

COUNCIL

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

2 March 2023

The Mayor: Councillor R. Wood

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor C. Williams

Councillors: A.R. Aubrey, T. Bowen, W. Carpenter, H.C. Clarke, C. Clement-Williams, M. Crowley, A. Dacey, H. Davies, H. Davies, O.S. Davies, R. Davies, S.E. Freeguard, C. Galsworthy, N. Goldup-John, W.F. Griffiths, S. Grimshaw, J. Hale, S. Harris, M. Harvey, J. Henton, S.K. Hunt, J. Hurley, C. James, C. James, N. Jenkins, J. Jones, L. Jones, R.G. Jones, S. Jones, C. Jordan, D. Keogh, S.A. Knoyle, E.V. Latham, C. Lewis, D. Lewis, A. Llewelyn, A.R. Lockyer, R. Mizen, K. Morris, S. Paddison, S.M. Penry, D.M. Peters, C. Phillips, R. Phillips, S. Pursey, S. Rahaman, P.A. Rees, S. Renkes, S.H. Reynolds, A.J. Richards, P.D. Richards, P. Rogers, M. Spooner, S. Thomas, D. Whitelock, C. Williams, L. Williams and R.W. Wood

Officers in Attendance: S. Curran, C. Furlow-Harris, C. Griffiths, A. James, A. Jarrett, H. Jones, K. Jones, C. Owen, N. Pearce, C. Saunders, M. Shaw, A. Thomas, Thomas and J. Woodman-Ralph

Representatives of the Translation Service: Nerys Hurford

1. **Mayor's Announcements**

There were none.

2. **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader of Council reminded Council that on St David's Day last year the Council condemned the horrific war waged on Ukraine by Vladimir Putin and the Russian Government.

He stated that many people have lost their lives over the past year, whole communities have been ravaged by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and many people have fled from their homes to find a place of safety. There have also been wider impacts arising from the weaponisation of energy in particular, adding to the hardship people were already experiencing.

The Leader stated that he was proud of the role that Neath Port Talbot Council has played in offering humanitarian support to Ukrainians who have made their way to our county borough and was proud too of the warm welcome and continuing support provided by people from all sections of our communities. He added that he has been humbled to hear Ukrainian people speak of the welcome they have received and more importantly that they feel safe here.

Council were asked to once again confirm their support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Council held a minutes' silence in tribute to those who have lost their lives in this terrible war and to those who continue to have their lives disrupted by Putin and the Russian Government.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Mike Harvey: In relation to Agenda Item 6 2023/24 Revenue Budget Proposals, Agenda Item 7 Council Tax 23/24 and Agenda Item 8 Capital Strategy and

Capital Programme 23/24 and 25/26 as he is employed by South Wales Police.

4. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Council**

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

5. **Public Question Time.**

No public questions were received.

6. **2023/2024 Revenue Budget Proposals**

Councillor Simon Knoyle, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the report which had been commended to Council from Cabinet on 1st March 2023.

It was clarified that on page 17, the number 6 was missing from the sentence... 'Leisure Services listed at Appendix...' and on page 37, 'Reason for Proposed Decision' should read 'to determine the Budget for 2023/24'.

The Chief Finance Officer, the Finance Team the Chief Executive and the Corporate Directors were thanked for all the work they have undertaken in developing the budget report being considered at Council today.

It was explained that this budget had been set against the back drop of extreme circumstances including inflation running at 10%, the war in Ukraine, the cost of living crisis and the ongoing rise in energy costs. But also against the backdrop of regeneration projects such as the £330m Wildfox resort, the £400m Global Centre for Rail Excellence and the Freeport bid as well as successful bids to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund worth approximately £28m.

It was detailed that the budget includes a £4.25m commitment to 'Clean up and Green Up' going towards street cleansing, play equipment and improving the public realm. The budget also commits to protecting jobs with no cuts to services proposed.

It was noted that budget reflected the positive inherited prudent financial position which allowed this budget to provide assurances to the work force, residents, trade union colleagues and members.

It was explained that 12 face to face roadshows had been held in an attempt to engage with communities as well as online social media engagement and traditional paper copies of the consultation distributed. Examples were given as to how the feedback from the consultation exercise had been taken into account and that for example the planned increase to fees and charges has dropped from the planned 10% in line with inflation to 5% as well as implementing a 2 year expansion to the welfare rights service.

Council was reminded about the ongoing work in partnership with trade union colleagues to lobby Welsh Government for a better and fairer settlement.

It was detailed that the budget aims to drive forward the working towards five key pillars:

Maintaining a clear focus on a recovery from Covid.

Supporting our Communities through the Cost of Living crisis.

Facilitation and enabling economic growth.

Delivering Welsh Government policy priorities.

Ensuring a sustainable and stable council.

In order to so it was explained that it is proposed to take £3.5m from General Reserves which leaves the Council Reserves balance at £16.2m which is considered healthy. The Medium Term Financial Plan allows the reserves to be at 4% of the net revenue budget which would allow the reserves to be at the level of £14.4m but due to uncertainty around energy prices and other unknowns it was considered prudent to preserve head room and propose the £3.5m utilisation of reserves only.

The proposed increase to Council tax was 4.5%.

Concern was raised on the consultation model, as well as the lack of detail included in the budget documentation to address issues such as rising energy costs, income generation.

It was raised that renewable energy needs to be investigated and considered as a priority for the Council against the back-drop of the rising energy costs that are being faced.

It was suggested that due to the ongoing severity of the Cost of Living crisis, the proposed Council Tax increase should be reduced and the use of reserves should be maximised.

Following on, it was highlighted that any reduction in Council Tax and reducing general reserves would not be prudent or sustainable going forward into future years.

An amendment was put to Council and there followed a request for a recorded vote on the following amendment, which received the requisite support in accordance with the requirements of Section 14.5 of Part 4 of the Council's Constitution- Rules of Procedure.

Recommendation 4 - In relation to the setting of Council Tax levels for 2023/24 Council are asked to approve that:

Council Tax in 2023/24 will increase by 2% as opposed to the 4.5% as detailed in the report with the gap of 2.5% being funded from the general reserve (representing an additional sum of £1.500m being taken for 2023/2024). Therefore, the total amount of general reserves to balance the budget is £5.000m i.e. £3.500m plus £1.500m. The 2023/24 Band D equivalent for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council will then be £1693.22

For the Amendment:

Councillors: A.Aubrey, C.Clement Williams, M.Crowley, O.Davies, C.Galsworthy, M.Harvey, C.James (Cathy), L. Jones, R.Jones, D.Keough, E.V Latham, A.Lockyer, S. Grimshaw, R. Mizen, S. Paddison, S. Penry, S. Pursey, P. Rees, S. Renkes, S. Reynolds, P.Richards, S.Thomas, D.Whitelock, L.Williams, S. Freeguard, S.Rahaman.

Against the Amendment:

Councillors: T.Bowen, W.Carpenter, H. C.Clarke, A.Dacey, H.Davies (Hayley), H Davies (Heath), R.Davies, N.Goldup-John, W.Fryer Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris, J.Henton, S.Hunt, J.Hurley, C.James (Chris), N. Jenkins, J.Jones, S.Jones, C. Jordan, S. Knoyle, C.Lewis, D. Lewis, A. Llewellyn, K. Morris, M. Peters, C. Phillips, R. Phillips, A. Richards, P.Rogers, M. Spooner,

Abstention:

Councillors: R. Wood, C. Williams (Chris)

As a result of the above, the amendment fell and there followed a request for a recorded vote on the substantive recommendation contained in the circulated report, which received the requisite support in accordance with the requirements of Section 14.5 of Part 4 of the Council's Constitution- Rules of Procedure.

For the recommendation:

Councillors: T.Bowen, W.Carpenter, H. C.Clarke, A.Dacey, H.Davies (Hayley), H Davies (Heath), R.Davies, N.Goldup-John, W.Fryer Griffiths, J.Hale, S.Harris, J.Henton, S.Hunt, J.Hurley, C.James (Chris), N. Jenkins, J.Jones, S.Jones, C. Jordan, S. Knoyle, C.Lewis, D. Lewis, A. Llewellyn, K. Morris, M. Peters, C. Phillips, R. Phillips, A. Richards, P.Rogers, M. Spooner

Against the recommendation:

Councillors: A.Aubrey, C.Clement Williams, M.Crowley, O.Davies, C.Galsworthy, M.Harvey, C.James (Cathy), L. Jones, R.Jones, D.Keough, E.V Latham, A.Lockyer, S. Grimshaw, R. Mizen, S. Paddison, S. Penry, S. Pursey, P. Rees, S. Renkes, S. Reynolds, P.Richards, S.Thomas, D.Whitelock, L.Williams, S. Freeguard, S.Rahaman.

Abstention:

Councillors: R. Wood, C. Williams (Chris)

RESOLVED:

Having given due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment:

1. That the revenue budget proposals and arrangements as per appendix 1 of the report for 2023/2024 be approved.
2. a) The following matters be delegated to the appropriate Corporate Director following consultation with the Council Leader, relevant Cabinet Member and Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee:-

-Fees and Charges (Executive Functions) applicable for the financial year 2023/2024

-Fees and Charges (Executive Functions) which are applicable in any subsequent financial year and which, in the opinion of the relevant Corporate Director, need to be set in advance of the financial year for operational reasons.

b) The following matters be delegated to the appropriate Corporate Director following consultation with the Council Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant non-executive committee

- Fees and Charges (Non Executive Functions) applicable in 2023/24
- Fees and charges applicable in any subsequent financial year and which, in the opinion of the Corporate Director, need to be set in advance of that financial year for operational reasons

3. That authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Performance and Social Justice to make any amendment necessary through the use of general reserves as a consequence of any variation between the Welsh Government Final Settlement and the provisional settlement.
4. That the Council Tax 2023/2024 will increase by 4.5% and the Band D equivalent for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council will be £1,734.72

7. **Council Tax 2023/2024**

Cllr Simon Knoyle, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the report setting out the calculations and necessary resolutions to be passed in relation to the setting of the level of Council Tax for 23/24 in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

RESOLVED:

a) That any expenses incurred by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council in performing in part of its area, a function performed by a Community Council, elsewhere in its area, are treated as the Authority's general expenses be approved.

b) That the levy of the Swansea Bay Port Health Authority is treated as a general expense be approved.

c) That the amounts detailed in the circulated report and associated appendices as calculated in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 be approved.

8. **Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/2024 to 2025/2026**

Cllr Simon Knoyle, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the report setting out the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26.

RESOLVED:

That the Capital Strategy be approved.

That the Capital Programme for 2023/24 ad detailed in Appendix 2 be approved.

That the delegation arrangements set out in the report be approved.

9. **Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy, and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy**

Cllr Simon Knoyle, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Social Justice introduced the report setting out the Council's Treasury

Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2023/24.

RESOLVED:

- That the Treasury Management Strategy be approved
- That the Annual Investment Strategy be approved
- That the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy be approved
- That the Prudential Indicators Policy be approved.

10. **Changes to Committee Membership**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which was to authorise changes to the allocation of seats on council committees and outside bodies to the political groups as detailed in the circulated report.

RESOLVED: That the changes to the membership of committees as detailed in the circulated report be approved.

11. **Notice of Motion under Section 10 of Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) the Council's Constitution**

No notices of motion were received.

12. **Questions from Members, with Notice, under Rule 9.2 of the Council's Procedure Rules**

No questions were received.

13. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

- 10 -

CHAIRPERSON