

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH CABINET** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 6 February 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor: John Ward (Chair)

Councillors: Jan Osborne
David Busby
Alastair McCraw
Clive Arthey
Elisabeth Malvisi
Mary McLaren

In attendance:

Councillor(s): John Hinton – Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
Melanie Barrett
Simon Barrett
Adrian Osborne

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
Director - Operations (ME)
Director - Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (ME)
Director - Housing (DF)
Corporate Manager – Finance, Commissioning & Procurement (RH)
Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Officer (AW)
Licensing Team Leader (KP)
Assistant Manager – Governance (HH)

Apologies:

Jane Gould

91 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There was no declaration of interests made by Councillors.

92 BCA/22/38 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 JANUARY 2023

Councillor Busby asked that paragraph 83.5 be amended to include: *other working adults in the same household were expected to contribute to Council Tax payments.*

It was resolved:

That with the following amendment the minutes of the meeting held on the 9 January 2023 be conformed and signed as a correct record of the meeting:

Paragraph 83.5: Councillor Busby queried whether other working adults *in the*

same household were expected to contribute to Council Tax payments.

93 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

None received.

94 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

95 MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES

There were no matters referred by the Overview and Scrutiny or Joint Audit and Standards Committees.

96 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

There were no comments made for the Forthcoming Decisions List.

97 BCA/22/39 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2023/24 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

97.1 The Chair, Councillor Ward, invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments, Councillor Busby, to introduce the report.

97.2 Councillor Busby introduced the report and moved the recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report which was seconded by Councillor McCraw.

97.3 Councillor McLaren referred to the Council's use of short - term external experts and those used on a regular basis such as auditors and asked whether a breakdown of the costs could be provided.

97.4 The Director of Corporate Resources responded that this level of details were not included in the report, but that a response would be provided outside of the meeting.

97.5 Councillor McLaren queried when the benefits of the solar panels installed at the Leisure Centre could be seen in the General Fund Budget.

97.6 The Cabinet Member for Environment detailed the process for storage of solar generated electricity at the Kingfisher Leisure Centre. She advised that the aim was to reduce the overall bill for electricity for the Leisure Centre. However, savings could not be provided until a full twelve months of data had been collected.

97.7 In response to Councillor McCraw's question regarding mitigating the Council's deficit, the Cabinet Member of Finance, Assists and Investments responded that this was detailed in the report, however it depended on

decisions from Central Government.

- 97.8 In responses to further questions from other Members attending the meeting the Director for Corporate Resources advised that the £1.4m forecast deficit would be covered by using all of the inflationary pressure reserve for the current year and the rest would be covered by the Strategic Priority reserve.
- 97.9 In response to additional questions from other Members attending the meeting Councillor Ward advised Members that Staff Costs were included in chart 4, page 2, which detailed employee costs against the forecast expenditure. However, he agreed that how the cost for staff was detailed in the report might be reconsidered, including posts that were funded by Government.
- 97.10 The meeting was adjourned between 2:30 pm and 2:36 pm.
- 97.11 The Chair stated that he had asked Simon Councillor Barrett to leave the meeting due to his disruptive behaviour.
- 97.12 Members debated on the issues including that the Council managed not to cut back on services, that this had been an informed budget process, that the Government had compensated significantly for business rates, but that consideration had to be made for savings on non-statutory services going forward as currently funding from Government was unpredictable.
- 97.13 Members continued to debate on the issues including that going forward the Council had to consider how to generate income from other sources to mitigate the funding gap, the Council tax increase in relation to the cost-of-living crisis, and that it was difficult to estimate what Government funding would be in the future.
- 97.14 Members thanked the Finance Team for the work they have undertaken for the budget.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That the General Fund Budget proposals for 2023/24 and four-year outlook set out in the report be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 20 February 2023.**
- 1.2 That the General Fund Budget for 2023/24 is based on a 2.99% increase to Band D Council Tax, which is equivalent to £5.30 per annum (10p per week) for a Band D property, be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 20 February 2023.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To bring together all the relevant information to enable Cabinet Members to review, consider and comment upon the Council's General Fund budget for endorsement

and recommendation to Council.

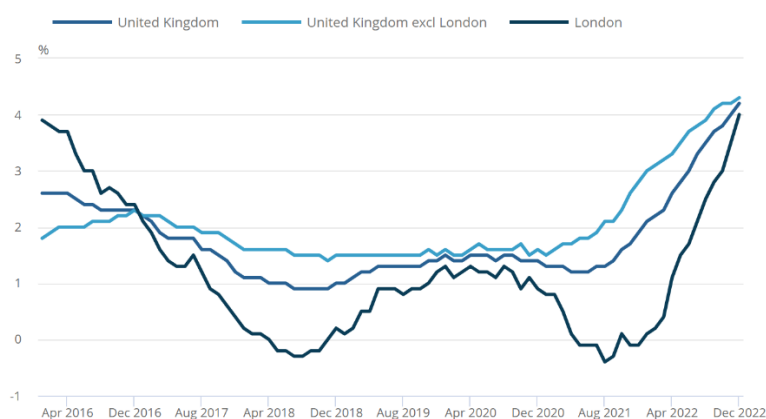
98 BCA/22/40 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2023/24 BUDGET

- 98.1 The Chair, Councillor Ward, invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments, Councillor Busby to introduce the report.
- 98.2 Councillor Busby provided an introduction to the report and moved recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report.
- 98.3 Councillor McLaren seconded the recommendations.
- 98.4 Councillor McLaren referred to the increase in rents for sheltered housing and asked whether additional resources would be available to manage issues around the rent increase and for any support for anxious residents.
- 98.5 The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Osborne confirmed that additional staff resources would be required and that a programme to support tenants for this area of housing was in progress. There would be funding from both Central Government and from the Council's own resources. A good Engagement Policy had been approved recently and there were ongoing discussions with the tenant panel regarding the proposed rent increases.
- 98.6 Councillor Arthey queried whether data for the increase of rents for the private housing sector for comparison purposes could be provided and Councillor Osborne provided Members with details for private sector rents.
- 98.7 The Director for Housing asked that a chart of the of UK Private Rental Prices be included in the minutes (see below). The Director then stated that the Council had taken on housing stock under the understanding that there would be Government funding to maintain the upkeep of these, but which had not been forthcoming. The challenge for the Council was to keep tenants safe, warm and dry by keeping the housing stock up to a good standard, and therefore the Council had to increase rents to ensure that.

2. UK private rental prices

Figure 1: The UK annual private rental price percentage change rose to 4.2% in the 12 months to December 2022

Index of Private Housing Rental Prices percentage change over 12 months, UK and London, January 2016 to December 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Index of Private Housing Rental

- 98.8 Councillor McCraw advised Members that the cost-of-living crisis would develop further as privately rented properties were coming to the end of the mortgage period and that the any increases would be passed onto renters.
- 98.9 The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Osborne stated that if the rent increase was not introduced this year, the Council would lose a large amounts of monies and would be unable to deliver all the Council's services in the long term.
- 98.10 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting, the Director for Housing responded that she was aware of the issues around renting garages and that recruitment for a new post would be undertaken in April to address this issue.
- 98.11 Councillor Osborne added that the development report for the review of garage sites would be presented to Members after the election and that currently only three sites had been identified as suitable for future development due to the tenure on the sites.
- 98.12 The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments, Councillor Busby advised Members that this had been looked into and most of the sites had parking problems not just issues with tenure.
- 98.13 Councillor Malvisi stated that the Council had a duty of care when redeveloping garage sites in relation to the safety removal of asbestos which was expensive.
- 98.14 Members debated on the issues including, that the Council sought to

continuously improve the standard of housing, and that the Government frequently changed the rules, which made it difficult to plan ahead for the Council.

- 98.15 Councillor Osborne reasoned that it was a good HRA budget, and the Council faced challenges in the future and could therefore not be complacent to ensure that a good level of service was delivered to residents in the District.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That the HRA Budget proposals for 2023/24 set out in this report, be endorsed for recommendation to Council on 21 February 2023.**
- 1.2 That an increase of 7% for council house rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £6.68 for social rent and £9.41 for affordable rent, a week be implemented.**
- 1.3 That the CPI increase of 10.1% in garage rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £4.86 or £4.91 (private rental), a month be implemented.**
- 1.4 That an increase of 7% for sheltered housing service charges, equivalent to £12.19 a month, be implemented.**
- 1.5 That an increase for sheltered housing utility charges, equivalent to £7.42 a month (8% for heating and 11% for water), be implemented, following no utility increase for 3 years (since 2019/20).**
- 1.6 That in principle, Right to Buy (RTB) receipts should be retained within the Housing Revenue Account, to enable continued development and acquisition of new council dwellings.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To bring together all the relevant information to enable Cabinet Members to review, consider and comment upon the Councils Housing Revenue Account budget for recommendations to Council.

99 BCA/22/41 BUSINESS RATES RELIEF POLICIES

- 99.1 The Chair, Councillor Ward invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments, Councillor Busby to introduce the report.
- 99.2 Councillor Busby provided an introduction to the report and moved recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Osborne.
- 99.3 Councillor McCraw asked for clarification of business rate relief in relation to businesses that had rateable value and hence had a multiplier in place. In response the Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Officer confirmed

that the multiplier had been frozen and that the business rate relief would automatically be raised to 75%.

- 99.4 Councillor Arthey queried whether village halls would be included in the relief scheme and the Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Officer confirmed that village halls would be entitled to this relief and that those who already had a reduction applied would automatically be included in this relief scheme, the remainder of village halls would be considered on a case by case basis.
- 99.5 Councillor McLaren queried the term hereditament in the report in relation to charity shops.
- 99.6 The Shared Revenues Partnerships Operations Manager clarified that hereditament was in effect properties and was a rating terminology, and that charity shops would be eligible to the business rate relief.
- 99.7 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting the Operations Manager advised that public toilets received a government funded relief and that car parks were excluded as car parks did not come under retail and hospitality.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That Cabinet approved the introduction of the discretionary Retail, Hospitality and Leisure and Supporting Small Business rate relief policies as set out in appendix 1 & 2 for the 2023/24 financial year.**
- 1.2 That Cabinet gave authority to the Director for Corporate Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to agree future changes to the discretionary Retail, Hospitality and Leisure and Supporting Small Business rate relief policies for the life of the 2023 rating list.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To provide discretionary reliefs to support ratepayers in Babergh.

To enable the implementation of the discretionary schemes.

100 BCA/22/42 CONSULTATION OF A REVISED TABLE OF FARES FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES

- 100.1 The Chair, Councillor Ward, invited the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Malvisi to introduce the report.
- 100.2 Councillor Malvisi introduced the report and move the recommendations in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Arthey.

100.3 Members considered the recommendations and sought clarification from the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Director for Operations for recommendation 3.2.

100.4 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting the Licensing Team Leader detailed the ranking of taxi charges for neighbouring councils in relation to the proposed taxi fare charges.

100.5 During the debate Councillor Ward stated that the increase in the taxifares had the support of the taxi trade.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That Cabinet agreed a new tariff table of maximum fares. Members were asked to approve a new tariff table of maximum fares with the following changes:

- i. **Miles & 1/10th Mile, replacing yards.**
- ii. **Tariff 1 reverts to tariff 2 (+50%) at 22:30 hrs each day instead of 23:00 hrs.**
- iii. **Tariff 4 is shown as an extra, due to size of vehicle/time of day, usage over 365 days of the year.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To decide on the preferred option and to undertake a public consultation exercise on a revised tariff table of maximum fares for Hackney Carriages within the District and to decide on the most concise, transparent fare table for the public to interpret.

It is widely understood that the cost of living has increased with higher transportation costs since the last rise in fares in June 2021.

NOTE:

Officer Decision made under the scheme of delegation by the Director of Operations – Key Decision Call-in Deadline on 15 February 2023

That Option 2: To vary the tariff table of maximum fares that may be charged by Hackney Carriage proprietors using a new table – miles & 1/10th Mile, and as detailed in the report number BCa/22/42 and recommended by the Licensing & Regulatory Committee be approved.

The business of the meeting was concluded at Time Not Specified.

.....
Chair

