

Council
24 March 2023

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH SPECIAL COUNCIL held on Friday 24 March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors G. Ganney (Deputy Mayor)
M. Birleson, S. Bonfante, J. Boulton, S. Boulton,
L. Brandon, J. Broach, L. Chesterman, J. Cragg,
L. Crofton, A. Hellyer, M. Holloway, D. Jones,
S. Kasumu, T. Kingsbury, J. Lake, R. Lass
F. Marsh, S. McNamara, G. Michaelides,
T. Mitchinson, G. Moore, L. Musk, N. Pace, D. Panter,
R. Platt, J. Quinton, J. Ranshaw, D. Richardson,
T. Rowse, B. Sarson, P. Shah, M. Siewniak, P. Smith,
C. Stanbury, F. Thomson, K. Thorpe, T. Travell,
R. Trigg, S. Tunstall, F. Wachuku, J. Weston, and
P. Zukowskyj.

OFFICIALS Chief Executive (K. Ng)
PRESENT: Executive Director - Finance and Transformation (R. Baker)
Executive Director - Place (C. Barnes)
Service Director - Resident and Neighbourhood (S. McDaid)
Acting Assistant Director - Legal and Governance (S. Saunders)
Senior Democratic Services Officer (C. Francis)

Before proceeding with the agenda items, the Deputy Mayor reminded Council of the need for all councillors to comply with the Councillor Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct incorporates the Nolan principles (The Seven Principles of Public Life). The Code, also, incorporates the general principles which have been specifically developed for the role of councillor. The Deputy Mayor asked that everyone complies with the requirement to treat each of their fellow councillors with respect.

64. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 were approved as a correct record and noted by the Deputy Mayor.

65. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bond, B. Fitzsimon, C. Juggins, J.P. Skoczylas, and S. Thusu.

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66. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors S. Boulton, T. Kingsbury, F. Thomson, and P. Zukowskyj each declared non-pecuniary interests in items on the agenda as appropriate as Members of Hertfordshire County Council.

67. FUNDING OF AN AMENDMENT TO A MOTION APPROVED AT THE COUNCIL MEETING OF 15 MARCH 2023

Report of the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation).

At the Council meeting of 15 March 2023, Council agreed to amend the increase in allotment fees which had been included in the approved budget decision.

Whilst funding was acknowledged during the debate, the funding source for the change was not included in the motion or determined through the debate, and therefore the budget is currently underfunded by £26.4k.

The change that was approved, had the effect of increasing the net expenditure budget of allotments. Due to the complexities of the Allotments being part of the special expenses calculations, an increase in the net expenditure would mean rebilling of council tax for the whole borough.

Since the meeting further investigation has been done, and the recommendations brought forward will avoid the need to rebill, which would come at significant cost.

The reduction in allotment fees, are recommended to be funded from a reduction in the expenditure budgets on allotments, which will enable the net cost of the service to remain the same, therefore meaning no changes are required to special expenses or council tax.

The detail on how savings would be generated within the service have yet to be determined, but officers will consider the options available, and will engage with allotment holders and members as required, dependant on the level of impact of any proposals.

There is a risk that the savings may not be fully achievable. This risk is considered to be small and would not have significant financial implications for the Council. Any underachievement of savings would be managed in line with the In Year Budgetary Controls of the Financial Regulations, and then be considered as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

It was moved by Councillor S. Boulton and seconded by Councillor T. Kingsbury.

During discussion the following was clarified:

- The reduction in the allotment fees will be funded from the reduction in expenditure budgets, so this may result in a reduction in service. Officers will meet with the allotment holders to look at what needs to be done, and to see what savings can be made out of the cost of running the service. Any under

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achievement of savings would be managed in line with the in-year budgetary control of the financial regulations and dealt with in the 2024/25 budget.

- If the recommendations are not agreed, then the estimated cost of rebilling of Council Tax is between £132k and £256k.

**RESOLVED:
(Unanimous)**

1. That Council note the financial implications, and approach to these implications, if the recommendations of this report are not approved.
2. That Council note that this report is presented to supplement and adjust decisions taken recently, in a way which enables the required outcomes to be achieved, without the rebilling of council tax.
3. That Council, in accordance with the motion to amend, which was approved at the meeting of 15 March 2023, and in line with the inflationary factors applied to other fees and charges, approve the fees and charges for allotments for 2023/24 as set out in section 3.5 of the report.
4. That Council approve that the reduction in income be funded from a reduction to the allotment expenditure budget, so as not to impact on the special expenses' calculation and therefore the council tax calculation.

68. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2023/24

Report of the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation), asking Council to note an amendment to the previously presented council tax for band H properties in the Northaw and Cuffley parished area. The original report included a typographical error which has now been corrected.

It was moved by Councillor S. Boulton and seconded by Councillor T. Kingsbury.

**RESOLVED:
(42 voting FOR, 1 Abstention)**

That the aggregate Council Tax for 2023/24, calculated in accordance with Section 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for band H in Northaw and Cuffley be amended to the correct total amount of £4,303.02.

Meeting ended at 8.04pm
CF