

# Minutes

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## Ordinary Council Wednesday, 23rd February, 2022

### Attendance

Cllr Ms Sanders (Mayor)	Cllr Mrs Hones
Cllr Reed (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr Hossack
Cllr Aspinell	Cllr Jakobsson
Cllr Barber	Cllr Kendall
Cllr Barrett	Cllr Laplain
Cllr Dr Barrett	Cllr Lewis
Cllr Bridge	Cllr McLaren
Cllr J Cloke	Cllr Mynott
Cllr Cuthbert	Cllr Naylor
Cllr Mrs Davies	Cllr Nolan
Cllr Mrs Fulcher	Cllr Parker
Cllr Fryd	Cllr Mrs Pearson
Cllr Gelderbloem	Cllr Poppy
Cllr Haigh	Cllr Mrs Pound
Cllr Heard	Cllr Tanner
Cllr Hirst	

### Apologies

Cllr S Cloke	Cllr Tierney
Cllr Russell	

### Officers Present

Phoebe Barnes	- Corporate Manage (Finance) and Deputy Section 151
Greg Campbell	- Corporate Director (Environment and Communities)
Philip Drane	- Corporate Director (Planning and Economy)
Amanda Julian	- Corporate Director (Law & Governance) and Monitoring Officer
Tracey Lilley	- Corporate Director (Housing & Community Safety)
Claire Mayhew	- Corporate Manager (Democratic Services) Manager
Jonathan Stephenson	- Chief Executive
Ian Winslet	- Strategic Director
Angela Hutching	- Strategic Director – Rochford District Council
Jacqueline Van Mellaerts	- Director Corporate (Finance & Resources) and Section 151 Officer

## **LIVE BROADCAST**

[Live broadcast to start at 7pm and available for repeat viewing.](#)

### **296. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs S Cloke, Russell and Mrs Tierney.

The Mayor, announces the passing of past Councillor Vivienne Russell.

Vivienne was a Liberal Democrats councillor for Hutton East Ward between 1991-2002. Over her years as a Councillor, she played an active role in many Committees and Boards including Chairing the Planning Committee; Policy Committee; a member of Country Parks and Recreation Committee as well as representing Hutton horticultural Society Allotment Management.

Deepest condolences, have been sent to Vivienne's family on their sudden loss and the Mayor ask that everyone joins her in observing a minute's silence in her memory.

Members of the Council paid tribute to Vivienne.

### **297. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at this stage.

### **298. Review of Local Council Tax Discounts 2022/23**

In March 2021, following a motion at Full Council by the Labour Group, which was accepted in February 2021, Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee (PRED) resolved to review Council Tax Discretionary Discounts and report options to a future PRED Committee.

In September 2021, Members reviewed the options available and agreed to consult with residents on three discretionary discounts to make amendments to the scheme of Council Tax Discounts and Premiums with effect from 1 April 2022, using discretionary powers granted by the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018.

This report outlines the results from the consultation and proposed changes to the scheme.

On 24th November 2021, PRED Committee resolved the following recommendations below, and now refers to Ordinary Council for approval.

The Motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hossack and **SECONDED** by Cllr Parker.

After a brief debate, a vote was taken by a show of hands.

The Motion was **RESOLVED UNANIMIOUSLY** to:

1. **Remove the Council Tax discretionary discount for Empty and Unfurnished properties from 1 April 2022.**
2. **Remove the Council Tax discretionary discount for Second Homes from 1 April 2022.**
3. **Not change The Council Tax discretionary discount for Empty & Uninhabitable properties from 1 April 2022.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

Properties that are vacant for long periods of time, can lead to problems with squatters, anti-social behaviour and have a direct impact on the amount of housing available in the Borough. The removal of these discounts would incentivise the owners to bring properties back into use and occupation with less delay.

Currently two local Council Tax discounts the Council are reviewing to remove are costing Brentwood Council £13,519 per annum, and the precepting authorities collectively £113,344 per annum. This would generate additional income to the collective Councils to reinvest within their services.

Legislation will still allow the Council to award discretionary support to people in exceptional circumstances and each request will be given due care and consideration and assessed on its own merits.

#### **299. Budget 2022/23**

The report and appendices set out all the relevant information in support of setting the Councils Budget for General Fund services and Council Tax for 2022/23, together with financial forecast information through to 2024/25. Also included is information on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2022/23 and the Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2024/25.

- (i) Appendix A - The General Fund budget proposals for 2022/23 to 2024/25.
- (ii) Appendix B - The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget proposals for 2022/23 onwards.

- (iii) Appendix C - The Capital and Investment Strategy for 2022/23 including the Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2024/25
- (iv) Appendix D – Fees & Charges Schedule 2022/23
- (v) Appendix E - Pay Policy Statement
- (vi) Appendix F - Section 151 Officers Assurance Statement and useful information
- (vii) Appendix G - Corporate Strategy Budget Summary
- (viii) Appendix H – Council Tax Resolution 2022/23

The budget was considered by the Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee on 2nd February 2022 and has been recommended to Ordinary Council for consideration and approval.

The figures presented summarise the detailed service budgets, together with known adjustments including the impact of the provisional central government grant funding along with financial implications of COVID-19.

The key elements of the proposed budget are:

#### General Fund

- 1) £5 increase in Council Tax for 2022/23 for Brentwood Council services.
- 2) Earmarked Reserves to set aside appropriate balances to mitigate future financial risk and build up in borough regeneration.
- 3) Future uncertainty of Local Government Financing.

#### Housing Revenue Account

- 1) For 2022/23 a budget that delivers a small surplus of £34k.
- 2) Increase in rents of CPI plus 1% per annum; equating to 4.1%.
- 3) Continued investment in the delivery of Decent Homes and Development of Housing within the Borough.
- 4) Significant investment in the Strategic Housing Delivery Programme ensuring the 30 year business plan is sustainable.

#### Capital

- 1) Total capital investment of £41.420 million in 2022/23
- 2) Subsequent investment of £38.9 million & £22.3million from 2023 to 2025.

No amendments to the Budget 2022/2023 were received prior to the meeting.

Member's thanked the Finance Team for the work on the Budget, especially Mrs Van Mellaerts and Miss Barnes.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

After a full discussion a recorded vote was taken in accordance with Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2014).

Members voted as follows:

**FOR:** Cllrs Barber, Bridge, J Cloke, Mrs Gelderbloem, Heard, Hirst, Mrs Hones, Hossack, Jakobsson, McLaren, Nolan, Parker, Mrs Pearson, Poppy, Mrs Pound, Reed, Ms Sanders, Tanner, Wagland, White & Wiles (21)

**AGAINST:** Cllrs Aspinell, Barrett, Dr Barrett, Cuthbert, Mrs Davies, Fryd, Fulcher, Haigh, Kendall, Laplain, Lewis, Mynott, Naylor (13)

**ABSTAIN:** (0)

The Motion was **CARRIED** and it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. **Approval the General Fund Budget 2022/23 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendix A**
2. **Approve that Council Tax has a £5 increase for 2022/23, the charge of Band D property increases to £198.63 per annum for Brentwood Council services only**
3. **Approve the HRA budget 2022/23 including the 30-year HRA Business Plan within Appendix B**
4. **Approve an increase to rents for 2022/23 by CPI plus 1%, a total of 4.1%**
5. **Approve the Capital and Investment Strategy in Appendix C including the Capital Programme**
6. **Approve the Fees & Charges Schedule in Appendix D**
7. **Approve the Pay Policy Statement in Appendix E**
8. **To note the Section 151 Officers Assurance Statement in Appendix F**
9. **That:**
  - (1) **The formal resolutions to set the Council Tax level for 2022/23 be made as set out in Appendix H (page 4 to 8) are approved.  
And in the absence of a formal precept demand from Essex County Council, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and Police Fire and Crime Commissioner;**
  - (2) **Delegated authority is given to the Section 151 Officer to notify all members of the Council once the precept demand is received; and to set the overall Council tax level for**

**2022/23 should there be any changes that effect Table 2, 3, 6 & Table 7 in Appendix H.**  
**ii.**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

Effective financial management underpins all the priorities for the Council and will enable the Council to operate within a sustainable budget environment.

The Council is required to approve the Budget as part of the Budget and Policy Framework

#### **300. Arrangements to appoint External Auditors from 2023/24**

The report outlines a recommendation to Council to opt into the appointing persons arrangement made by the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the Councils external auditor appointment for the accounting periods 2023/24. To meet deadline of 11 March 2022.

The Motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hossack and **SECONDED** by Cllr Parker.

After a brief discussion, a vote was taken by a show of hands.

The Motion was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1. Recommend to Ordinary Council that the Council opts into the proposed central arrangements for appointing external auditors for the accounting periods 2023/24 – 2027/28. (Option 3)**

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

To ensure the Council has proper arrangements in place for an External Audit function.

#### **301. Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 20.25