

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 03 December 2018

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Richard Lewis (Chairman)
Glenvil Greenwood-Smith (Vice Chairman)
Steven North (Leader of the Council)
David Jenney (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Tony Boto
Val Carter
John Farrar
Roger Glithero JP

Helen Harrison
Rupert Reichhold
Phillip Stearn

299. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Brackenbury, Dudley Hughes JP, Andy Mercer and Sarah Peacock.

300. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to:

Minute 262 – Freedom Leisure Capital Investment Project – Conversion of Pemberton Suite at the Pemberton Centre

4th paragraph, add sentence to read “The Chairman clarified that each member of Rushden Town Council had been sent a copy of the letter before it had been submitted to ENC and no comments had been made on its contents.”

301. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was made:

Councillor	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Val Carter	Transfer from Members' Allowances Scheme Budget to Member Empowerment Fund	Wishes to transfer the increase in her Basic Allowance to the Member Empowerment Fund		Yes (left the meeting for consideration of the item)

302. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

No questions were submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

303. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

a) Personnel Sub-Committee – 5 November 2018

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 5 November 2018 were received (see pages 316 to 317).

b) Housing Policy Sub-Committee – 12 November 2018

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Policy Sub-Committee held on 12 November 2018 were received (see pages 318 to 320).

c) Personnel Sub-Committee – 26 November 2018

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 26 November 2018 were received (see pages 321 to 322).

304. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2019/2020

The Head of Customer and Community Services presented a report which set out the Council's estimated tax base for the financial year 2019/2020.

The estimated Billing Authority tax base for 2019/2020 was 31,860 compared to 31,348 for 2018/2019. The increase in the tax base was attributable mainly to property growth and the reduction in Council Tax Support expenditure, as follows:

2018/19 Tax base estimate	31,348	
18/19 adjustment	199	Actual new property occupations in addition to the 231 included in the original 2018/19 estimate.
New Properties	262	Anticipated number of new property occupations in 2019/20 (adjusted for anticipated relief and discount levels)
Council Tax Support (CTS)	106	Reduction in CTS expenditure due to caseload reducing as a consequence of welfare reforms.
Discounts	18	Reduction in the number of single occupier discounts awarded. Proactive work is carried out on reviewing these on a 12 month rolling basis.
Exemptions	(73)	Increases in the following exemptions: Class E – liable person in hospital or care home Class F – liable person is a personal representative of a deceased person Class I – liable person resides elsewhere to receive care

		Class P – occupied and owned/leased by a member of a visiting force Class U – occupied by only severely mentally impaired persons.
2019/20 Tax base estimate	31,860	

During discussion on the item, Members highlighted that ENC had always been prudent in its tax base estimates; however there had been some criticism that some authorities were being over prudent, and assurance was sought that the estimates in the report were the best figures available. In response, the Executive Director (Resources and Commercial) advised that during the current financial year the Council had over performed with more new properties being built and the new calculation had been amended to reflect that. It was an estimate and would be reviewed throughout the year.

R.19 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:

That a tax base of 31,860 for the year 2019/2020 be adopted.

(Reason: To fulfil the Council's statutory requirement.)

Councillor Val Carter left the meeting for the following item.

305. TRANSFER FROM MEMBERS ALLOANCES SCHEME TO MEMBERS EMPOWERMENT FUND

The Monitoring Officer presented a report which asked the Committee to consider if the principle of transferring budget from the Members' Allowances Budget to the Member Empowerment Fund was acceptable following a request from a councillor. Since the report had been published another councillor had also made the same request.

The Member Empowerment Fund (MEF) had initially been introduced in 2011 to allow ward councillors to support small local community projects and activities taking place in their wards. The MEF had been increased from £500 per councillor in its first year to £1,000 per councillor per annum in 2012/13. Provision was also made to enable carrying over an individual member's unspent funds from one financial year to the next over the 4-year term of office. The scheme was reviewed and confirmed for the current term of office (2015-19).

At the full Council meeting in October 2018, it was agreed to increase the level of the basic Members Allowance from £4807 to £5185 following the recommendations of the Independent Members Remuneration Panel. It was also agreed that this increase should be back-dated to May 2018. Following that meeting, a councillor indicated that they would like to forgo payment of the increase for the remainder of this term of office if it was possible for the increase of £378 to be added to their Member Empowerment Fund entitlement instead.

During discussion on the item, Members highlighted that the increase in the basic allowance had been recommended by an independent panel and felt that if individual councillors wished to distribute that increase then they were able to do so themselves. As we were coming to the end of the current four year cycle, any outstanding MEF funds would soon be transferred to the general fund and there was no guarantee at this time that the MEF would continue another year following the Secretary of State's proposal to defer the council elections in May 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the transfer of funding from the Members' Allowances budget to the Member Empowerment Fund budget not be approved.

(Reason: To provide transparency of process)

Chairman