



Council

Monday, 22 February 2021

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Gareth Prosser (Mayor), Councillor Julian Grubb (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Roger Bennett, Joanne Beecham, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, John Fisher, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Ann Isherwood, Wanda King, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, Mike Rouse, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, David Thain, Craig Warhurst and Jennifer Wheeler

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Chris Forrester, Kate Goldey and Sue Hanley

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley and Amanda Scarce

64. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all those present and outlined how the virtual meeting would proceed.

65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Debbie Chance and Gemma Monaco.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

67. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Council held on Monday, 25th January 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

68. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Chair

The following announcements were made at the meeting:

a) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that he had no announcements to make on this occasion.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader explained that he had attended a number of meetings of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) since the previous meeting of Council. However, there were no detailed updates to provide to Council at this time.

c) Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive confirmed that he had no announcements to make at the meeting.

69. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Council considered minutes from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 16th February 2021 and recommendations from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Monday, 22nd February 2021 directly before Council.

The following items were discussed:

Pay Policy Statement 2021/22

The Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 was considered in some detail. Members commented that the report was required to set out the pay for staff employed at all levels of the organisation, from the Chief Executive to the lowest paid staff. Reference was made to the pay increase that had been awarded to staff employed by Redditch Borough Council and this was welcomed in recognition of the hard work of staff during the pandemic.

During consideration of this item concerns were raised about the potential impact of public sector pay freezes moving forward. However, Members also noted that the proposals outlined an increase to the wages paid to staff employed by the Council that was above the level of inflation.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24

Council considered the proposed Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24. Members commented that a balanced budget

position had been secured for 2021/22 despite the financial challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic and the additional workload that had been generated for Council staff. Officers working in the Financial Services team were thanked for their hard work in respect of balancing the budget.

In proposing the recommendations detailed in the report, the Leader outlined an alteration to the sixth recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor Mike Rouse. This alteration was as follows:

“The net general fund revenue budget be approved:

2021/22 £10.467 million
2022/23 £10.064 million
2023/24 £10.051 million”

This alteration was adopted.

During consideration of this item, Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed an alternative budget. This alternative budget was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

Members were advised that in the alternative budget recommendations 1 to 8 in the report would remain as detailed in the agenda. However, the alternative budget included altered wording and figures in respect of recommendations 9 and 10, as follows:

- “9) Approval of the increase of the Council Tax per Band D at 0.7% for 2021/22; and
- 10) Approval of the drawdown from balances of £42k for 2021/22.”

In proposing the alternative budget, Councillor Hartnett explained that a one-year settlement had been outlined for Members’ consideration. The additional information that had been requested in respect of the budget at the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 16th February 2021 had helped to inform the content of the alternative budget. Consideration had also been given to the financial position of local government and the need for greater certainty to be provided in respect of Council finances moving forward. A key concern had been the impact of Covid-19 on local residents and businesses, particularly people who had been furloughed or had been made unemployed as a result of the pandemic, many of whom were struggling financially as a consequence. To address this, the alternative budget proposed that Council Tax should be increased by 0.7 per cent in 2021/22, which was equivalent to the rate of inflation or the Consumer Price Index (CPI), rather than at the £5 maximum level at which District Councils could increase Council Tax. Councillor Hartnett

commented that he hoped that the economy could start to open up safely later in the year but he cautioned that many businesses would struggle to recover, especially as there had been little or no income during lockdown to pay for costs such as rent and utilities bills. Reference was also made to an increase in demand for support from food banks amongst Redditch residents during the pandemic and Members were asked to note that many residents in this position would struggle to pay their Council Tax. Councillor Hartnett concluded by urging the Government to provide more funding for local government moving forward.

In seconding the alternative budget, Councillor Greg Chance commented that it would be unfair in his opinion to agree to an above inflation increase to Council Tax during a global pandemic. Whilst the Council remained subject to a Section 24 Notice, Members were asked to note that the alternative budget was balanced for 2021/22 and had been verified as such by the Head of Financial and Customer Services. Decisions had been taken in previous years not to increase Council Tax at the maximum level permissible for District Councils and Councillor Chance suggested that this would be appropriate to repeat in a year when residents and businesses were struggling financially due to Covid-19. Any potential gaps arising in the budget would need to be addressed but Councillor Chance argued that this needed to be resolved by the Government, through the provision of more funding for local government moving forward.

Members discussed the alternative budget and in so doing commented on the following points:

- The proposed use of funding from balances in order to balance the alternative budget.
- The impact that the use of funding from balances could have on the extent to which the external auditors would continue to apply the Section 24 Notice to the Council.
- The causes of the Section 24 Notice that was in place for the Council.
- The loss of income for the Council should a decision be taken to increase Council Tax by 0.7 per cent rather than £5 in 2021/22. Members noted that this would amount to in excess of £80,000 in 2021/22 and over £450,000 in five years' time.
- The difficult decisions that needed to be taken in order to achieve a balanced budget.
- The need to support some of the most vulnerable members of society, including those who had been negatively impacted financially by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Council services that were supported with funding from Council Tax.

- The other measures that could be taken to increase Council funding, including increases to fees for Council services and the sale of Council assets.
- The different approaches that had been adopted by Councils in the country with regard to increases to Council Tax and the need to meet local needs in determining any increases to Council Tax.
- The support that had already been provided by the Council to local residents and businesses.
- The notice that had been provided to Members in respect of the alternative budget.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the alternative budget was subject to a named vote.

Members voting FOR the alternative budget:

Councillors Joe Baker, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett,
Wanda King, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith and Jenny Wheeler (9)

Members voting AGAINST the alternative budget:

Councillors Salman Akbar, Tom Baker-Price, Joanne Beecham, Roger Bennett, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Peter Fleming, Julian Grubb, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, Gareth Prosser, Mike Rouse, David Thain and Craig Warhurst (16)

Members voting to ABSTAIN on the alternative budget

No Councillors (0)

The vote on the alternative budget was therefore lost.

Members subsequently discussed the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24 report and recommendations detailed in the agenda, including the altered recommendation 6. During the discussion of this report Members referred to the following matters:

- The proposals that would result in a balanced budget for 2021/22 and the return to balances of £44,000 in the first year of the plan.
- The need for the Council to have access to adequate funding in order to ensure that services remained sustainable moving forward.
- The proposed increase of £5 in Council Tax and the impact that this might have on vulnerable residents in particular.

- The reductions in expenditure proposed for areas such as management and supervision costs and the need for the Council to achieve further efficiency savings.
- The comments that had been raised at recent meetings of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the proposed budget.
- The position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), whereby funding was being returned to balances.
- The improvement to the turnaround times for void properties and the positive impact that this had on income for the Council.
- The work that was being undertaken to build Council houses in the Borough.
- The hard work of staff in the Housing Department to ensure that the HRA was in a sustainable position moving forward.
- The work that had been undertaken by officers in respect of compliance for Housing Services.
- The uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic, both for the public and the private sector, and the ongoing impact that this could have on Council services.

The Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24 as detailed in the agenda, including the alteration to recommendation 6, was subsequently put to the vote. At the request of Members, a vote was held first in respect of recommendations 1 to 8 and 10 and a separate vote was then held on recommendation 9.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 all of the recommendations in the Medium Term Financial Plan were subject to a named vote.

Members voting FOR recommendations 1 to 8 and 10 in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24

Councillors Salman Akbar, Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Joanne Beecham, Roger Bennett, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, John Fisher, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Julian Grubb, Bill Hartnett, Ann Isherwood, Wanda King, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, Gareth Prosser, Mike Rouse, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, David Thain, Craig Warhurst and Jenny Wheeler (26)

Members voting AGAINST recommendations 1 to 8 and 10 in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24

No Councillors (0)

Members voting to ABSTAIN on recommendations 1 to 8 and 10 in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24

No councillors (0)

The vote on recommendations 1 to 8 and 10 was therefore carried.

Members voting FOR recommendation 9 in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24

Councillors Salman Akbar, Tom Baker-Price, Joanne Beecham, Roger Bennett, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Peter Fleming, Julian Grubb, Ann Isherwood, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, Gareth Prosser, Mike Rouse, David Thain, and Craig Warhurst. (17)

Members voting AGAINST recommendation 9 in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24

Councillors Joe Baker, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Wanda King, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith and Jenny Wheeler. (9)

Members voting to ABSTAIN on recommendation 9 in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24

No Councillors (0)

The vote on recommendation 9 was therefore carried.

Council Tax Resolutions 2021/22

The Council Tax Resolutions 2021/22 were considered and Members noted that the recommendations took into account the proposed £5 increase to Council Tax that had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24. The funding gathered in the Council Tax collection would be distributed to all of the precepting authorities, including Redditch Borough Council.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the recommendations in respect of the Council Tax Resolutions were subject to a named vote.

Members voting FOR the Council Tax Resolutions

Councillors Salman Akbar, Tom Baker-Price, Joanne Beecham, Roger Bennett, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Peter Fleming, Julian Grubb, Ann Isherwood, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, Gareth Prosser, Mike Rouse, David Thain and Craig Warhurst. (17)

Members voting AGAINST the Council Tax Resolutions

Councillors Joe Baker, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Wanda King, Mark Shurmer and Jenny Wheeler.

Members voting to ABSTAIN on the Council Tax Resolutions

No Councillors (0)

The vote on the Council Tax Resolutions was therefore carried.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 16th February 2021 be approved and all recommendations adopted subject to the following amendment to recommendation 6 in the minutes at Minute Item No. 78:**

The net general fund revenue budget be approved:

2021/22 £10.467 million

2022/23 £10.064 million

2023/24 £10.051 million

- 2) **the calculation for the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2021/22 (excluding Parish precepts) as £6,517,245.77;**
- 3) **the following amounts be calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act:**
 - (a) **£47,617,501 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act (taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils) (*i.e.*, *Gross expenditure*);**
 - (b) **£41,090,255 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act. (*i.e.*, *Gross income*);**
 - (c) **£6,527,246 being the amount by which the aggregate of 1.2.2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.2.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act);**

- (d) £249.53 being the amount at 1.2.2 (c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1.1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts);
- (e) £10,000 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Feckenham Parish precept) referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act;
- (f) £249.15 being the amount at 1.2.2 (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 1.2.2 (e) above by Item T (1.1 (a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates;
- (g) £276.38 being the amount given by adding to the amount at 1.2.2(f), the amount of the special item relating to the Parish of Feckenham 1.2.2(e), divided by the amount in 1.1(b) above;
- (h) the amounts below given by multiplying the amounts at 1.2.2(f) and 1.2.2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band, divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwelling listed in different valuation bands;

Valuation Band	Proportion of Band D tax paid	Parish of Feckenham £	All other parts of the Council's area £
A	6/9	184.25	166.10
B	7/9	214.96	193.78
C	8/9	245.67	221.47
D	1	276.38	249.15
E	11/9	337.80	304.52
F	13/9	399.21	359.88
G	15/9	460.63	415.25
H	18/9	552.76	498.30

- 4) it be noted that for the year 2021/22, Worcestershire County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwelling in the Council's area as indicated below:

	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Worcestershire County Council	895.89	1,045.20	1,194.52	1,343.83	1,642.46	1,941.09	2,239.72	2,687.66
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	160.13	186.81	213.50	240.19	293.57	346.94	400.32	480.38
Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority	58.45	68.20	77.94	87.68	107.16	126.65	146.13	175.36

- 5) that having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 1.2.2(h) and 1.2.3 above, that Redditch Borough Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 hereby sets the amounts shown below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2021/22. for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings:

Valuation Band	Proportion of Band D tax paid	Parish of Feckenham £	All other parts of the Council's area £
A	6/9	1,298.72	1,280.57
B	7/9	1,515.17	1,493.99
C	8/9	1,731.63	1,707.43
D	1	1,948.08	1,920.85
E	11/9	2,380.99	2,347.71
F	13/9	2,813.89	2,774.56
G	15/9	3,246.80	3,201.42
H	18/9	3,896.16	3,841.70

- 6) that the Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make payments under Section 90(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund by ten equal instalments between April 2021 to March 2022 as detailed below:

	Precept	Deficit on Collection Fund	Total to pay
	£	£	£
Worcestershire County Council	35,152,080.00	-335,887.00	34,816,193.00
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	6,282,921.24	-57,694.58	6,225,226.66
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority	2,293,424.78	-22,030.90	2,271,393.88

- 7) that the Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make transfers under Section 97 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund to the General Fund the sum of £6,464,599 being the Council's own demand on the Collection Fund (£6,517,246) and Parish Precept (£10,000) and the distribution of the Deficit on the Collection Fund (£62,647);
- 8) that the Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make payments from the General Fund to Feckenham Parish Council the sums listed above (£10,000) by instalment after 1 April 2021 in respect of the precept levied on the Council;
- 9) that the above resolutions to be signed by the Chief Executive for use in legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the recovery of unpaid Council Taxes;
- 10) notices of the making of the said Council Taxes signed by the Chief Executive are given by advertisement in the local press under Section 38(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992; and
- 11) that authority be delegated to the Head of Finance and Customer Services (Interim S151) following consultation with the finance portfolio holder to amend the resolution should the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority Service not approve the estimated figure that is being used in this report. This is due to the Fire service having their approval meeting after this resolution report has been brought to Council.

(During consideration of this item there was an adjournment from 7.31 pm to 7.48 pm.)

70. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

Council was advised that two urgent decisions had been taken since the previous meeting in January 2021. The first of these decisions related to funding for action that could be taken to enable the decarbonisation of the Greenlands Business Centre and Redditch Town Hall. The second urgent decision had granted Members a dispensation to participate in the debate and vote in respect of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 and the Council Tax Resolutions.

71. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no further urgent business for consideration on this occasion.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.04 pm