

CABINET

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on Tuesday, 7th January 2014 at Worksop Town Hall

Present: Councillor S A Greaves (Chair),
Councillors A Chambers, J Evans, J A Leigh, S May, J White and
G J Wynne.

Assistants: Councillors I J Campbell, G Jones, C Palmer and J Potts.

Advisory Members: Councillors H M Brand and D Challinor.

Liaison Members: Councillors B Barker, H Burton, K H Isard and C Wanless.

Officers: C Crossland, M Hill, M Ladyman, E Simmonds, N Taylor and
R Theakstone.

Also present: Councillors B A Bowles, J B Rickells and J Sanger.

(The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, read out the Fire Evacuation Procedure, and also enquired as to whether any member of the public wished to film the meeting or any part thereof.)

(Meeting opened at 6.30pm.)

111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Gregory.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

There were no Declarations of Interest by Members.

(b) Officers

There were no Declarations of Interest by officers.

SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

113. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – CUSTOMER AND SUPPORT SERVICES - COUNCILLOR S MAY

(a) The Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2014 (Key Decision No. 388)

Members were presented with a report which set out the Council's scheme for Council Tax Reduction (CTR). The scheme must be in place (following Council approval) by 31st January

2014, to come into effect from 1st April 2014. This will replace the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2013.

A consultation was held in October 2013 on the Council's website as well as with partners, local agencies, volunteers and precepting authorities. A scheme the same as 2013/14 with a reduction in the maximum CTR available being set as low as 88% was consulted on. The general comments were that this was too low, given the impact of other welfare reforms and that DWP benefits were only rising by 1% in April 2014, therefore option 2 of 90% is recommended. Bassetlaw has taken measures to reduce the impact of further changes to the scheme, and is aiming to protect residents from additional burdens at this time of financial difficulty.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The consultation responses have been taken into account, in producing options for Members to consider, particularly the concern that the proposal of an 88% maximum Council Tax Support (12% charge), would be too difficult for households managing on out of work benefits, given that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits are only rising by 1% from April 2014. Therefore reducing the maximum CTR could increase the risk of non-collection in some cases.

Option 1 would be a decision not to change the scheme at all and keep the maximum CTR at **92%**. However, this option, together with a possible 1.5% Council Tax rise, would increase expenditure on CTR from £8.29m to £8.43m and the preceptors would meet the additional funding from the Collection fund and ultimately the General Fund to fund the deficit. A typical (Worksop) Band A (£1,057.03 pa) household on maximum CTR currently pays £84.56 per year. If the Council Tax was to increase by 1.5% overall, their charge with maximum CTR would be £85.83 in 2014/15 (offered over 12 months would be £7.15 per month).

Option 2 would be a decision to change the scheme to **90% maximum** CTR offsetting most of the gap left by the loss of the transitional grant received for year 1 only. This is a 2% increase in the contribution to a household's Council Tax. On a typical (Worksop) band A property this would increase the amount the household currently pays from £84.56 a year to £105.70 per year. If the Council Tax was to increase by 1.5% overall, a typical band A charge with maximum CTR would be £107.29 in 2014/15 (offered over 12 months would be £8.94 per month).

Option 3 - Members could decide to limit the maximum CTR further to **88%** (which is the amount we have consulted on prior to knowing the grants and other funds available). This is a 4% increase in the contribution to a household's Council Tax. On a typical (Worksop) band A property this would increase the amount the household currently pays from £84.56 a year to £126.84 per year. If the Council Tax was to increase by 1.5% overall, a typical band A charge with maximum CTR would be £128.75 in 2014/15 (offered over 12 months would be £10.73 per month).

RESOLVED that the Council Tax Reduction (Bassetlaw District Council) Scheme 2014/15, to apply from 1st April 2014, be recommended to the Council Meeting on 30th January 2014 for approval and adoption, and the following be agreed:

1. The definition in the scheme (at Class G) of vulnerable working age households entitled to full discount protection (no change from 2013/14 scheme).

2. That war widows, widowers and the war disabled continue to have their income treated in accordance with the existing local scheme (e.g. the full war pension weekly amount ignored).
3. That CTR for pensioner households will be calculated as prescribed by the Default Scheme (no change).
4. That option 2 i.e., 90% of a claimant's weekly council tax liability be presented as the maximum liability (after other discounts) for the Council Tax reduction calculation, for working age households (excluding those in the vulnerable category) from 1st April 2014.
5. That delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive to determine a hardship/write off fund for households who meet extreme financial difficulty during 2014/15.
6. That Members receive an annual report, by January each year with a review of matters concerning the monitoring, calculation and funding of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Bassetlaw.

114. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – FINANCE – COUNCILLOR J EVANS

(a) Department for Work and Pensions Co-location (Key Decision No. 418)

Members were presented with a report which sought delegated authority for officers to finalise the Heads of Terms with the Department for Work and Pensions to move from their current location in Worksop to Queen's Buildings.

Members commented that the move is a great opportunity and noted the benefits and partnership working opportunities that the move will bring.

In response to concerns raised in relation to security, Members were advised that the Department for Work and Pensions would be bringing their own security officers.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

This is not a mandatory decision. Members can decide to forgo the rental income and the transformation programme that will follow from any move to host the DWP with Bassetlaw. However, the contents of this report provides the Council with a unique opportunity to transform its service offer to local people, make more efficient use of the fixed cost of the accommodation it owns, and be at the cutting edge of public service provision at this time. Whilst the response to the national austerity package to reduce the deficit has been ongoing, it does force all parts of the public sector to look at service redesign; how things can be provided differently and how services can be improved despite lower levels of resource.

Setting aside the service issues, 2015/16 provides the Council with the biggest financial challenge with a projected £1.3m savings target. Any additional income will offset the requirement to make savings elsewhere. Service integration of this kind, and also in secondary areas, such as A1 Housing, will assist Members is supporting key services during these challenges.

RESOLVED that:

1. Officers be given delegated authority to finalise Heads of Terms with the Department for Work and Pensions to enable them to move from their existing offices in Worksop to Queen's Buildings.

2. Thanks be recorded to officers for their work to date on the Department for Work and Pensions move.

(b) Calculation of Council Tax Base 2014/15 (Key Decision No. 397)

Members' approval was sought to approve the calculation of the Council's 2014/15 tax base as required by The Local Government Finance Act 1992 in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Council has a statutory obligation to set a tax base and to notify precepting authorities. To not set a tax base would mean a breach of the statutory requirement and there would be no basis on which to set a Council Tax for 2014/15.

Setting the Council tax base is the first step in determining the Council Tax for 2014/15. The tax base must be determined and notified to other relevant bodies by 31st January each year.

RESOLVED that

1. The Council tax base for the year 2014/15 be agreed to be 31,893.84 band D properties, subject to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme being agreed as proposed.
2. The calculations set out in Appendix 1, to agree the Council tax base calculation for the District for 2014/15, be recommended to the Council meeting on 30th January 2014 for approval and officers be instructed to notify this figure to the major precepting authorities.
3. The calculations set out in Appendix 2, figures which are tax bases for parts of the area, be recommended to the Council meeting on 30th January 2014 for approval and officers be instructed to notify the 2014/15 tax base to Town and Parish Councils, Parish Meetings and Charter Trustees as soon as is practicable.

(c) Business Rates Budget 2014/15 (Key Decision No. 398)

Members' approval was sought for the Council's estimated net yield from local business rates for 2014/15, which will be used to calculate Bassetlaw's share for the purpose of budget setting in the February General Fund budget 2014/15 Cabinet report. An estimation of the National Non-Domestic Rates Return 1 (NNDR1) had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Due to the delay by central government in distributing the relevant documentation and guidance in respect of this budget calculation, the provisional and final returns will be circulated to both the Cabinet and Extraordinary Council separately before the respective meetings. There is no choice other than meeting the 6th and 30th January 2014 deadlines.

RESOLVED that:

1. The provisional calculation of the NNDR1 return and the estimated net yield from local business rates for 2014/15 be approved.
2. This report be recommended to the Extraordinary Council on 30th January 2014 where the final NNDR1 return for 2014/15 will be considered.

Other Decisions

None

SECTION B - ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE

Key Decisions

None

Other Decisions

None

As there was no other urgent business, the Chairman closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 7.00 pm.)