



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 6 January 2015 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Butt (Chair), Councillor Moher (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Crane, Denselow, Hirani, Kansagra, McLennan and Pavey

Also present: Councillor Chohan

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 November 2014 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Moher in the list of members present.

3. Matters arising

None.

4. Calculation of Council Tax Base 2015-16

Mick Bowden (Operational Director, Finance) presented a report to the committee setting out council tax base calculations to be used for 2015/16. The level of council tax base set would be used in the calculation of the council tax for 2015/16 and regulations required that the council tax base be set by 31 January, prior to the start of the financial year.

It was explained that the calculation was initially based on the council tax base return submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in October 2014, which was used in government grant calculations. For 2015/16 the tax base used in grant calculations was 85,802 Band D equivalent properties. This figure assumed 100 per cent collection of council tax; in practice, actual amounts collected would vary and it was considered prudent to assume an overall eventual collection level of 96.5 per cent for 2015/16. This estimated level of council tax collection took into account improvements in recent years of in-year collection and the smaller than anticipated reduction of collection rate following the introduction of Council Tax Support. It was therefore proposed that the council tax base for 2015/16 be set at 82,799 representing an increase of 3,594 over the figure for 2014/15. This would form part of the overall calculation of the Council's budget.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the collection rate for the council tax for 2015/16 is set at 96.50 per cent;
- (ii) that, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount calculated by the council as its council tax base for 2015/16 is set at 82,799.

5. Calculation of business rates (NNDR) income 2015-16

Mick Bowden (Operational Director, Finance) presented a report to the committee setting out the calculation of the estimated income from National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR), also known as Business Rates, to be used for 2015/16. This figure would be used in the calculation of the council tax requirement for 2015-16 and had to be agreed by 31 January 2015.

The committee was informed that the estimate for the actual income figure (or net rate yield) for 2015/16 was based on a return to the Department for Communities and Local Government called the NNDR1. The NNDR1 had not yet been issued by DCLG and the report reflected the latest estimate, incorporating the impact of announcements on NNDR within the Autumn Statement. The estimated income from NNDR for 2015/16 had been calculated as £115m of which Brent would retain 30 per cent (£34.07m). The committee was asked to delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to amend the figures to reflect any changes necessary once the final statutory calculation was made.

Mick Bowden outlined the method of calculating the net rate yield for 2015/16, explaining that a multiplier set by the government was applied to the aggregate rateable value for Brent as at 31 December 2014; this was a fixed figure based on the Valuation Office's (VO) valuations for all Brent properties at that date. The resulting figure was then adjusted to account for various uncertainties, including the anticipated impact of appeals against VO valuations. The council was required to undertake a further calculation at the end of each year of a surplus or deficit on the NNDR part of the collection fund, with Brent either receiving or bearing responsibility for 30 per cent of this.

During members' discussion, it was queried whether the council bore the impact of successful appeals against VO valuations which had been backdated to 2010, despite local retention of business rates being introduced in 2013/14. Further information was sought regarding the anticipated number of successful appeals. Members requested additional details of the criteria for debts categorised as irrecoverable.

Mick Bowden advised that Brent would bear 30 per cent of the impact of successful appeals submitted from April 2013. An allowance had been made for an average of a 6 per cent reduction of the retained income figure which was in line with resolved cases to date. Debts were considered irrecoverable in circumstances where businesses had gone into liquidation and there were no assets recoverable or where small traders could not be traced.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the estimated income from NNDR for 2015/16 be set at £115m, with Brent's share of this being £34.07m;
- (ii) that authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer to amend these figures to reflect any changes necessary once the final statutory calculation has been made.

6. Stopping Up Order - Durham Court, Kilburn Park Road and Gloucester House, Cambridge Road

Eric Marchais (Team Leader – Traffic Orders) presented a report to the committee seeking authority to make a Stopping Up Order for an area of public highway consisting of footpaths, roads, a podium area and ancillary land at Durham Court and Gloucester House under Section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA 1990). The meeting was informed that the Order was required to complete the development of the Durham Court and Gloucester House site. The development would provide for 4-8 storey blocks, comprising 236 flats (134 private and 102 affordable (social rent)), an energy centre for the South Kilburn Neighbourhood Decentralised Heating System, basement car park, associated landscaping and general amenity space, and the provision of a replacement public space and play area.

Eric Marchais highlighted that one objection had been raised regarding the proposed Order by National Grid but the company had indicated that they might decide to retract their objection subject to the outcome of a more detailed assessment and further negotiation with council officers. Drawing members' attention to the financial implications detailed in the report, Eric Marchais explained that the cost of the Stopping Up Order would not be recharged to the developer partner as indicated in the report, rather the Regeneration Team would meet the costs as part of the process of developing the land.

In the subsequent discussion queries were raised regarding access to the playground area, the rationale for the council bearing the cost of the Order and the objection raised by National Grid. In response, Noreen Twomey (Project Manager, South Kilburn) explained that the playground would be re-provided as part of the development of the site. The costs for the Order would be met by the Regeneration team as part of work undertaken to assemble the land for development and would be drawn from the land receipts from previous regeneration phases. Eric Marchais advised that it was not uncommon for National Grid to raise an objection where they had apparatus located near to the development and that officers would seek to resolve their concerns through further discussion and negotiation.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that it be noted that the draft Stopping Up Order had been advertised in accordance with the requirements of Section 247 TCPA 1990 and that in response to the consultation, 5 consultees had informed the Council that they had apparatus in the area. Of these responses, the National Grid objected to the draft Stopping Up Order and Thames Water reserved the right to object if assurances were not given regarding its apparatus;

- (ii) that the objections raised to the proposed Stopping Up Order detailed in the report be noted;
- (iii) that the Stopping Up Order be agreed and advertised subject to the resolution of the objections detailed in the report from the Strategic Director of Environment and neighbourhoods.

7. Appointments to Sub-Committees / Outside Bodies

RESOLVED:

- (i) that Councillor Kansagra be appointed to the Senior Staff Appointment Sub Committee
- (ii) that Councillor Colwill be appointed as a substitute member of the Senior Staff Appointment Sub Committee
- (iii) that Councillor BM Patel be appointed as a substitute member of the Senior Staff Appointment Sub Committee.

8. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 6.27pm

M BUTT
Chair