic arrangement where car allowances were granted at a time about 15 years ago where recruitment and retention of staff was difficult and it became untenable.

Recommendations agreed.

#### **CA/22/20     EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

To consider passing a resolution in the following terms:

**That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Part 1 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during the items in Part 2 of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that, if members of the public were present during those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council and third party companies/organisations.**

**Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, paragraph 3.**

#### **CA/23/20     LAND DISPOSAL**

Full details in part 2 minutes.

The Meeting ended at 8.05 pm