

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL TAX SETTING COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE MEETING ROOM 1, TOWN LODGE,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON THURSDAY, 11TH JANUARY, 2018 AT 7.00 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Councillor Julian Cunningham (Chairman), Ian Albert, Tony Hunter, Lynda Needham and Richard Thake.*

In Attendance: *Howard Crompton (Service Director - Customers), Geraldine Goodwin (Revenues Manager), Mark Scanes (Systems and Technical Manager) and Ian Gourlay (Committee and Member Services Manager).*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2 MINUTES - 23 FEBRUARY 2017

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 February 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no notification of other business.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

It was confirmed that, according to the Government Guidance: "Openness and transparency on personal interests, A guide for councillors" September 2013", no declarations of pecuniary interests or dispensations were required by Members for setting Council Tax or precepts.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

6 COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018/19

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Information Technology seeking approval of the Council Tax Base for 2018/2019. The report contained the following appendices:

Appendix A – Council Tax Base by Parish 2018/19; and
Appendix B - Example of Council Tax Base calculation for Letchworth Garden City.

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Information Technology advised that the 2018/19 Council Tax Base figures for each Parish contained in Appendix A to the report assumed a 1% non-collection rate. The Council Tax Base for 2018/19 was proposed to be £49,118.50.

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The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Information Technology stated that Appendix B provided an example of how the Council Tax Base was calculated for Letchworth Garden City.

In response to a question, the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Information Technology commented that the impact of Universal Credit on the Council Tax collection rate would probably be less than its impact on rent arrears collection.

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.16(h), the Chairman requested that a Recorded Vote be taken on the Council Tax Base 2018/19.

(Voting:

For: Councillors Ian Albert, Julian Cunningham, Tony Hunter, Mrs L.A. Needham and R.A.C. Thake - 5

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0)

It was therefore

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a non-collection rate of 1% for 2018/2019 be approved; and
- (2) That the amount calculated by this Council as its Council Tax Base for 2018/2019 shall be £49,118.50, and that the individual sums shown for each Parish, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISION: To fulfil the statutory requirement to set a Council Tax Base for the District and to enable Major and Local Precepting Authorities to set their levels of Council Tax for 2018/2019.

7 NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE RETURN 1 - 2018/2019

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Information Technology in respect of the National Non-Domestic Rate Return 1 (NNDR1). The Draft NNDR1 Return was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Systems and Technical Manager advised that the Council had until 31 January 2018 to submit its NNDR1 return. Before Members was the draft Return, based on the same format as last year. It contained the same set of data types, and Members' attention was drawn to Line 12 of Page 20 of the document, which provided the estimated NNDR income for 2018/19 of £38,234,954. Page 21 of the document separated NHDC's share of the amount due from the amounts due to Central Government and Hertfordshire County Council.

The Systems and Technical Manager commented that, for 2018/19, the gross rates payable had been calculated against the rateable values as at 31 December by CPI (Consumer Price Index) rather than the RPI (Retail Price Index) to calculate the Non-Domestic Rate multiplier. This reduced the figures by about 10 pence in the pound. He referred to Section 31 Grants on Page 22 of the report (Line 36).

The Systems and Technical Manager explained that it was not easy to predict the actions of the VOA (Valuation Office Agency) that would affect the rates payable in 2018/19. The VOA still had 365 North Hertfordshire appeals outstanding from the 2010 List. The 2017 List introduced a new rating appeals process, Check, Challenge and Appeal. At present there had not been a single challenge from the VOA against the 2017 List, which made it very difficult to anticipate changes to the gross rates payable figure. Challenges on the 2010 List would cascade into the 2017 List, which added to the difficulty of forecasting.

The Systems and Technical Manager confirmed that the top rateable values in North Hertfordshire were Tesco's, Sainsbury's, Johnson Matthey, Morrison's, Waitrose and Altro. Tesco's was the largest at £2.6Million, with Altro the smallest at £715,000. Apart from Johnson Matthey and Altro, all those rateable values were at appeal stage.

The Systems and Technical Manager stated that Pages 29 to 33 of the Return were the supplementary pages that had yet to be completed. This disaggregated information would be included by the 31 January 2018 deadline for submission of the form.

In response to a Member's question, the Systems and Technical Manager commented that the Council was still awaiting a response from Hertfordshire County Council as to whether or not Hertfordshire would be entering into a combined Business Rates pooling arrangement for 2018/19.

In reply to a further question, the Systems and Technical Manager confirmed that NHDC was allowed to retain between 5 pence and 6 pence of each pound of Business Rates collected.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the draft NNDR1 Return for 2018/19, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and
- (2) That any amendments to the NNDR 1 Return resulting from changes to the form and any additional guidance, be delegated to the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Information Technology, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Information Technology.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with statutory requirements.

The meeting closed at 7.10 pm

Chairman