

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
COUNCIL TAX SETTING COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON THURSDAY, 14TH JANUARY, 2021 AT 5.00 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Ian Albert (Chair), David Levett, Sam North and Martin Stears-Handscomb*

In Attendance: *Jo Dufficy (Service Director - Customers), Geraldine Goodwin (Revenues Manager), Mark Scanes (Systems and Technical Manager), Matthew Hepburn (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present:

1 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

Audio Recording – 18 Seconds

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Council Tax Setting Committee meeting.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call to ensure all those present could hear and be heard and drew attention to the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol which was noted.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – 1 Minute 44 Seconds

There were no apologies for absence received.

3 MINUTES - 27 FEBRUARY 2020

Audio Recording – 1 Minute 50 Seconds

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor David Levett seconded and it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 27 February 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair; and
- (2) That, with the authorisation of the Chair, his electronic signature and initials be attached to the Minutes approved in (1) above.

4 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio Recording – 3 Minute 5 Seconds

There was no other business notified.

5 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – 3 Minutes 13 Seconds

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting;
- (2) The Chair announced that, in accordance with Council policy, this meeting was being audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recordings would be available to view on Mod.gov and the film recording via the NHDC Youtube channel; and
- (3) Members were reminded to make declarations of interest before an item, the detailed reminder about this and speaking rights was set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording – 3 Minutes 39 Seconds

There was no public participation.

7 COUNCIL TAX BASE 2021/2022

Audio Recording – 3 Minutes 45 Seconds

The Service Director – Customers presented the report entitled Council Tax Base 2021/2022, including the two appendices:

- Council Tax Base 2021/2022 Appendix A
- Council Tax Base 2021/2022 Appendix B

The Service Director – Customers advised that it was a statutory requirement to set a Council Tax Base each year in order that the levels of Council Tax for the forthcoming financial year could be set. The process for calculating the tax base was the same across all Local Authorities.

The Service Director – Customers explained that the Tax base was established by calculating the equivalent number of Band D properties in the District. In North Herts, the calculation was undertaken separately for each Parish and Town, effectively repeating the exercise 37 times to reach an overall total for the District.

The Service Director – Customers directed Members to Recommendation 2.2 which detailed the Council Tax Base for 2021/2022 as being at 49,396.9. The Service Director – Customers asked Members to note that the tax base was a decrease of 1.17% compared to 2021.

The Service Director – Customers informed Members that owing to the pandemic, there had been an increase in the amount of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) awarded, which impacted on the tax base. As CTR was a discount, any increase in discounts decreased the tax base.

The Service Director – Customers drew Members' attention to the Non-Collection Rates section detailed in the report at paragraphs 8.6 – 8.10.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed the Recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn.

Councillor Ian Albert advised that in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.16 (h) (i), a Recorded Vote was required. On the request of the Chair, a Recorded Vote was undertaken on the Council Tax Base 2021/2022.

(Voting:

For: Councillors Ian Albert, David Levett, Sam North and Martin Stears-Handscomb – 4

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Councillor Claire Strong was absent.)

It was therefore:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a non-collection rate of 1% for 2021/2022 be set;
- (2) That the Council Tax Base for 2021/2022 be set at 49,396.9 and that the individual sums shown in Appendix A for each Parish be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: 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 2021/2022.

8 NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATE RETURN (NNDR1) 2021/2022

Audio Recording – 8 Minutes 24 Seconds

The Service Director – Customers presented the report entitled National Non Domestic Rate Return (NNDR1) 2021/2022.

The Service Director – Customers advised that the National Non Domestic Rate Return was a statutory return which had to be submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government by 31 January 2021.

The Service Director – Customers explained that it was not unusual for the form to arrive late and this had been the case this year. This meant that there was not sufficient time for colleagues to complete the return. It was for this reason that the form had not been included in the report. With this information in mind, the Service Director – Customers requested an amendment to Recommendation 2.1.

The Systems and Technical Manager added it had been difficult to complete the form namely owing to receiving it late, but also as a result of the uncertainties produced by the pandemic.

Following the information that had been provided regarding the return form, the Service Director – Customers advised that the return form was not available to be approved, therefore it was suggested that Recommendation 2.1 be deleted.

The Service Director – Customers also suggested that Recommendation 2.3 be amended to read: ‘that the Committee delegates the sign-off and any subsequent amendments to the return resulting from changes to the form and any additional guidance, to the Service Director – Customers in consultation with the Service Director – Resources and the Committee Chair’

Councillor Sam North put forward an amendment to Recommendation 2.3, adding in ‘that the form be circulated to the Council Tax Setting Committee for comment’.

Councillor David Levett asked if the Committee were legally able to delegate the signing off of the form.

In response, the Service Director – Customers confirmed that this was able to happen.

The Systems and Technical Manager added that every year, owing to the form being received late, it had to be delegated down to the Executive Member and Service Director.

The Chair verified with Members that they were happy with the amended Recommendation 2.3.

It was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Recommendation 2.1 regarding the Draft NNDR 1 be deleted;
- (2) That the draft version of the NNDR sent to Councils by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) at 18.07hrs on Friday 18th December 2020, be noted.
- (3) That Recommendation 2.3 be amended to read: ‘that the Committee delegates the sign-off and any subsequent amendments to the return resulting from changes to the form and any additional guidance, to the Service Director – Customers in consultation with the Service Director – Resources and the Committee Chair and that the form be circulated to the Council Tax Setting Committee for comment;
- (4) That the sign-off and any subsequent amendments to the return resulting from changes to the form and any additional guidance be delegated to the Service Director – Customers in consultation with the Service Director – Resources and the Committee Chair and that the form be circulated to the Council Tax Setting Committee for comment.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To comply with statutory requirements.

The meeting closed at 5.17 pm

Chair