

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 27 JANUARY 2022

Present: Councillor Eden (Mayor);

Councillors Edwards, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Khan, Lovelock, Manghnani, McEwan, McGonigle, Mitchell, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Page, Robinson, Rowland, Rynn, DP Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry, R Williams, Duveen, Sokale (Deputy Mayor), Leng and Whitham

Apologies: Councillors Woodward, Debs Absolom, David Absolom, Challenger, Davies, Maskell, McElroy, Pearce, R Singh, White and J Williams

30. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Rowe Court Fire

The Mayor referred to the terrible fire that had occurred on 15th December 2021 at Rowe Court. The Mayor expressed condolences and sympathy on behalf of the Council to all those affected. The Council stood in silence in memory of the tragic event.

(b) Policy Committee Membership

The Mayor reported that the Monitoring Officer had exercised his delegation on the recommendation of the Liberal Democrat Group Leader to appoint Councillor O'Connell to the Policy Committee in place of Councillor Duveen.

31. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

32. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Whitham	Retaining Care Workers	Cllr Ennis
2.	Cllr Whitham	Drug and Alcohol Treatment	Cllr Hoskin

(The full text of the questions and replies was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

33. APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2022/23

The Director of Finance submitted a report regarding the Council Tax support scheme, estimated Council Tax collection rate and Council Tax base for the 2022/23 financial year. The report explained that Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

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and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 required the Council, as the Billing Authority, to calculate a Council Tax Base for its area by 31 January each year.

The report explained that the estimated balance as at 31 March 2022 on the Council Tax Collection Fund was a projected deficit of £2.451m. The Council's share of this deficit was £2.098m. Ordinarily, the declared surplus/deficit was paid out/recoverable by the Collection Fund in full in the following financial year. However, Government had introduced new legislation that required any 2020/21 in year deficit to be spread equally across the three financial years 2021/22 - 2023/24, to help ease the financial impact of Covid-19 on Local Authorities. Therefore, the balance of the deficit required to be funded in 2022/23 was £1.721m, of which the Council's share was £1.473m.

The report also stated that the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Local Government Finance Act 2012 had replaced the Council Tax Benefit scheme with a locally determined Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which was effectively a type of Council Tax discount. The legislation required the Council to approve the scheme by the end of January preceding the start of the financial year. The recommended Scheme for 2022/23 was based on the Scheme agreed by Council for 2021/22 amended by Policy Committee on 17 January 2022 (Minute 68 refers).

The report had appended the results of the public consultation on the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the associated Equality Impact Assessment.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor McEwan and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) The proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme recommended by Policy Committee in January 2022, taking into account the results of the public consultation as set out in Appendix A and summarised in paragraph 4.4 of the report, be approved;
- (2) That the Tax Base calculation for 2022/23 of 57,059.55 band D equivalent properties be approved;
- (3) The assumed Council Tax collection rate of 98.5% for 2022/23 be noted;
- (4) That the 2022/23 Council Tax Reduction Scheme would be updated in line with the Scheme's regulations be noted;
- (5) That it be noted that the estimated balance of the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31st March 2022 was an overall deficit of £2.451m, of which the Council's share would be £2.098m, but that the deficit balance required to be funded in 2022/23 would be a total of £1.721m, of which the Council's share was £1.473m.

34. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2022/23

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report setting out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, following its meeting on 24 November 2021, in relation to the scheme of Councillors' Allowances for the financial year 2022/23. The Panel's recommendations were set out in Appendix A to the report and had been reflected in the updated allowances scheme at Appendix B to the report. In addition, the Panel was asked to consider the Local Government Association's (LGA) Parental Leave Policy, which was attached at Appendix C to the report. The Panel had agreed that this Policy would be beneficial to members of the Council and should be considered for adoption.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) That the Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2022/23, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be adopted;
- (2) That the Local Government Association's Parental Leave Policy for Councils, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be adopted.

(The meeting closed at 7.12 pm)