



Democratic Support Service
PO Box 136
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MINUTES of the Budget Meeting of the NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at County Hall, Northampton on 29 February at 10.00am

PRESENT:

Councillor Phil Larratt (Chairman)
Councillor Malcolm Waters (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor	Sally Beardsworth	Councillor	Joan Kirkbride
"	Paul Bell	"	Graham Lawman
"	Wendy Brackenbury	"	Derek Lawson MBE
"	Julie Brookfield	"	Stephen Legg
"	Michael Brown	"	Chris Lofts
"	Robin Brown	"	David Mackintosh
"	Mary Butcher	"	John McGhee
"	Michael Clarke	"	Allan Matthews
"	Adam Collyer	"	Andy Mercer
"	Elizabeth Coombe	"	Dennis Meredith
"	Gareth Eales	"	Ian Morris
"	Brendan Glynane	"	Steve Osborne
"	Matt Golby	"	Bill Parker
"	André Gonzalez De Savage	"	Bhupendra Patel
"	Christopher Groome	"	Suresh Patel
"	James Hakewill	"	Ron Sawbridge MBE
"	Eileen Hales MBE	"	Bob Scott
"	Mike Hallam	"	Mick Scrimshaw
"	Jim Harker OBE	"	Judy Shephard
"	Stan Heggs	"	Heather Smith
"	Alan Hills	"	Danielle Stone
"	Sue Homer	"	Winston Strachan
"	Jill Hope	"	Michael Tye
"	Dudley Hughes	"	Sarah Uldall
"	Sylvia Hughes	"	Allen Walker
"	Cecile Irving-Swift		

Also in attendance (for all or part of the meeting):

Honorary Alderman John Bailey
Dr Akeem Ali, Director for Public Health & Wellbeing
Dr Paul Blantern, Chief Executive
Laurie Gould, Monitoring Officer
Paul Hanson, Manager, Democratic Services
Alex Hopkins, Director of Children, Families & Education
Michael Quinn, Liberal Democrat Group Political Assistant
Jenny Rendall, Democracy Officer (Minutes)
Ben Wesson, Labour Group Political Assistant

And 26 members of the public.

01/16 Apologies for non-attendance:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jim Broomfield, Malcolm Longley, Russell Roberts as well as Honorary Aldermen Derek Batten & Priscilla Padley and the Director of the Environment, Development & Transport.

02/16 To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015:

RESOLVED that: Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 26 November 2015 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

03/16 Notification of requests by members of the public to address the meeting

Agenda Item No: 6 - Draft Budget 2015-16

- Mrs Jean Lineker
- Mr Colin Bricher
- Ms Bianca Todd
- Mr John Smith
- Mr Tony Banks
- Mr Ron Mendel
- Ms Jean Romaine
- Adore Pierre
- Ms Roxanne Homayoun
- Mr Norman Adams
- Mr Dave Green
- Mrs Anjona Roy
- Mr Michael Nagle

04/16 Declarations of Interest by Councillors:

There were none.

05/16 Chairman's Announcements:

The Chairman referred to the process that would be followed for the meeting, a copy of which was e-mailed to all councillors the previous week.

06/16 Final Budget 2016-17 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-20:

At the Chairman's invitation the following members of the public commented as follows:

Mrs Jean Lineker stated she had been a carer twice and never realised there was a Carer's Society that could assist her. She felt the Council was failing in its ability to notify people of where to turn to for assistance. She had not known where to turn for assistance and it all felt like a minefield, particularly for those with dementia. She said she was assessed by the Wellingborough Carers Society and was recently recognised as a carer. When she had a complaint with the County Council they took up her complaint which she did win. She said it was hard for her going through the complaint but the Carer's Society helped her and without them she would not have coped. She was asking the Council to provide more funding for the Carer's Society who assisted children and adult carers everywhere.

Mr Colin Bricher referred to his address to Cabinet on 18 February 2016 at which he did not appreciate aggression from Cabinet. He referred to comments made about members of the public leaving the meeting early but some of these had to work. They had been angry and had a right to express their views. He felt most councillors cared but he felt many did not clearly understand these were cuts that seriously jeopardise the lives and wellbeing of members of the public.

Ms Bianca Todd referred to the affects of the decision made today which could lead to death. She referred to the organisation she represented which had fed 20 young people their breakfast that morning. She also referred to the spending of £55million on a new building when out-sourcing services. She felt this budget took away hope, belief and anything from ordinary people in Northampton and demonstrated the Council did not care about. She ended by referring to county council elections the following year at which she hoped many would be replaced by people who cared about their communities.

Mr Tony Banks claimed the budget failed to meet people's needs or hopes and many users of services had already expressed this. A young person had also informed Council that his future would be blighted by the budget. He felt the budget undermined democracy through outsourcing and a lack of accountability. He also felt the Council had not heeded the criticism levied against it at the recent Cabinet meeting. He felt Private Finance Initiatives continued to be entered into despite the Council's ability to borrow at cheaper rates. He also referred to the alternative budget by the Labour Group which he felt would reinforce meeting democracy and the needs of people and communities which this budget clearly did not.

Ron Mendel stated he was President of the Northamptonshire Union Council as well as a member of Save Northamptonshire Services. At the Cabinet meeting he had referred to Council hiding behind euphemisms and did not communicate with people in a language they understood. He referred to savings in adult social care of £24million and in children family and education of £20million but he felt these numbers did not really explain the situation which was really about human beings. Young people with less access to training to prepare them for work and people with less access to care to assist them to live in their world. He stayed for the whole cabinet meeting at which he heard 2 cabinet members state the budget would improve services and another state the disadvantaged and more vulnerable would not be hurt. He asked how they could believe those states and asked Cabinet to show some regret about the cuts made and maybe even apologise to the people of Northamptonshire.

Ms Jean Romaine who was registered blind was also a member of the Northamptonshire Disabled People against cuts and Save Northamptonshire Services. For the past few years she had been extremely worried about cuts to disability benefits as her brother had a learning disability and was very vulnerable. She was very concerned about the Council cutting spending in adult social care and the impact this would have on vulnerable people in society as it would cause them to live in fear of when the next cut would be and how they would survive these cuts. Those receiving care packages worried about how these cuts would affect them every time they had to have a re-assessment. Some people required support in order to feel less isolated and alone. They needed assistance to get out of bed, use the toilet, wash and dress themselves. Others required someone to do their shopping and help them pay bills and make phone calls. Some needed assistance to cook so cuts to the meals on wheels service would result in some people going hungry.

Ms Roxanne Homayoun asked Council to look at her: a disabled woman with high support needs, a wheelchair user with difficulties to speak. What people could not see is someone who was registered blind, had a hearing impediment and various disabilities. She was at

the mercy of the Council to provide support. She was a disabled woman penalised by this financial reliance and threatened by the proposals. She was once in receipt of Independent Living Fund funding but the Government ceased this but did provide funding to councils until the end of this parliament. This additional funding however could not be seen anywhere in the proposals which seemed to just consist of Council cuts. The Council was making vital life changing decisions which affected the way in which disabled people wished to live and what they required in order to leave the house.

Mr Norman Adams referred to real people with real needs. He felt Council did not understand fully what these cuts would actually mean to people. He referred to numerous disabled people sitting at home worrying about what the cuts in the budget will mean for them. He felt Council should have stated what the cuts will actually mean to people. He referred to the 'flesh on the bone' which he felt had already been slashed and no longer existed. The Council was a very lean machine with little meat left and he felt it should provide a proper public service and the public good.

Mr Dave Green referred to what he considered to be a colossal waste of hundreds of millions of pounds on Private Funding Initiatives (PFIs) which the Council insisted on using. He then referred to PFI agreements in schools, adult social care and street lighting despite the fact that a parliamentary select committee had stated they did not provide value for money. He felt this money could be better spent on various services including adult social care. He referred to £45million the Council spend on agency and consulting staff. He felt Council should scrap PFI contracts and out sourcing and save Northamptonshire services.

Mr Michael Nagle was part of Northants Disabled People against cuts (DPAC) and was in his late 50s. As a child he went to 2 schools for disabled people managed by the Council. He had also attended centres for disabled people which had since closed down. His wife and he had a learning disability and were also registered blind. They received support to live independently from the Council which they were also worried about losing and which if they did lose, would stop them from being able to live independently in their own home. He felt cutting social care and health support was not helping vulnerable people. He felt you had to stand up and fight for support or it would be taken from you, something that should not happen.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Ron Mendel then read a submission received from Mr John Smith (copies of which were available on the day) which stated he was one of the people who would be affected by cuts to services. He felt the Council had already 'cut to the bone' and was discarding existing trained NCC staff to be replaced by unknown agencies to assess people. He felt assessments which were fair relied on building trust with clients. He also felt the portfolio holder relied on spin when stating health and wellbeing will be improved and reduce isolation and ill-health. He felt continuing healthcare was concerned with supporting people primarily in 11 critical areas, a social care professional alongside a nurse undertake assessments and then make a recommendation which goes to a panel. He felt this was through which also invited advocates to discuss how the recommendation could be undertaken. He referred to concerned people who felt 'enough was enough'. Young people, hungry school children and those in receipt of Meals on Wheels, the elderly, mental health users, the homeless and the disabled all needed assistance. He then referred to money squandered on PFI scams and thousands of pounds paid to consultants at the same time professionals were made redundant. He therefore asked Council to reconsider its cuts.

The Chairman thanked all of the public speakers for their comments. He then invited the Director for Finance to make a short statement who stated as follows:

- He had a statutory duty to make a commentary on the budget from the perspective of adequacy of reserves and the robustness of the proposals.
- During recent years there had also been a practice of providing a Section 151 statement to budgets produced by opposition groups. Councillor Services & Governance Working Group stated a Section 25 report would be provided where there had been fair measure and scrutiny and where budgets were provided in sufficient time for him to review them.
- One of his colleagues drafted a Section 25 Report for the alternative budget provided by the Labour Group and as a result of confusion as a one-off concession he had agreed to honour that report.
- As a result of this agreement the Director for Finance could have inconvenienced other opposition groups on the Council and he apologised for this.

The Chairman then invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Bill Parker to move his report (copies of which had been previously circulated who highlighted the following:

- This was the most challenging budget the Council had ever had to set due to a combination of ongoing reductions in Government funding and a rapid increase in the population of Northamptonshire.
- In setting the budget they had undertaken all they could to protect all ages needing the Council's help whilst taking routine steps to improve services.
- Council tax had been increased by 3.95% including 2% precept figure that enables local authorities with responsibility for adult social care to increase council tax by this amount.
- They had listened to the people of Northamptonshire during the consultation undertaken and decreased the savings figure from £77million to £65million.
- The sum of £500,000 in the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service had been put back into its budget as had the £500,000 for the Countywide Traveller Unit. The £4million for a combined authority had been taken out. Details of the £65million savings were included in Appendix E to the report.
- These changes did not impact on Council tax or savings proposals for 2016-17.
- They were also expecting to receive some funding towards the cost of adult social care from the new hoes bonus.
- The Director of Finance and his team were thanked for all of their hard work in setting a budget.
- Capital receipts were being used to fund service transformation and resulting in additional funds for the 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 budgets. The Council was expected to move back into surplus in 2018-19. The Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix K to the report) had been altered to enable the Council to write the debt arrangement down more slowly.
- The 4-year budget had a total saving of £131million and this would continue to be a significant challenge and scrutiny would be expected to be involved from the outset.
- The Section 25 report refers to a plan B and there was a need to ensure robust mitigations in place as any future saving proposal that was unachievable would require savings from elsewhere in the budget.
- The easier savings had been taken out of the budget some years previously.
- A rapidly increasing and ageing population had led to a corresponding demand for services. More people presented with more complex and complicated needs which had required a move away from traditional models of service delivery. This would require the directorate to make bold decisions, some of which would not be popular. The primary aim would remain to ensure the most vulnerable were supported.

- Adult social care and Olympic Care Services (OCS) would work closer to create good pathways for social care. An accommodation strategy had recently been introduced that would ensure over the next decade more support places for those unable to live at home. District and borough councils were also coming forward with strategies for delivery during the year. A private funder willing to invest £53million had been sought which should it come to fruition, provide a very positive impact on the community. Cabinet and Scrutiny would be fully informed of progress in this direction.
- A new target operating model would move adult social care to a new approach exploring new opportunities with new partners and focussing on providing the right type of support for those with differing packages. It will ensure resources are used more effectively to ensure they help those at most in need.
- The new community connectors scheme was being trialled that awarded small amounts of money to local community groups and was likely to be continued the following year.
- Children's services were being improved through a focus on resources for those who needed them at the earliest point of need. This delivery of evidence based intervention will ensure the best possible outcomes and they were continuing to work with early years settings and schools to ensure everyone was ready for education.
- Services were being realigned to meet the Race to the Top priority and place the Council in the top quartile for performance of education by 2020.
- The huge growth in the number of children in the County continued both in terms of those born here as well as those moving to the county. The number of new arrivals was sufficient to fill a whole primary school each month. The Council therefore planned 31 new primary schools by 2020. By 2018 it will have already delivered 14,000 primary school places.
- Between 2012 and 2015 there had been a 40% increase in the number of referrals to children's services and since April 2015 17% of those had been unaccompanied asylum seekers. The budget there provided an increase of £23million to this area.
- Work had begun in setting up the Northamptonshire Children's Trust with the Department for Education to ensure services for vulnerable children.
- The directorate strategy was to build early efficient offers cross all statutory bodies across the county through a programme of change. The Director for Children, Families and Education would adopt a more co-ordinated approach to the increasingly competitive foster care market and there will be an increase in services in health provision.
- The number of visits to the county's country parks had increased and the number of library visits in the first 9 months of the current year had risen to 2.4million, above the target figure of 2.1million.
- For the third year running the Women's Tour cycle race would start and finish in the county.
- The 20millionsteps programme had actually achieved 31million.
- First for Wellbeing was created and launched in December 2015.
- The Environment, Development & Transport directorate had already moved a long way towards its new role within the Council's next generation working model with many staff transferred to Kier WSP at the same time as improvements in performance in the whole area were achieved. The directorate was recognised nationally as being one of the most cost effective in the county.
- An integrated transport service brought together the Council, local University and the NHS to assist in improving bus services throughout the county.
- The tri-county alliance had been recognised by Central Government as vital to the heartland transport and a transport body would be formed with devolved national powers.

- By the following year over 2,000 members of staff would have moved to the new Project Angel building which was exciting and innovative and would enable the Council to vacate 12 properties and save £51million over the next 20 years.
- The Budget was without doubt the most challenging the Council had ever had to set. No-one enjoys making some of the very difficult decisions regarding the level of savings the Council was required to make but he felt the proposals did all they could to ensure the most vulnerable in the county were protected and services would remain effective.

The budget was seconded by Councillor Allen Walker.

At the Chairman's invitation, Councillor Mick Scrimshaw then moved the Labour Group alternative budget (copies of which had been previously circulated) who highlighted the following:

- The Council was in massive financial difficulty which required it to make bold and innovative suggestions. He noted that over the past 3 years over a third of the suggestions his group had made had been eventually adopted by Council. He also noted some large money making investment schemes had been totally ignored which would have created a lot more money for the Council citing ideas being taken forward by councils in Kettering and Brighton.
- He referred to borrowing which in some cases could be perfectly acceptable if it would lead to an improved income and raising of the Council's reputation. He went on to suggest the Council set up a working group to explore opportunities.
- Their alternative budget was for a 5-yr plan and started with the proposal for the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NF&RS). He felt the Council's plan to remove the 24 hour cover for a highly specialised vehicle was a bad idea as it was manned by highly trained professionals and carried many specialised items of equipment not currently used on other vehicles. The Labour Group proposed to conduct a review of all aspects of the NF&RS with a view to making savings without removing the specialised vehicle.
- They did not wish to lose any money from emergency planning, particularly in light of floods that had only happened in other parts of the country just within the past 2 months.
- They also proposed improvements in street lighting in consultation with the Police and other local authorities.
- They also withdrew the proposed cut to bus services particularly as those in rural communities were in danger of becoming more isolated should their bus service cease. They proposed keeping the bus services until a good solid review could be completed.
- It was felt current arrangements would have time and effort spent on investigating supporting services contract with additional costs later in the year. Cutting funding to Youthworks would jeopardise all of their work and they offered a very sensible compromise of £150,000 for the first year of the budget to give them time to adapt and continue the work they were involved with which was considered very highly.
- They would also reverse the suggested £700,000 saving in Highways as this money had been used to attract £millions towards jobs and many apprenticeships.
- Additional funding would be allocated to address issues with the maintenance of footpaths in the county.
- It was felt budgets year after year had been inadequate for adult social care and their proposal enabled investment in this area.
- Reference was made to the next generation council and it was noted the consultant overseeing this change was paid over £1,000 per day whilst no-one knew what the changes would be. He also felt the Council would have to pay corporation tax under

these new arrangements; something it currently did not pay. He felt there was a need to step back from these plans and consider if there were any other ways forward for delivering services in-house or through co-operatives which were less likely to be taken over as private companies.

- They felt it was important to learn from examples of other councils with regard to children's services.
- They also felt there was a need to monitor the progress of the Community Interest Company set up to provide health and wellbeing and if there was anything that could be learned from it.
- The figure of £9million of income through the Children's Trust and £2million a year thereafter but nothing stated how these figures would be achieved.
- They welcomed the use of social income bonds and proposed using this method to finance £3million in 3 areas of the Council's work.
- They proposed halting the work on the brand new state of the art office block for staff until they felt the Council could afford it.
- They felt halving councillor allowances would stimulate a much needed conversation in this area.
- They felt their alternative budget enabled the Council to move forward whilst recognising its current financial situation.

The Labour Group alternative budget was seconded by Councillor John McGhee who stated:

- He knew people locally were struggling and felt halting Project Angel made sense in the current financial times. He also felt they had taken consideration of the issues with this proposal.
- Changing the next generation model was also in his view a good idea. Whilst he felt the Government did not believe in public services, he felt you did not need to be a business to act more businesslike.
- He felt his Group's proposals would help the people of Northamptonshire.
- He felt it wasn't fair to the people of Northamptonshire when the Council was provided with the worst local government settlement. He also referred to the accompanying Section 25 Report which is not much different to the Administration's Section 25 Report.

Councillors commented as follows:

- Some found it difficult to comment on proposals that had only just been provided.
- Whilst some agreed with the part of the proposals that related to keeping political assistants but felt it interesting that would be funded through a cut in the empowering councillors scheme funding.
- Some felt the change in bus subsidies would not make an adequate difference.
- Concerns were raised regarding the halting of Project Angel and it was noted the Section 25 Report referred to issues in relation to it.
- Further concerns were raised regarding the figure the Labour Group alternative budget proposed borrowing and the fact that it did not state where that sum would be borrowed from.
- Queries were raised about how councillors would fit in with the Parliamentary Select Committee's recommendation that local authorities should monitor child protection.
- It was felt the Administration's budget would lead to fragmented proposals in relation to children's services and whilst a future Labour Government would regulate children's services, this would only be after many children had suffered.
- Some suggested politics was being brought into adult social services wrongly. It was then suggested that the cuts in adult social care would not be met. The alternative budget recommended the Council look at viable alternatives to providing adult social

care.

- It was also suggested local MPs should be supporting the Council and local people by going to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and demanding a better local government settlement for the Council.
- It was noted a major view of the NF&RS which was in special measures when the Administration took it over. Improvements had been made to such a state that it was now noted as leading the way.
- Some asked that the presenter of the alternative budget should have referred to the proposal to retain the political assistants and justified that part of the budget.
- It was noted savings bonds had to be funded from the savings they actually generated.
- Some requested that future alternative budgets be presented earlier so that members could actually review them and possibly discuss proposals within them before the day the budget is actually set.
- Concerns were raised about what the people of Northamptonshire would think if Project Angel was halted when the building was partially completed.
- It was noted scrutiny would welcome earlier sight of alternative budgets as well.
- Some suggested there was a need to plan now to mitigate the Government plans. It was also suggested that commissioning by the Council had failed. It was then noted that the scrutiny report rated 8 out of 17 of the Administration's priorities as red for deliverability.
- Some suggested the Labour Group's alternative budget could not be supported partly because suspending project angel would present a cost and would not achieve the expected savings.

In reply Councillor Scrimshaw stated:

- He felt the Administration's latest budget was issued at the last minute.
- He also felt stepping back from the next generation council would release £millions into the 2016/17 budget.
- The social impact bonds equated to money the Council had already committed to spending so if it failed, the Council would save £9million. If it succeeded, savings would be achieved.
- He considered this to be the one opportunity during the year for opposition groups to explain the differences between them and the Administration.
- Councillor Parker was invited to take up any of the ideas within the alternative budget.
- They had received a Section 25 Report that highlighted issues but so had the Administration.

Upon the vote the Labour Group alternative budget was rejected.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Chris Lofts to make a budget statement on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group who highlighted the following:

- It was felt the Council's ability to deliver deep cuts proposed a risk to the delivery of services in the future and left people concerned and fearful of their future.
- The Administration's budget would in his opinion damage lives. He felt the Government had cynically manoeuvred to deconstruct services. He also referred to attacks on junior doctors and the removal of extra funding for free school meals.
- The full context of the current situation did not absolve the Administration's responsibility for the catastrophic situation the Council was in with every new mother in anxiety because they did not receive the support they required, every family losing everything because a fire that should have been put out sooner or a trip on potholes. He felt recognising mistakes was what assisted people to learn from them and avoid

them in the future.

- He felt the Council's single strategy of low tax and low spend had led the Council into its current position. They had in his opinion failed to provide a good strategy and he referred to cuts in adult social care that had been necessary because of a need to write blank cheques over the past 3 years for children's services.
- He felt now was the time for strong leadership and whilst local people liked paying less in council tax, probably not at the cost of having to make cuts everywhere in the Council's service.
- Reference was made for thousands paid to provide a new director for transformation.
- Reference was then made to money to big business in the county claiming it was investment and would assist services. By providing direct support to Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership, business had been prioritised over disadvantaged residents and services had suffered through mismanagement.
- He referred to enormous transformation loans that were being taken to challenge the budget and he felt the Council was relying on a final pay day loan. He then referred to the Labour Group's alternative budget the previous year that the Cabinet Member for Finance had stated he was glad it would never happen at the Council.
- He felt that not only services were failing but many budget lines were a complete fantasy that could not bring a balanced budget.
- As the finance department had stated it would not present a Section 25 Report, they felt it would be irresponsible to take officer time away from work on the Administration's budget and felt it would be better use of their time to engage stronger support to the scrutiny process.
- He referred to a man who instead of fixing a large house he had inherited, gradually sacked his staff and left things like Ivy to grow on the walls. He ignored all ideas and suggestions given to him and after a decade the house fell apart. When the house fell apart and his siblings came to visit him sitting in the rubble they complained about the loss their inheritance and he just said he had no money to undertake repairs. He therefore repeated his suggestion from the previous year. At a time of such austerity he felt it unacceptable to have 8 councils with 6 figure sums for their Chief Executives and Chief finance Office. He also referred to South Northants District Council's consideration of joining with Cherwell District Council to provide a unitary authority and asked who could blame them when considering failings by the County Council. He therefore proposed 3 unitary authorities for the county.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Michael Brown to make a budget statement on behalf of the UKIP/Independent Group who highlighted the following:

- He referred to a new plan to save £65million and raise £21million over the next 6 years. He felt this represented £2.5million less for the people of the county and £2.5million more than the bankers who lent the Council money.
- He referred to the previous year's budget which contained no flexibility, risks, potential risks, more risks and no accountability to deliver and stated he felt this year's was worse.
- He also noted all earmarked reserves were earmarked for a particular use.
- He felt the finances of the Council felt more like Government attacks on its funding rather than austerity measures. He referred to the many meetings with senior civil servants to obtain a better deal but all that was achieved was an additional £1.7million over the next 2 years. He then noted many councils in other parts of the country had achieved at least double that sum, particularly Hertfordshire County Council which received £16million.
- Reference was then made to collaboration with other local authorities and he noted a collaborative council would save at least £500,000 and as almost all of the councils in Northamptonshire were run by the same party he felt it should be possible even if not through a unitary authority.

- The previous year's budget included savings of £7million from introducing joint refuse collection. The district and borough councils could not agree to work together and no savings were achieved. Daventry District Council was now going out to consultation on a new refuse collection from 2018 to save £500,000 per year. The Leader of Daventry District Council had also stated this week that the County Council was considering closing all but one of its recycling centres but officers would state there was no such plan but the Leader of Daventry District Council was Chairman of the Waste Partnership.
- Services were being cut for local because local councils would not work together which as in his opinion a disgrace. Corby Borough & East Northants District Councils had no confidence in the Council's ability to deliver any savings in 2016/17 let alone £4million from creating a combined authority for the county.
- He noted more people from opposition groups attended the scrutiny review meetings than the Administration. He felt the Liberal Democrat Group took stock of a lot of UKIP ideas and the Labour Group stated they were glad to see capitalisation of the roads which had been a UKIP idea.
- He felt the draft budget when issued was an absolute disaster for those in care homes. All those in the 6 OCS Care homes spent their Christmas worrying about whether they would have a home and he felt the way this leaked out in the budget was disgusting. As only 2 care homes were being considered at that time for closure those in the other 4 care homes should have been told not to worry.
- Reference was then made to job cuts in local companies and the fact that the UK Government could do nothing about it because of EU bureaucracy.
- Parking charges had been increased the previous year and the Council was currently £56,000 in arrears. If this trend continued in 2015/16 the parking account would be in surplus and he presumed charges would then be reduced.
- He also referred to parking tickets issued and paid for by foreign visits and stated many more had been issued that paid which was not fair when you consider the UK driver paid whilst 80% of foreign vehicles did not.
- In reference to the latest earmarked reserves it was noted the majority of them could not be touched and could therefore not be used to deliver any savings.
- He considered the Administration's budget to be nonsense and felt the Administration had not delivered a budget for the past 3 years only managing to balance the books by use of reserves.
- He felt rolling savings into the next 4 years would not be possible particularly as next generation council would in his opinion not help because it would increase expenditure. The budget stated it would cost £4million to set up but there was no explanation of how it would save money. He felt it was modelled on OCS which did provide a good value service as they had built reserves for the future that were taken by the Council to bail it out.
- He felt the Council was already on the point of collapse with little money to meet the demands and the pressures of an increasing and ageing population.
- He felt a partial answer would be in the form of a unitary authority which would save the Council £50million and £50million each year moving forward. A questionnaire delivered during the budget consultation discussed a formal consultation between the Council, borough and district councils and health. 67% of those responding to this agreed it was a good idea.
- With South Northants District Council looking to form a unitary outside of the county, the county could be broken up.
- He also felt other councils could be asked to consider funding their own street lighting.
- He felt the Administration's budget was fiction and everyone should consider the common sense idea of forming unitary authorities.

At the Chairman's invitation, Councillors then debated the substantive motion being the budget put forward by the Administration as follows:

- Some felt the Council's plan for redeveloping the old Castle site meant it should consider its relationship with the Friends of Northampton Castle and the future of the Northampton Heritage Gateway.
- The budget stated there was a fundamental review underway of the NF&RS but it seemed the plans to hand over responsibility for fire and rescue services to the Police were already well advanced. The relevant cabinet member was asked to comment on the fact that the Police and Crime Commissioner would then become responsible for all blue light services and there was a danger they could fail.
- The budget was considered by some to cruel and careless with every vulnerable group being hit in some form.
- It was suggested 8 portfolio holders were not required when there were only 5 directors.
- Concerns were raised that the budget took away the opposition groups' ability to undertake research adequately with the loss of political assistants.
- The decision to outsource services was queried when the Council would still retain responsibility for ensuring they were delivered.
- It was suggested officers should have visited all care homes to explain to families the situation and ensure they were not worried over Christmas.
- It was noted councillors did care about services. All people lived in a world with limited resources and had to provide what could be provided within those limited resources. Part of doing that and moving the Council forward was transformation.
- It was also noted the EU provided funding that the Council and local services required and a vote for the budget was also a vote for staying in the EU.
- It was also noted the Council had to find other ways of working.
- Reference was made to local services ceasing as a result of cuts in funding, in particular a group that supported disabled children and provided respite for their parents. The letter informing them of a cessation of funding was sent to them on 24 December 2015.
- Past mistakes like £24million being spent on consultants some years ago and the £32million Carillion contract that went wrong did not bode well for outsourcing Council services in the future and provided no confidence in it.
- Some felt the budget targeted those who most required the Council's help. The Council it was felt now reached young people and adults freeing them by providing funds they could spend as they wished.
- Some felt they could not support the budget because they could not support the £24million out of adult social care. It was felt money should have been spent on improving OCS care homes sooner.
- It was suggested the MPs in the county should be challenged to go back to Central Government and achieve a better settlement for the county.
- Although several people thought councillors did care, the electorate when the budget was passed would find the cuts in it devastating and feel that the Council did not care.
- It was suggested holding the EU and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections on the same day would have saved money and it was further suggested this message should be given to Central Government.
- It was further suggested Central Government were holding money that should be offered to local authorities.
- It was noted scrutiny had received a large attendance from councillors and members of the community.
- Some noted there was a growth and pressure on the budget in relation with

children's services. The looked after children budget continued to increase and it was felt the budget would introduce more turbulence into the budget which was not welcome at a time when a lot of money had been spent in improving the service.

- Once the Council moved out of intervention the whole workforce situation should start to improve with less dependence on agency workers. Whilst many of the agency workers were very good they were not committed to the organisation in the long-term but moving towards a trust would enable the Council to improve the situation for its workers at a fraction of the cost of the current agency workers.
- The reduction in funding would go in to children's centres. The situation had improved in the past few years with the system entirely different to what it was when the buildings were created for children's centres. There had been a switch to providing care, assistance and support in the home to a lot of those families who never visited the centres in the first place.
- The Deputy Leader of the Council would be addressing the situation in relation to unitary authorities.
- There was a need to change the way prevention was dealt with and to identify a way of engaging with a much broader group of people than in the past. Age and scale is something the NHS was seeking to develop in the future and the Council would be very much engaged with that.
- The next generation council was considered the way forward as it would enable the Council to work with partners across the voluntary sector in a different way and to consider what customers required from a view of outcome and locality. It would be a bottom up and not top down approach.
- Some felt the Council did not have an adequate businesslike attitude to leave adequate funding in its budget to ensure it was not dependent on Government. Concerns were also raised with regard to the freezing of Council tax which some felt had created issues.
- Concerns were raised that no-one had taken responsibility for making people vulnerable and damaging people's lives and communities. It was also considered bad to target those who had already been made vulnerable and it was noted the Council was responsible for ensuring they did not become vulnerable in the first place.
- Some felt the Council needed to 'do better' particularly as it came 135th out of 150 local authorities.
- It was noted adult social care services aimed to assist people to work towards regaining their independence. Although it had budget pressures it continued to have a strong focus on quality and to always be fair and equitable. It aimed to continue good quality services for those who needed support and safeguard the most vulnerable.
- Adult social care services had a number of people seeking support with higher complex needs and the Council was working with partners in district and borough councils and the voluntary sector to continue to strengthen support to people before they hit crisis. Re-ablement services had recently been extended and they were undertaking joint work with partners through First for Wellbeing. During the next few months they would begin to bring together OCS and adult social care in a trust that would provide greater service for customers and implement a model of care that enabled people to take many opportunities.
- The Director General for Social Care, Local Government and Care Partnerships at the Department of Health, Mr John Rouse recently visited the Council meeting the Chief Executive and senior managers in adult social care as well as some of the Council's partners and stated he was impressed with services in the county, their high standing and performance.
- It was suggested local borough and district councils could be asked to assist in funding services such as the NF&RS.

- Concerns were raised about the spending of reserves and the capitalisation of highway maintenance.
- It was noted that 2 years previously the Council failed to save the required £30million resulting in the current situation. It was also noted that scrutiny had stated there was a high risk of delivering the budget as a whole.
- It was also noted that in the past the Council had struggled to recruit social workers leaving it to rely on employing agency social workers.
- It was further noted that there was a need to integrate the budget with the one held by health services but because of the NHS funding situation there was a high risk of sustainability.
- Concerns were then raised about the proposal of asking OCS to work on point 1%, which in the opinion of some would guarantee they would fail. It was felt this highly volatile area was ill thought out and unconvincing.
- It was noted no changes had yet been made to NF&RS and any that were recommended were unlikely to take effect in the next 1-2 years. It was also noted the Mereway site as a combined police and fire station was moving well with some good opportunities to add some greater protection there too.
- It was also noted no service would be outsourced but all proposals would be subject to full and transparent consultation.
- No matter what had happened in the past there was a fact that the Council had funding hole it needed to reach out of. There was in the opinion of some the need to consider unitary authorities quickly. There was a need to cut its own expenses as opposed to cutting services and it was suggested a cross-party working group be formed to look at the options.
- Some noted that social care across the country had been cut by 11% in the last few years whilst healthcare had been increased by 71%. Some felt this was due to a lack of understanding by Central Government of what people required in terms of health.
- It was suggested the budget tracker required strengthening in order to ensure the budget could be maintained throughout the year.
- With regard to the bus subsidies and in particular the number 8 bus service it was noted the Council Connect Service would continue to provide a service that could be used by those attending hospital appointments.
- Some voiced concerns that 7 MPs and 7 local borough and district councils appeared to have no faith in the leadership of Northamptonshire County Council and it was felt that until the leadership was addressed, unitary authorities would never be formed in the county.
- Concerns were raised that the most vulnerable such as those disabled or with mental health problems had been targeted with the poorest getting poorer and the rich getting richer. It was also noted domestic violence had grown but the Council at this time cut services when it should be asking for more help from Government.
- It was felt by some that services should move forward. You could no longer rely on the state which the country could no longer afford. There was a need therefore to do things differently. Populations were growing and infrastructure was required and there was a need for smarter ways of doing things which the Council was attempting to lead through the next generation council.
- It was noted there was a need to provide services to 1,000 new people in the county every month. Whilst it was good to have people living longer, that also created a cost.
- Councillors had many meetings with various officials and had worked closely with the Local Government Association and whilst they had achieved some additional funding it was not at a level the Council would have liked.

In reply Councillor Parker stated the following:

- The reason borough and district councils in the county could manage their budgets better was because they received 80% of the new homes bonus and could use some of this funding to balance their books.
- The next generation council was not concerned with outsourcing services. It was concerned with the Council working with partners and would provide the Council with the opportunity to work in a different way and bring funding into the Council that it could not currently access.
- Keeping council tax at or below the rate of inflation was a promise the Administration had made when it first took office in 2005. It had achieved this every year except for 2011-12 when the coalition government brought in a freeze of 0%.

RESOLVED that: upon a recorded vote of 32 for and 18 against with 7 absentees Council:

- 1) **Approved the final budget for 2016-17 which set**
 - a) **A net revenue budget of £416.468million**
 - b) **A Council Tax requirement of £254.423million**
 - c) **A Band D Council Tax increase of 3.95%, including a Social Care Precept of 2% taking Band D Council Tax from £1,069.0 to £1,111.25**
- 2) **Approved the Council Plan 2016-17 to 2019-20 as given in Appendix A to the report;**
- 3) **Endorsed the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2016-17 to 2019-20 as summarised at Appendix D to the report with the planned proposals at Appendices H1 to H5 and noted the move to an ongoing quarterly review**
- 4) **Approved the detailed proposals underpinning the MTFP revenue budgets for 2016-17 set out at Appendix H (1-5) to the report**
- 5) **Approved the planned utilisation of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2016-17 as given in Appendix F to the report**
- 6) **Approved the Capital Strategy as given in Appendix I to the report**
- 7) **Approved the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2016-17 as given in Appendix K to the report which included:**
 - a) **The prudential indicators, including the capital financial requirement of £668.7million and the authorised borrowing requirement of £728.7million**
 - b) **The Annual Investment strategy as given in Appendix K6 to the report**
 - c) **The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy as given in Appendix K4 to the report**
 - d) **A change to the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for the current year (2015-16) as explained in Appendix K5 to the report**
- 8) **Approved the Asset Utilisation Strategy as given in Appendix J to the report**
- 9) **Noted the fees and charges report to follow (section 7.6 of the report)**
- 10) **Noted the Chief Financial Officer's Section 25 Report as given in Appendix L to the report**
- 11) **Noted the Reserve Summary Statement as given in Appendix G to the report**
- 12) **Noted the consultation feedback as given in Appendix B to the report; and**
- 13) **Noted the equality Impact feedback as given in Appendix C to the report.**

07/16 Urgent Business:

There was none.

08/16 Exempt Business:

There was none.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 3.10pm.

Jenny Rendall
Democratic Support

Chairman's Signature:-

Date:-



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Recorded Votes for Council:	
Date of Meeting:	Monday 29 February 2016
Item No:	6 Final Budget 2016-17 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-20

Surname	First Name	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
Beardsworth	Sally		√		
Bell	Paul				√
Brackenbury	Wendy	√			
Brookfield	Julie		√		
Broomfield	Jim				√
Brown	Michael		√		
Brown	Robin	√			
Butcher	Mary		√		
Clarke	Michael	√			
Collyer	Adam		√		
Coombe	Elizabeth		√		
Eales	Gareth		√		
Glynane	Brendan		√		
Golby	Matthew	√			
Gonzalez de Savage	Andre	√			
Groome	Christopher		√		
Hakewill	James	√			
Hales	Eileen		√		

Surname	First Name	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
Hallam	Mike	√			
Harker	James	√			
Heggs	Stanley	√			
Hills	Alan	√			
Homer	Sue	√			
Hope	Jill		√		
Hughes	Dudley	√			
Hughes	Sylvia	√			
Irving-Swift	Cecile	√			
Kirkbride	Joan	√			
Larratt	Phil	√			
Lawman	Graham	√			
Lawson	Derek	√			
Legg	Stephen	√			
Lofts	Chris		√		
Longley	Malcolm				√
McCutcheon	Arthur				√
McGhee	John		√		
Mackintosh	David				√
Matthews	Allan	√			
Mercer	Andrew	√			
Meredith	Dennis		√		
Morris	Ian	√			
Osborne	Steve	√			
Parker	Bill	√			
Patel	Bhupendra	√			

Surname	First Name	For	Against	Abstain	Absent
Patel	Suresh	√			
Roberts	Russell				√
Sawbridge	Ron	√			
Scott	Bob				√
Scrimshaw	Mick		√		
Shephard	Judy	√			
Smith	Heather	√			
Stone	Danielle		√		
Strachan	Winston		√		
Tye	Michael	√			
Uldall	Sarah		√		
Walker	Allen	√			
Waters	Malcolm	√			
Totals		32	18		7