



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Monday 9 December 2019 at 11.30 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Butt (Chair), Councillor McLennan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Agha, Farah, Colwill, Hirani, Krupa Sheth and Tatler

1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

There were no apologies for absence.

2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interests made by Members.

3. **Deputations (if any)**

There were no deputations received.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Monday 22 July 2019 be approved as an accurate record.

5. **Matters arising (if any)**

There were no matters arising.

6. **Calculation of Council Tax Base 2020/21**

Ravinder Jassar (Head of Finance, Brent Council) introduced a report setting out the Council Tax base for 2020/21 in order to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory role under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended).

Members noted that calculation of the Tax Base was based on a formula involving two elements:

- A. the number of taxable properties shown as "Band D equivalents" which for 2020/21 had been calculated at 99,975 net properties; and
- B. the estimated lifetime collection rate for the year, which had been set at 97.63% and remained unchanged from 2019/20.

Therefore, the calculation of the Council Tax base for 2020/21 was proposed as follows – A (99,975) multiplied by B (97.63%) = 97,605

In presenting the report, the Committee were advised that the calculation for the number of taxable properties had included an estimate for the number of new housing developments anticipated across the borough and reflected a 2% growth in the rate of housebuilding compared to the equivalent position in 2018. The general trend was also supported by the level of new Council Tax registrations currently awaiting banding by the Valuation Office Agency. Members noted the position would, however, continue to be monitored so that if, at any time, the rate of new properties coming on stream slowed a further adjustment could be made to ensure the collection fund remained in balance.

Details were also sought by the Committee on how the expected lifetime collection rate on which the current calculation was based compared to other local authorities. In response, Ravinder Jassar advised that the recommended rate had been based on an historical analysis of collection rates along with the inclusion of an appropriate non-collection allowance as provided for within legislation. Carolyn Downs (Chief Executive) advised that the collection rate compared well to performance within other billing authorities and highlighted that whilst debt continue to be pursued a balanced approach had been adopted in Brent that distinguished between those more vulnerable clients and others who refused to pay. This approach had also been reflected within the Council Tax Protocol, ongoing work with bailiffs and the changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme. Having noted the need to ensure an adequate non-collection allowance was built into the basis of the calculation and work being undertaken to pursue debt, members also recognised that there would be a level of debt that needed to be written-off as it became statute barred.

Given the issues raised, the Chief Executive suggested that a further paper be provided for Members with an outline of the overall approach adopted by the Council in relation to debt collection and in order to seek the necessary approvals (now that the collection service had been bought back in-house) to any outstanding debt that needed to be written off. Members also requested that the additional paper include an update on the impact of the Council Tax Protocol since its adoption in Brent.

As no further issues were raised, it was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To agree that the Band D equivalent number of properties be calculated, as shown within the report, in accordance with the Government regulations
- (2) That the collection rate for Council Tax for 2020/21 be set at 97.63%;
- (3) Subject to (1) and (2) above, a Council Tax Base for 2020/21 of 97,605 Band D equivalent properties (after collection rate allowance deduction) be approved.
- (4) That a further report be provided for Members outlining the Council's approach towards the management and collection of Council Tax debt (including the impact of the Council Tax Protocol) and seeking the necessary approvals to any debt requiring write-off.

7. Exclusion of Press and Public

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.

8. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 11:45am

Councillor Muhammed Butt
Chair