

CABINET EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Narborough

MONDAY, 13 JANUARY 2025

Present:

Councillor Terry Richardson (Leader of the Council) (Leader)
Councillor Maggie Wright (Finance, People & Performance Portfolio Holder) (Deputy Leader)

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| Cllr. Cheryl Cashmore | - Health, Leisure, Climate and Economic Development Portfolio Holder |
| Cllr. Nigel Grundy | - Neighbourhood Services & Assets Portfolio Holder |
| Cllr. Les Phillimore | - Housing, Community Safety and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder |
| Cllr. Ben Taylor | - Planning, Transformation and ICT Portfolio Holder |

Also in attendance as Observers:

Cllr. Nick Brown - Scrutiny Commission Chairman
Cllr. Neil Wright – Scrutiny Commission Vice-Chairman

Officers present:-

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| Julia Smith | - Chief Executive |
| Marc Greenwood | - Executive Director - Place |
| Louisa Horton | - Executive Director - Communities |
| Sarah Pennelli | - Executive Director - S.151 Officer |
| Gemma Dennis | - Corporate Services Group Manager |
| Katie Brooman | - Elections and Governance Manager |
| Joanne Davis | - Accountancy Services Manager |
| Sarabjit Khangura | - Council Tax Income and Debt Manager |
| Nicole Cramp | - Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer |

164. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

No disclosures were received.

165. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2024, as circulated, were approved and signed as a correct record.

166. PUBLIC SPEAKING PROTOCOL

No requests were received.

167. MINUTES SILENCE IN REMEMBRANCE OF MAL LEITCH

The Chairman, Cllr. Terry Richardson invited Members and Officers to join him for a minutes silence in remembrance of Mal Leitch who had sadly passed away on Monday 6 January 2025.

Mal Leitch was a long serving colleague and a much-loved member of the District Cleansing team. Our deepest condolences and thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues at the depot.

168. COUNCIL TAX - SECOND HOME PREMIUM AND EMPTY PROPERTY PREMIUM AMENDMENTS

Considered – Report of the Environmental Services Manager.

Other Options Considered:

The alternative considered was to keep the empty home premium at its current level and not to introduce the second home premium but given the priority to increase the availability of affordable housing in the district this would not help to utilise this measure to encourage owners to bring properties back into occupation.

DECISIONS

1. To increase Council Tax for all properties which are occupied periodically by 100% from 1 April 2026 subject to any exemptions set out the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
2. To increase the Council Tax empty homes premium to 100% for properties empty for between one and five years (currently over 2 years) from 1 April 2026 subject to any exemptions set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and guidance.
3. To increase the Council Tax empty homes premium to 200% for properties empty for between five years and ten years from 1 April 2026 subject to any exemptions set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and guidance.
4. To increase the Council Tax empty homes premium to 300% for properties empty over ten years from 1 April 2026 subject to any exemptions set out in Local Government Finance Act 1992 and guidance.

*All recommendations are subject to feedback following the end of the consultation period at 11.59pm on Monday 6th January.

Reasons:

1. The purpose of changing the Empty Homes Premium for long-term empty properties is to provide owners with a further incentive to bring empty homes back into use, thus supporting the aims of the Council's Empty Homes Enforcement Strategy as well as generating additional Council Tax income. The current Empty Homes Premium that is applied by the Council is 100% for properties that have been empty for 2 years and over.
2. The purpose of the Second Home Premium is to close the loophole where furnishing an empty property negates the Empty Home Premium charge as well as generating additional Council Tax income.

169. ESTABLISHMENT 2024/25 AND 2025/26

Considered – Report of the Environmental Services Manager.

Cllr. Les Phillimore arrived at the meeting during consideration of this item.

Other Options Considered:

Not to produce a separate report on establishment costs ahead of the main budget proposals. This option is not considered appropriate given that the establishment budget constitutes such a significant proportion of core costs.

DECISIONS

1. That the latest forecast in respect of the 2024/25 establishment be accepted.
2. That the proposed establishment budget for 2025/26 be approved.
3. That additional resource requirement for 2025/26 as set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report, be approved.

Reason:

The cost of the establishment is a significant part of the council's overall budget and members are asked to consider and approve the budget for the next financial year. The final establishment costs will be incorporated into the General Fund budget for consideration in February 2025.

170. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2025/26

Considered – Report of the Environmental Services Manager.

Other Options Considered:

None – the setting of the Council Tax Base is a statutory requirement.

DECISIONS

1. That the Council Tax Base for the Year 2025/26 be set at £34,672.75.
2. The amount calculated by Blaby District Council as the Council Tax Base for each of the Districts Parishes for the year 2025/26 is shown at Appendix C of the report.
3. That the Tax Base be prepared without taking into account special expenses under Section 34a and 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Reasons:

1. That the Council is statutorily required to set its base each year by 31st January before the subject year.
2. To enable the Tax Base to be prepared without taking into account special expenses as explained within the report.

171. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES BASE 2025/26

Considered – Report of the Environmental Services Manager.

Other Options Considered:

None. The setting of the NNDR Base is a statutory requirement.

DECISIONS

1. That the amount calculated by Blaby District Council as its National Non Domestic Rate Base for the financial year 2025/26 shall be £54,000,207.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director (Section 151) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to make amendments, if required, to the draft National Non-Domestic Rate Base prior to submission of the NNDR1 return by 31st January 2025.

Reasons:

1. The Council has a statutory obligation to set its National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) Base for 2025/26 by 31st January 2025.
2. It is appropriate for the Executive Director (Section 151) to have authority to amend the National Non-Domestic Rate Base in line with the finalised NNDR1 submission, to ensure that all known factors are considered.

172. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND DEVOLUTION

Considered – Report of the Chief Executive.

Other Options Considered: Not seeking Delegated Authority is not considered appropriate to ensure openness and transparency.

DECISIONS

1. That the content of the English Devolution White Paper and the Government's intention to create unitary authorities as well as the current position in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland be noted.
2. That the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland where there is a satisfactory outcome for local government organisation under the new Strategic Authority (SA) be supported.
3. That delegated authority be given to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to engage with other local authorities, the government and relevant partners to develop the proposal to create a Mayoral Strategic Authority and develop options relating to local government re-organisation to ensure that Blaby District Council and its residents are represented as far as possible in ongoing discussions with the Government.
4. That an initial £50,000 be released from reserves to support work arising from the White Paper.
5. That that further reports be brought to Cabinet and Council to consider the implications for the Council and our communities as a result of proposals.

Reasons:

1. The position of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland in relation to Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution is changing rapidly, the current position is noted.
2. To enable a dynamic approach to the changing environment it is necessary for delegated Authority to be given to ensure Blaby District residents are engaged and represented.
3. Further reports will be presented to members for debate, consideration and transparency.
4. To enable expenditure to ensure we are responsive to key issues and able to contribute to work on behalf of all Districts in Leicestershire.
5. To ensure members are engaged and informed.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6.19 P.M.