

North Tyneside Council

Report to Council

21 January 2021

Motions

Notice has been received of the following motions from Members of the Council to be put to the Council meeting.

1. Motion signed by Councillors S Brockbank, L Bartoli and K Barrie

Coastal Investment.

In advance of the Mayor presenting her budget at the next meeting of Council, North Tyneside Council asks:

The Mayor to note:

- Council currently holds over £66.9 million in reserves;
- Incomes of hardworking families in North Tyneside have been squeezed through this pandemic;
- North Tyneside Council has already been allocated an extra £8,260,000 for the coming financial year;
- Under this administration, Council Tax has increased by a whopping 24.4% since Mayor Redfearn's election as Mayor, leaving hardworking families hundreds of pounds per year worse off;
- Labour Leader, Kier Starmer, has called the proposed increase in Council Tax this year "absurd" given the current economic climate.

The Mayor to commit to:

- Freezing Council Tax for the coming financial year, taking into account the hardship that working families have experienced;
- Delivering a budget which will see significant investment in our coastal communities and businesses which have been hit hardest by the pandemic;
- Putting any increase in Council Tax to a public referendum to give residents the chance to have their say on further hikes;
- Considering further ways that those hardest hit by the pandemic can be supported to cover Council Tax contributions.

Legal Implications:

There are no immediate direct legal implications arising from this motion for the Authority. The motion seeks the Elected Mayor to commit to a number of particular suggestions. It should be noted that the responsibility for the determination of the Authority's budget is shared between the Cabinet and Full Council – each has a role in the development of the Authority's budget and the setting of the level of Council Tax. In the process of the determination of the budget and level of Council Tax, advice and guidance will be provided to the Elected Mayor and Cabinet and Full

Council by the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Resources as to the implications of any proposals.

Financial implications:

Tax now funds over 60% of the Council's net budget bringing increasing significance of any proposal to increase or freeze council tax on the Authority's ability to deliver services and to make any investment across the borough.

Freezing Council Tax will bring significant concerns of financial sustainability for the authority. The Local Government Act 2003, section 25, sets out the statutory duty of the Section 151 Officer to report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves. In regard to this requirement the Section 151 Officer necessarily considers the risks in relation to the financial position of the Authority at the time of setting the budget and also in the medium term. The advice of the Section 151 Officer is that the most significant risks to the Authority currently identified (although others exist and have been taken into account by the Section 151 Officer) are that: Central Government Funding will continue to reduce, the Authority will continue to be subject to increasing pressure, both demographically and financially with regard to the provision of Adult Social Care Services and the Authority will continue to be subject to increasing financial pressure, with regard to the provision of Children's Social Care Services, and, the challenging circumstances associated with the response and recovery to the COVID 19 pandemic. These pressures alone are significant when compared to unearmarked reserves.

The Reserves of £66.9m includes all Reserves, including School Balances, General Fund Balances and a number of earmarked reserves. Earmarked reserves are for specific purposes for example grant reserves with specific spending conditions, and PFI reserves for managing the profiling of the PFI grant over the life of the contract. Un-earmarked reserves include the Strategic Reserve of close to £15million at 1 April 2020, and the Change Reserve at £7.297m at 1 April 2020. These are low levels of reserves (3.67%) for an organisation with gross revenue expenditure of over £600 million.

The direct cost of holding a referendum is anticipated to be in the region of £300k, with the costs associated with any revised billing requirements in the region of £250-300k.

The Local Council Tax support scheme continues to be in place to support residents, as do a range of other financial support mechanisms such as the Welfare Support Fund, Discretionary Housing Payments, Section 17 Payments for Children.

2. Motion signed by Councillors Sean Brockbank, Lewis Bartoli and Pam McIntyre

Flood planning in North Tyneside.

Across many areas of North Tyneside, residents are concerned about the impact of flooding. In Monkseaton, for example, there are real worries expressed by the local community about alarming rises in water saturation on the fields adjacent to the Briar Vale locality and Langley Playing Fields; an area which will be heavily involved in the development of the Local Plan.

It was most welcome that Officers responded to Cllr. Brockbank's urgent enquiries on behalf of residents to offer some re-assurance, yet communities in our Borough will be rightly curious about what the Mayor and Council have in place to mitigate against extraordinary weather events in the years ahead. For some residents, it would appear that sandbags deposited in emergency situations along property boundaries, are not a planned response rather a stop-gap to plaster over a larger and more endemic issue.

Council calls upon the Elected Mayor and cabinet to review the flood response protocols, in light of weather anomalies, and in response to the proposed 3 000 extra houses proposed in coastal wards.

We also request the relevant cabinet member presents a detailed plan to the next meeting of Council on provisions to prevent a repeat of the severe flooding in Monkseaton - especially in light of the proposed Local Plan development.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications for the Authority arising from this motion.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications for the Authority arising from this motion.

3. Motion signed by Councillors L Bartoli, K Barrie and S Brockbank

Anti-social behaviour.

Crime and anti-social behaviour have been on the rise in the aftermath of lockdown, Northumbria's Police and Crime Commissioner has herself admitted that antisocial behaviour in particular is on the rise. Figures show that between April and June last year there was a 101% increase in reports made to Northumbria Police, in comparison to the same period in 2019.

Anti-social behaviour has been a huge problem for our coastal communities, in June 2020 Northumbria Police stepped up patrols in a bid to clamp down on troublemakers following a weekend of anti-social behaviour and litter on North Tyneside's beaches. The Christmas period again saw problems with litter and antisocial behaviour caused by our coastal villages becoming destination spots for groups of drinkers who also flouted our Covid-19 restrictions. With national restrictions now re-imposed this council is concerned that this will be repeated once the latest lockdowns are relaxed without a clear plan to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

We therefore ask the mayor to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner and request more support for our coastal communities as we move out of these national restrictions and to work constructively with all parties to put in place a clear plan to tackle anti-social behaviour along our coastline.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications for the Authority arising from this motion.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications for the Authority arising from this motion.