Full Council
On Wednesday 27th February 2019
At 7:00 pm in the Council Chamber, The Cube, George Street, Corby

Present: - Councillor Rahman (Mayor), Ferguson, Addison, P Beattie, T Beattie, Beeby, Butcher, Cassidy, Colquhoun, Dady, Elliston, Eyles, Goult, Keane, McEwan, McGhee, Pengelly, Watt & Watts.

62. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Brown, Caine, Reay, Riley, Rutt & Sims.

63. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate whether this was prejudicial or non-prejudicial, the nature of any interest, and whether they intended participating in the relevant agenda item.
No declarations were made.

64. Budget 2019/20 – General Fund Revenue Budget and Council Tax Setting


The proposed budget showed a balanced and sustainable position in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The proposed General Fund budget for 2019/20 was detailed in the report and appendices. The proposed total budget totalled £8.412m. This was within the parameters set by the MTFS. Variances from 2018/2019 were detailed including a modest amount of growth.

It was noted that One Corby Policy Committee at its meeting on 19th February 2019 had recommended an additional one-off growth amount of £300k for grants to voluntary/community organisations. The updated financial implications had been circulated to Members.

In relation to Council Tax, it was being proposed that Corby Borough Council’s portion of the Council Tax be subject to a freeze at 2018/19 levels, with no increase for 2019/20. Information regarding Council Tax and the level of balances, contribution to reserves and financial risks were detailed in the report.

Councillor T Beattie MOVED the recommendations. Councillor Addison SECONDED the recommendations.

Councillor T Beattie felt that the proposed budget was extremely positive for the Council in the current financial climate and continued to build on the successes of the Council’s strong financial leadership. It was one of the most straightforward budgets that the Council had
delivered in recent years and one where the Council were contributing to reserves and deciding over which growth proposals it should include rather than which services or posts the Council needed to cut back on.

Councillor T Beattie explained that this was largely due to a combination of factors. These included the difficult decisions that the Council had previously been taken, its willingness to look at new ways of working such as shared services, its pursuit of a growth agenda and more recently the Council’s commercial approach to investment properties.

Councillor T Beattie concluded by stating that the Council recognised and accepted the challenges that it would face over the next few years, overall its Budget for 2019/20 was another budget for service provision, investment, growth and opportunity. It was a budget that builds on the Council’s past achievements and would continue to deliver even more in Corby in support of the Council’s corporate aims.

Councillor Dady congratulated officers on ensuring a sustainable financial position. Councillor Dady expressed regret that the Council would be unable to determine local spending priorities in the future under unitary arrangements.

Councillor Butcher also thanked officers and noted that other precepting authorities in the county were planning increases for the Council Tax.

RESOLVED that:-

   i) The 2019/2020 Budget as set out in Appendix A be approved;
   ii) A Council Tax freeze for 2019/2020 be approved, representing a Band D Council Tax for Corby Borough Council of £189.50;
   iii) The Council Tax resolution as set out in Appendix C be approved; and
   iv) The use of and contribution to reserves as detailed in the balances and reserves section of the report be agreed.

(The following Councillors voted FOR the recommendation – Councillors Addison, P Beattie, T Beattie, Beeby, Butter, Cassidy, Colquhoun, Dady, Elliston, Eyles, Ferguson, Goult, Keane, McEwan, McGhee, Pengelly, Rahman, Watt & Watts. There were no votes AGAINST or ABSTENTIONS).

65. Budget 2019/20 – Housing Revenue Account and Rent Setting

The report set out the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2019/20.

An average rents reduction of 1% was being proposed in line with Government policy. The proposed budget showed a balanced and sustainable position in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

It was noted that the reduction in rents whilst beneficial financially to tenants and reduced the Government’s welfare bill was detrimental to the HRA capital programme. The Council were keen to invest in its housing stock but the reduction in rental income meant that this needed to be scaled-back.
The proposed changes from the 2018/2019 approved budget were also itemised in the report.

Councillor Eyles MOVED the recommendations. Councillor Addison SECONDED the recommendations.

Councillor Eyles stated that the 2019/20 budget for Housing Revenue Account continued to represent a challenging future for Council. Whilst the annual running and management costs could be maintained, the Government’s decision to reduce rents by 1% for 4 successive years continued to have a significant impact on the long term investment in the stock going forward. The Council were now moving into the final year of these 4 years and whilst this was good news for the tenant it meant that the £160m funding requirement over the next 30 years to keep the homes up to a decent standard would be some £80m short as the capital budget that was fully funded from the HRA would continue to be reduced during this 4 year period as a result of the 1% reduction. The impact of this was likely to be felt in the medium to long term rather than the immediate short term.

Councillor Eyles concluded that as with the General Fund, the Council recognised and accepted the challenges that it faced over the next few years, particularly in respect of the introduction of Rent Reductions, Welfare Reform and Universal Credit. Overall though, the Budget for 2019/20 was another budget for service provision, investment, growth and opportunity. It was a budget that built on the Council’s past achievements as a landlord and would continue to deliver even more in Corby in support of its corporate aims.

Councillor T Beattie welcomed the recent Government decision to lift the cap on HRA borrowing; this would assist in the Council continuing its development of social housing. Corby Council’s continuing progress had been noted at national level.

RESOLVED that:–

i) The 2019/2020 Budget as set out in Appendix A be approved; and

ii) An Average Rent Reduction for 2019/2020 of 1% be approved.

(The following Councillors voted FOR the recommendation – Councillors Addison, P Beattie, T Beattie, Beeby, Butcher, Cassidy, Colquhoun, Dady, Elliston, Eyles, Ferguson, Goult, Keane, McEwan, McGhee, Pengelly, Rahman, Watt & Watts. There were no votes AGAINST or ABSTENTIONS).

66. Budget 2019/20 – Capital Programme and Funding Strategy

The report set out the proposed capital programme for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2019/20 and the next 4-years.

Following several years of only essential or grant funded expenditure; the current General Fund capital programme was significantly increased as discussed by the Committee at its meeting in October 2018.
In terms of the HRA, there continued to be a significantly reduced annual programme following the 1% reduction in rents and Members would need to prioritise work moving forward.

Councillor Elliston MOVED the recommendations. Councillor Addison SECONDED the recommendations.

Councillor Elliston felt that it was a positive capital programme despite the current financial climate. Over £5m would be invested in local assets and this was welcomed. The Council would continue to seek to improve its housing stock and create new homes where it could.

Councillor McGhee sought assurance that Members would receive regular updates on the progress of the capital programme throughout the year, as it was important to ensure the works were being undertaken on time.

Councillor Watt welcomed the report and the continued investment in the housing stock. Councillor Watt also welcomed the capital allocation to be spent on shopping parades.

RESOLVED that:-

   i) The Capital Programme for 2019/2020 to 2023/2024 as set out in the report and Housing Improvement Programme as set out in Appendix A be approved; and

(The following Councillors voted FOR the recommendation – Councillors Addison, P Beattie, T Beattie, Beeby, Butcher, Cassidy, Colquhoun, Dady, Elliston, Eyles, Ferguson, Goult, Keane, McEwan, McGhee, Pengelly, Rahman, Watt & Watts. There were no votes AGAINST or ABSTENTIONS).

67. Pay Policy Statement

The Statement was submitted to Full Council to ensure compliance with s.38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011.

The aim of Pay Policy Statement was to provide transparency around chief and senior officer remuneration in local government. The Statement was not a policy in itself but a statement summarising the Council’s various remuneration policies, as agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

68. **Local Government Reform in Northamptonshire – Draft Structural Change Order (SCO)**

Full Council were being requested to endorse recommendations from the North Northamptonshire Steering Group in relation to preferences to be registered with the Government regarding the content of any future Northamptonshire Structural Change Order.

Subject to a final decision being made by the Secretary of State following his recent consultation exercise, there had been a need for senior officers and Members to discuss options for the creation of a Shadow Authority for North Northamptonshire ahead of the potential establishment of a new North Northamptonshire unitary authority.

These discussions had been held with senior representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and been influenced by the recent local government reform exercise being conducted in Dorset.

Government had indicated that should the Secretary of State support the reform proposal submitted by seven of the county’s local authorities on the 31st August 2018, then the preferred Vesting Day (the day the new council(s) would come into being) would be 1st April 2020. Given previous delays the timetable to organise Vesting Day had restricted. It had therefore been necessary to discuss plans and options ahead of the Secretary of State’s decision.

Members noted that Parliament had already postponed the scheduled local elections in Northamptonshire due to have been held in May 2019.

A decision by the Secretary of State was unlikely to be made until Spring 2019. If the decision was to proceed with the reform programme, there was a legislative timetable to be followed. This involved the laying before Parliament of a Structural Change Order (SCO).

The purpose of the SCO would be to facilitate the transition from the existing local authorities to the new unitary councils. The Order would define the basic governance and operating principles in the lead up to the new unitary authorities coming into existence on Vesting Day.

A Shadow Council would be created comprising all of the Members from Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire District Council, Kettering Borough Council, the Borough Council of Wellingborough and those Members from Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) representing divisions within the North Northamptonshire area.

This Shadow Council would be in operation until Vesting Day. The purpose of the Shadow Council would be to oversee arrangements for the creation of the new unitary authority and ensure there was continuity of service delivery to the public from 31st March 2020 (abolition of existing authorities) to 1st April 2020 (Vesting Day).

Councillor Pengelly felt that the process was being rushed and the Government should allow more time for the transition period to ensure processes and services were safe and legal.
Councillor T Beattie informed Council that a new Programme Director was in post, albeit initially on a part time basis. The timetable was tight and Government were still seeking Vesting Day as being on the 1st April 2019.

Councillor McGhee informed Council that he would not be abstaining from voting on this report and the subsequent report on the Joint Committee.

Councillor Butcher expressed her concern regarding the future of children’s services. Councillor Butcher felt that it was important that service be given time to improve performance; the unitary process was being rushed. Councillor T Beattie stated that it was expected that the Children’s Services Commissioner would report to Government soon.

RESOLVED that:-

i) The draft Structural Change Order preferences (as detailed in Appendix A) to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government be agreed; and

ii) Any changes to the submitted draft Structural Change Order, as arising from negotiations with Government officials, be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Monitoring Officer, where not expedient to formally report back to Full Council or duly appointed committee.

(Councillor John McGhee abstained from voting)

69. Local Government Reform in Northamptonshire – Proposed Joint Committee

Full Council considered a report recommending the Council’s participation in a Joint Committee to be established by the principal local authorities within North Northamptonshire, for the purpose of preparing for the establishment and operation of a Shadow Authority, subject to a final decision being made by the Secretary of State to implement local government reform in the county. All local authorities within North Northamptonshire were being requested to consider this matter.

Following concerns regarding the financial management of Northamptonshire County Council, on 9th January 2018 the Government appointed Max Caller to undertake an independent review of the authority and its Best Value duties. In the final report published on 15th March 2018, Mr Caller recommended that “the problems faced by NCC are now so deep and ingrained that it is not possible to promote a recovery plan…that could bring the council back to stability and safety in a reasonable timescale.” He recommended that “a way forward, with a clean sheet, leaving all the history behind is required”. It was Mr Caller’s recommendation that local government in Northamptonshire should be reorganised into two unitary councils.

In response to the inspection report, the Secretary of State announced that an invitation would be issued to the county council and the seven district and borough councils to come forward with proposals for the creation of unitary councils in place of the existing two-tier structure.
It was recognised that seven authorities agreed to the two unitary proposal being submitted. Corby Borough Council senior officers and senior Members have been working constructively with partners since the submission, to try to ensure that the local priorities and needs of local residents will be protected. To date, much of the discussion had related to governance structure rather than service delivery; the main reason for this was time pressure.

The transition from eight authorities to two unitary authorities needed to be completed by 1st April 2020 to comply with the timetable set by Government. This timetable was challenging as previously set. Given subsequent delays it was now unlikely, should the Secretary of State be minded to support the unitary proposal, that legislation would be in place until later than originally anticipated. Effectively, if progressed, the “Shadow Period” (the period leading up to the creation of the unitary authorities) has been reduced significantly.

In order to ensure that Corby Borough Council continued to be involved in the preparations ahead of any agreed unitary authority, it was being recommended that the Council agree to participate in a Joint Committee as detailed within the report and appendices.

The Joint Committee would have responsibilities associated with the creation and organisation of the Shadow Authority only. No other local authority decision making was being delegated.

The Joint Committee would assist in the partner local authorities reaching a collective position with regard to these important governance issues, prior to the creation of the Shadow Authority. In addition, the Joint Committee would be kept updated on the steps being taken for the overall Implementation Plan.

It was important that the local authorities demonstrated a continuation of partnership working to ensure that the process (subject to the Secretary of State’s decision) was inclusive and the maximum benefits achieved for the public, staff and other stakeholders.

RESOLVED that:-

i) A North Northamptonshire Joint Committee of 15 seats (three per council) be established (Borough Council of Wellingborough, Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire Council, Kettering Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council):

- Effective from the date of the Secretary of State deciding to create two new unitaries; and
- With delegated functions as set out in the terms of reference at Appendix A accompanying the report.

ii) Subject to the resolution above, the Monitoring Officer be delegated authority to produce a “North Northamptonshire Joint Committee Agreement” identifying appropriate standing orders and operating practices for the Committee and, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, to negotiate, finalise and enter into the proposed agreement with the other councils in North Northamptonshire; and
iii) Delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer, following consultation with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, to make any consequential changes to the Council’s Constitution arising from the creation of the Joint Committee.

(Councillor John McGhee abstained from voting)

70. Community Governance Review (CGR) for Corby

Full Council considered a report detailing terms of reference for the conduct of a Community Governance Review in relation to the unparished area of Corby Borough.

Currently a large part of the Borough (namely Corby town itself) was unparished. Subject to a Community Governance Review, the potential existed for a town/parish council to be created for Corby. It was stressed that any future town/parish council would not have the same level of duties and responsibilities as the current Borough Council. It would be subject to decisions made by any new principal council but would provide a level of local community identity and representation.

Any new council created following a Review could designate itself a “town council” and create a “Mayor of Corby” role. Existing village parish arrangements would be unaffected. Any new council would be able to levy a precept (as current parish councils do) to provide for its operation/function. Whilst some assets could be transferred from the Borough Council to any new council it was noted that the revenue and capital expenditure associated with these assets would probably need to be met from any local precept.

It was further noted that statutory functions and ownership/management of the housing stock would remain with the principal council. In addition, given the need for any new principal council to be financially sustainable it was unlikely that assets generating a significant income would be transferred, but that was supposition at this stage.

If assets were transferred then future liabilities would need to be met by local precept or where possible external grant funding.

A Community Governance Review if undertaken would need to be completed within 12 months. The Review would focus on the unparished area of Corby Borough only (Appendix C of the Terms of Reference). An initial public consultation would be conducted to gauge the level of interest in the creation of a town/parish council. Following this consultation, more detailed proposals would need to be approved by Members; these would also be subject to public consultation.

Ultimately the decision rested with Full Council as to whether a town/parish council be created. Any town/parish council would have precepting powers. Elections to any town/parish council would likely be held on the same day as elections for the local principal council (combined elections).

The number of councillors and wards would be determined as part of the Review process, together with the potential transfer of assets and civic responsibilities.
Any town/parish council would be subject to limitations both legal and financial on what
duties and responsibilities it could undertake.

Councillor McGhee hoped when deciding ward names that local preferences would be taken
into account.
Councillor Watts welcomed the report and felt it was important that the town of Corby had a
local voice.

RESOLVED that:-

i) The Terms of Reference (accompanying the report) for the Community
Governance Review of the unparished area of Corby Borough be approved; and

ii) Delegated authority be given to the Local Government Reform Sub-committee to
oversee the Review, provide Member decision making where required and
prepare final recommendations in relation to the outcome of the Review for final
determination by Full Council.

71. Appointment of Representatives to Stanion Parish Council

The Council had received an approach from Stanion Parish Council to exercise its powers
under section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Currently there were only 3 parish councillors on Stanion Parish Council due to resignations
and vacancies. There are currently 6 vacancies.

Corby Borough Council, as the principal council in this matter, had the power to appoint to
parish councils where the number of vacancies on a parish would cause the parish to be
unable to fulfil its statutory duties.

In the case of Stanion Parish Council they currently only had 3 parish councillors. The
quorum for parish meetings was 3. It was known that in March 2019 one of the 3 current
councillors would need to register a personal & prejudicial interest in an agenda matter.
Although a scheme of dispensation existed the interest was one where a dispensation would
not be appropriate.

In addition given that the parish council was operating on minimal numbers and there was no
imminent possibility of numbers increasing, ensuring that there was a safeguard in place to
cover absences in the near future was felt prudent.

The parish council had taken steps, and would continue to do so, to advertise vacancies and
encourage potential parish councillors to come forward.

It was being suggested that both Borough Ward Members be duly appointed. The
appointments would only be activated where there was a possibility formal meetings of the
parish council may be inquorate. The Member(s) would have full voting and speaking rights
when acting as a parish councillor.
RESOLVED that:-

i) The draft Order be confirmed and Councillor Julie Riley and Councillor William Colquhoun to act as parish councillors on Stanion Parish Council subject to s.91 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

72. Close of Meeting

Meeting closed at 7:54 pm.