

ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

25 FEBRUARY 2021

(7:30 pm - 9:58 pm)

The Mayor (Councillor Margaret Thompson)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Sushila Abraham)

Councillors

Zain Abbas	Lesley Heap
Sushila Abraham	Alison Holt
Steph Archer	Jason Hughes
Roy Arora	Caroline Kerr
Kim Bailey	Andreas Kirsch
Rowena Bass	Katrina Lidbetter
Mark Beynon	Rebekah Moll
Fiona Boulton	Maria Netley
Olivia Boulton	Munir Ravalia
Tim Cobbett	Dave Ryder-Mills
David Cunningham	Anita Schaper
Emily Davey	Malcolm Self
Kevin Davis	Nicola Sheppard
Lorraine Dunstone	*Christine Stuart
Mark Durrant	Sharron Falchikov-Sumner
Simon Edwards	John Sweeney
Sam Foulder-Hughes	Thay Thayalan
Ed Fram	Jon Tolley
Hilary Gander	Olly Wehring
Ian George	Diane White
Dennis Goodship	Annette Wookey
Liz Green	Yogan Yoganathan
Jaesung Ha	Sharon Young

* Absent

52. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Christine Stuart.

53. Declarations of Interest

The Mayor advised that the Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all Members to vote on the Budget and Council Tax item, on the grounds that the item unusually spans the entirety of the Council's activity and consequently, it was more likely that a Member would find themselves with interests which would arguably be regarded as a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest which would preclude them, otherwise, from participating in the Budget debate.

54. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 15 December 2020, were approved as a correct record.

55. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor announced that the Mayor's Ball which was provisionally due to take place on 23rd April would need to be cancelled.

As customary at the February Council meeting, the Mayor extended the Council's congratulations to all those who lived or worked in the Royal Borough who were honoured in this year's New Year's Honours list.

It was also announced that the Mayor had received a large number of nominations for the annual Mayor's Awards. In addition to the normal Community Awards this year there was also a special category of Covid Awards and the judging Panel had recently had the difficult task of trying to decide which individuals and organisations were particularly worthy of special recognition. It was noted that the Council would shortly announce all of the recipients of an award.

The Mayor reminded Members that the Mobile Mop Up project which had been run in the borough in partnership with Genuine Solutions was underway. The Mayor called for donations of unwanted mobile phones so that they could be reused or the parts recycled, so the Mayor's Charitable Trust could continue to benefit from the proceeds raised.

56. Petitions

There were no petitions.

57. Revenue and Capital Budget 2021-22 & Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25 Appendix A

To enable the Council to approve the budget and set the Council Tax for 2021/22, Members considered a report (at Appendix A of the agenda), in association with the 'Budget Report 2021/22 to 2024/25' pack which had been published and circulated separately to Members.

The Budget Report pack included detailed information in the following Annexes:

- Annex 01 - Budget Risk 2021-22,
- Annex 02 - Reconciliation between original budget 2020_21 and proposed budget 2021_22,
- Annex 03 - Statutory Council Tax Calculation 2021-22,
- Annex 04 - Parking, Bus Lanes & Moving Traffic 2020-21,
- Annex 05 - RBK Budget Growth 2021-22 - amended,
- Annex 06 - RBK Budget Savings 2021-22 to 2024-25 - amended,
- Annex 07 - Summary of 2021-22 Budget by Service,
- Annex 08 - Summary of 2021-22 Budget by expenditure type,

- Annex 09 - Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2021-22,
- Annex 10 HRA BUDGET REPORT 2021-22,
- Annex 11 - Kingston Capital Strategy 2021-25,
- Annex 11 - Enclosure 1 - Capital Programme 2021-22-2024-25 (2021-22),
- Annex 12 - RBK Treasury Strategy 2021-25,
- Annex 13 - RBK Pay Policy Statement 2021-22,
- Annex 14 - RBK Schools Budget 2021-22,
- Annex 14 - Enclosure 1 - Schools Budget 2021-22,
- Annex 14 - Enclosure 2 - Schools Budget 2021-22,
- Annex 14 - Enclosure 3 - Schools Budget 2021-22,
- Updated Annex 03 - Statutory Council Tax Calculation 2021-22 (as set out in the published late material),

Key features of the 2021/22 Budget proposals were:

- Growth and investment in services to meet the Council's key priorities and demand pressures of £11.535m
- The identification of £7.415m of revenue savings, of which £3.093m were as a direct result of the Transformation programme.
- An average Council Tax at band D of £1,693.57, a 1.99% increase in the Council Tax set by Kingston Council and a 3% increase in the Adult Social Care precept.
- A general fund reserve of £19.633m for 2021/22 was held at the level of this year's figure with no increase applied.
- A Capital Programme to provide infrastructure investment in Kingston. The general fund capital programme over four years from 2021/22 would be £113.3m.

Members noted that the Budget was designed to support the Council in meeting the significant challenges it faced in ensuring services for its residents and some of the most vulnerable communities were protected against a backdrop of increasing demand in terms of volume and complexity, decreasing resources available to fund those services and the ongoing financial challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Executive Director, Corporate and Communities had been authorised by the Response and Recovery Committee to make any necessary changes to the GLA precept in the Council Tax Calculation (Annex A) (which might arise from the GLA Budget meeting on 25 February) prior to submission to Budget Council. However, Late Material circulated prior to the Council meeting reported that, in the event, the GLA budget had been approved without amendment and therefore no amendments to the Council Tax calculation in Annex A were necessary. The Late Material also confirmed that the final local government finance settlement for 2021/22 had included no changes to the provisional figures which had been included in the budget report pack.

(1) In order for the proposals to be presented in detail at the Council meeting by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Commissioning, Councillor Andreas Kirsch (in place of the Leader of the Council), in accordance with Procedure Rule 16 (1), it was **Resolved** that Procedure Rule 10 (12) be suspended to allow the Portfolio Holder to speak for longer than 4 minutes.

(2) Councillor Andreas Kirsch proposed and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Caroline Kerr, seconded the recommendations to the Council set out in the report at Appendix A to the agenda.

(3) Councillor Sharron Falchikov-Sumner proposed an amendment (with accompanying comments from the Section 151 Officer), which was seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Kevin Davis, as follows:

‘Council notes

The pandemic has been difficult for everyone - many local people have lost jobs, been furloughed or faced financial uncertainty. Children have similarly faced a year of disrupted education, anxiety and isolation from friends and wider family.

The evidence which shows it is the poorest in our community that have been hit hardest. The BMJ (<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n376>) wrote (21 February 2021):

Containment and lockdown measures have disproportionately affected low income families with young children. Recent research identified the extra costs involved in having children at home for longer without access to vital free services, requiring increased spending on food, heating, and occupying children indoors. Over a third of low income families with children increased their spending during 2020, while 40% of high income families without children reduced theirs.

That councillors and senior officers have been more insulated from these financial concerns with guaranteed incomes and no threat of losing their livelihoods unlike the poorest families in our borough.

Council recognises

The amazing way our borough (and the communities that make it up) has pulled together during this pandemic and we thank every person, family, community group and business for their compassion, grit and reliance during the last 12 months.

By each of the community leaders here tonight making a small sacrifice (by way of our above inflation pay increases) we can pool this money together and help some of the boroughs children recover from the anxiety and isolation of lockdown.

Council believes

We have a duty to protect the poorest and most vulnerable in our borough.

As we look forward to the end of the pandemic we need targeted action to deal with its longer term effects on the poorest children in our borough - particularly on their educational achievement and mental health. Children living in families

without the financial strength to have proper home learning through lack of IT or broadband are also likely to be the ones living in accommodation with the least access to open space and will have disproportionately lost out on learning and have suffered the greatest mental health impacts as a result.

Therefore Council calls for:

1. A freeze on councillor allowances in 2021/22.
2. A freeze on senior officer pay for 2021/2022– defined as officers holding the rank of assistant director and above.
3. The £41,500 raised by the above measures to be allocated equally between the four Neighbourhood Committee (£10,375 each) to create a fund for use in supporting school aged children who have experienced mental health problems or educational disadvantage during the pandemic.
4. Each neighbourhood to proactively invite applications from affected families, community organisations and individuals, local charities and self help groups for small grants to provide equipment, events or help services for school aged children to help them reintegrate back into their educational settings.'

(4) The Mayor adjourned the meeting to allow the Council to consider the amendment. On the Council reconvening, the Mayor exercised discretion to waive the limit to allow more than 10 speakers in the ensuing discussion.

(5) After debate, the amendment was put to the vote and was declared defeated –

Voting:

For: 1 Member of the Council (Councillor Sharron Falchikov-Sumner)

Against: 35 Members of the Council (The Mayor, Councillor Margaret Thompson, and Councillors Zain Abbas, Sushila Abraham, Stephanie Archer, Kim Bailey, Mark Beynon, Fiona Boulton, Olivia Boulton, Tim Cobbett, Emily Davey, Lorraine Dunstone, Mark Durrant, Simon Edwards, Sam Foulder-Hughes, Hilary Gander, Dennis Goodship, Liz Green, Jaesung Ha, Lesley Heap, Alison Holt, Caroline Kerr, Andreas Kirsch, Katrina Lidbetter, Rebekah Moll, Munir Ravalia, Dave Ryder-Mills, Anita Schaper, Malcolm Self, John Sweeney, Thay Thayalan, Jon Tolley, Diane White, Annette Wookey, Yogan Yoganathan and Sharon Young.)

Abstaining: 10 Members of the Council (Councillors Roy Arora, Rowena Bass, David Cunningham, Kevin Davis, Ed Fram, Ian George, Jason Hughes, Maria Netley, Nicola Sheppard and Olly Wehring)

(6) The recommendations set out in the report at Appendix A to the agenda were put to the meeting and, after further debate, it was:

Resolved that:

[References to 'the report' are to the report at Annex 1 to Appendix A in the Council agenda pack. Other references are to the Budget Report Pack.]*

1. the budget proposals and Council Tax for 2021/22 as set out in the Budget Report Pack report and annexes, be approved.
2. the relevant officers to take necessary action to deliver the agreed budget and service changes, including increasing relevant fees and charges in line with inflation, be authorised.
3. in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the comments of the Executive Director, Corporate and Communities in regard to the robustness of estimates and the level of reserves and balances as set out in the section “Comments of the Executive Director, Corporate and Communities (S151 Officer)” in paragraphs 24 to 33 of the Budget Report Pack, be noted;
4. in accordance with sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Act 1992, the amounts in the statutory Council Tax calculation, Annex 3 of the Budget Report pack) for the financial year 2021/22 be calculated;
5. the Capital Strategy including the detailed capital programme for 2021/22 to 2024/25 as set out in Annex 11 to the Budget Report and the Treasury Strategy including the Annual Investment Strategy, prudential indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy as set out in Annex 12 to the Budget Report, be approved;
6. the HRA 2021-22 base budget and proposal for growth and savings as set out in Annex 10 of the Budget Report Pack, be approved;
7. the pay policy at Annex 13 to the budget report, be approved;
8. the Schools Budget for 2021-22 in line with paragraph 16 and Enclosure 1 of Annex 14 to this report, be approved;
9. the proposals outlined for the Central School Services Block (ref. paras 25-27) of Annex 14 to this report), be approved;
10. the proposals outlined for the Early Years Block including the transfer of £162k to the High Needs Block (ref. paras. 28 - 33) of Annex 14 to this report), be approved;
11. the proposals for the High Needs Block (outlined in Annex 14 paras. 34-37), be approved;
12. the proposals outlined for the Schools Block (ref. paras 19-24 of Annex 14) and the Schools Funding Formula outlined in Enclosure 2 of Annex 14 and the Schools Allocations in Enclosure 3 of Annex 14 be approved, including a Minimum Funding Guarantee of +0.5% per pupil (ref. paras 21-22 of Annex 14), be approved.

Voting:

For: 36 Members of the Council (The Mayor, Councillor Margaret Thompson, and Councillors Zain Abbas, Sushila Abraham, Stephanie Archer, Kim Bailey, Mark Beynon, Fiona Boulton, Olivia Boulton, Tim Cobbett, Emily Davey, Lorraine Dunstone, Mark Durrant, Simon Edwards, Sam Foulder-Hughes, Hilary Gander, Dennis

Goodship, Liz Green, Jaesung Ha, Lesley Heap, Alison Holt, Caroline Kerr, Andreas Kirsch, Katrina Lidbetter, Rebekah Moll, Munir Ravalia, Dave Ryder-Mills, Anita Schaper, Malcolm Self, John Sweeney, Thay Thayalan, Jon Tolley, Olly Wehring, Diane White, Annette Wookey, Yogan Yoganathan and Sharon Young.)

Against: 9 Members of the Council (Councillors Roy Arora, Rowena Bass, David Cunningham, Kevin Davis, Ed Fram, Ian George, Jason Hughes, Maria Netley and Nicola Sheppard)

Abstaining: 1 Member of the Council (Councillor Sharron Falchikov-Sumner)

58. Appointments of Members to Committees, Panels and other bodies

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Council.

59. Urgent Items authorised by the Mayor

There were no urgent items.

Signed.....Date.....

Chair

Signed:.....Date:

The Mayor