



Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 19:30

Present: Councillor Legg (Mayor)

Councillors M Bradburn, Andrew, Andrews, Adewale, Ahmad, Bailey, Bell, K Bradburn, R Bradburn, Brown, Cannon, A Carr, J Carr, Clarke, Crooks, Darlington, Exon, Ferrans, Fuller, Geary, Hall, Hearnshaw, D Hopkins, Hume, Hussain, Imran, Kendrick, M Khan, N Khan, Lancaster, Long, Mahendran, Marland, McLean, McQuillan, Middleton, Muzammil, Nayee, Nolan, Oguntola, Oyakhire, Petchey, Priestley, Rolfe, Smith, Townsend, Trendall, Verma, Wardle, Whitworth and Wilson-Marklew

Alderman Miles and 27 members of the public

Apologies Councillors De Villiers, V Hopkins, McPake and Taylor

Aldermen Bartlett, Alderman Beeley, Alderman Bristow, Alderman Connor, Alderman Coventry, Alderman Geary, Alderman Henderson, Alderwomen Henderson, Alderwomen Irons, Alderman Lewis, Alderwomen Lloyd, Alderman McCall, Alderman McKenzie, Alderwoman Saunders and Alderman Tallack

CL93 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That with the correction to minute CL89 (Electoral Review – Council Size Submission) amending the wording ‘The recommendations were agreed’ to read ‘Recommendations 1, 2 and 4 were agreed by acclamation. On being put to the vote, recommendation 3 was carried’, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24 January 2024 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

CL94 Disclosures of Interest

The Council was advised that as any payment of, or liability to pay, Council Tax did not create a disclosable pecuniary interest as defined in the national rules; all councillors were eligible to take part in the business of setting the Council Tax or precept.

CL95 Announcements

The Mayor made announcements in respect of the ‘pre-election period’, the Olney Pancake Race and the recent death of the Rt Rev Dr Alan Wilson, Bishop of Buckingham.

CL96 Petitions

None Received.

CL97 Questions from Members of the Public

Questions were received from two members of the public.

Parish Councillor Roy Adams asked Councillor Townsend, would the Council earmark a reserve for funds to build a community centre on Galley Hill in the current financial year?

Councillor Townsend indicated that as advised previously there was £20,000 set aside in the budget to carry out a feasibility study and once this was completed, which would be in the spring, then a community working group would be established. No further budget would be set aside until the feasibility study had been completed and the working group had considered its findings.

As a supplementary question, Parish Councillor Roy Adams asked Councillor Townsend could she confirm the timescales.

Councillor Townsend indicated that the feasibility study was due in the spring and therefore should be completed within the next couple of months.

Roger Carey asked Councillor Marland, with regard to the exclusion of Milton Keynes Council and other local authorities from meetings of the East West Rail Economic Growth Board would the council continue to attend other East West Rail meetings knowing that Milton Keynes could be 'dumped on' by this overarching Board?

Councillor Marland indicated that he was not totally au fait with the various consultation bodies that East West Rail has. There were several bodies that covered Milton Keynes and parts of Bedfordshire which officers continued to engage with. The Leader indicated that he had recently written to the Chief Executive of East West Rail regarding a lack of consultation and meaningful action.

As a supplementary question, Roger Carey asked Councillor Marland, according to East West Rail modelling, more than 95% of the housing that the railway will enable would be for car drivers not East West Rail passengers. Could the Leader advise what modelling or other investigation would the council undertake to understand the local effect and additional cost of these additional road users?

Councillor Marland indicated that officers would continue to engage with East West Rail on traffic modelling. Within Milton Keynes the line was already mostly mapped out and the South East Milton Keynes SPD had already been Agreed. The Leader further noted that he had given assurances that when the proposals came forward for housing in this area that proper traffic modelling would be carried out. The Council was also just about to consult on a new Local Plan and any impact of East West Rail would be taken forward as part of that work.

CL98 Business Remaining from Last Meeting

CL99 Report on Changes to the Council's Constitution

The Mayor moved the following recommendations which were formally seconded by the Deputy Mayor:

- “1. That revised Rule 19.5 of the Council Procedure Rules (shown with track changes), be agreed.
2. That all councillors will attend mandatory refresher training in interests before the end of May 2024.”

The recommendations were agreed by acclamation.

RESOLVED:

1. That revised Rule 19.5 of the Council Procedure Rules be agreed.
2. That all councillors will attend mandatory refresher training in interests before the end of May 2024.

CL100 Reports from Cabinet and Committees

CL101 Cabinet - 5 December 2023 - Council Tax Base 2024/25

Councillor Townsend moved the following recommendations which were formally seconded by Councillor Marland:

- “1. That the Council approved revisions to the Local Council Tax Policy to:
 - a) charge a premium of 100% on properties that are empty for a period of between 1 and 2 years from 1 April 2024, subject to any exceptions that may be subsequently agreed by the Secretary of State; and
 - b) adopt a new Second Homes Premium from 1 April 2025 of 100%, subject to any exceptions that be subsequently agreed by the Secretary of State
2. That the 2024/25 Council Tax Base estimate is set at 97,194.98 Band D equivalent properties be approved.
3. That the proposed 2024/25 funding contribution to parish and town councils of £0.325m be approved.
4. That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, as adopted by the Council on 22 February 2023, be continued for 2024/25, with amendments that reflect changes to related benefits and to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations; retaining the delegation to the Director Finance and Resources to make technical legislative changes.”

The recommendations were agreed by acclamation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council approved revisions to the Local Council Tax Policy to:
 - a) charge a premium of 100% on properties that are empty for a period of between 1 and 2 years from 1 April 2024, subject to any exceptions that may be subsequently agreed by the Secretary of State; and
 - b) adopt a new Second Homes Premium from 1 April 2025 of 100%, subject to any exceptions that be subsequently agreed by the Secretary of State

2. That the 2024/25 Council Tax Base estimate is set at 97,194.98 Band D equivalent properties be approved.
3. That the proposed 2024/25 funding contribution to parish and town councils of £0.325m be approved.
4. That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, as adopted by the Council on 22 February 2023, be continued for 2024/25, with amendments that reflect changes to related benefits and to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations; retaining the delegation to the Director Finance and Resources to make technical legislative changes.

CL102 Cabinet - 6 February 2024 - Council Budget 2024/25 and MTFP 2024/25 to 2027/28

Councillor Marland moved the recommendations from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6 February 2024, together with recommendations relating to the precepts from the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority and parish/town councils, necessary for the Council to adopt when setting the level of Council Tax, which were seconded by Councillor Townsend:

“1. That Council agrees:

- a) That the Revenue Budget 2024/25 totalling £256.140m be approved.
- b) That the Council Tax at Band D of £1,676.08 for the Milton Keynes element of the Council Tax, be approved. This is an increase of 4.99% increase on the previous year, consisting of a 2.99% general increase and 2.00% Adult Social Care Precept.
- c) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2024/25 (excluding Parish Precepts) of £162.906m, be noted.
- d) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 [the “Act”]:
 - (i) £653.977m Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish and town councils. (Gross expenditure including precepts)
 - (ii) £478.859m Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3). (Net income excluding Council Tax requirement)
 - (iii) £175.118 m As its Council Tax requirement for the year, being the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4).

- (iv) £1,801.72 As the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts), being the amount at (iii) above, divided by the Council Tax Base agreed on 5 December 2023.
- (v) £12,211,734 Being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (vi) £1,676.08 Being the amount at (iv) less the result given by dividing the amount at (v) above by the Council Tax Base agreed on 5 December 2023, as the basic amount of Council Tax for the year for Milton Keynes City Council, excluding Parish and Major Precepting Authorities.
- (e) That the following amounts be calculated for Milton Keynes City Council Tax:

Table A – Milton Keynes City Council Tax

	VALUATION BANDS							
	A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
MKCC With 2.99% Increase	975.06	1,137.57	1,300.08	1,462.59	1,787.61	2,112.63	2,437.65	2,925.18
ASC Levy With Further 2.00% Increase	142.33	166.05	189.77	213.49	260.93	308.37	355.82	426.98
MKCC Total 4.99%	1,117.39	1,303.62	1,489.85	1,676.08	2,048.54	2,421.00	2,793.47	3,352.16

- (f) That the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (vi) by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to all dwellings listed in each particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act.
- (g) That for the year 2024/25, Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Act 1992, has confirmed the following precepts to the Council for each of the categories of dwellings:

Table B – PCC for Thames Valley Council Tax

VALUATION BANDS							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
179.52	209.44	239.36	269.28	329.12	388.96	448.80	538.56

- (h) That for the year 2024/25, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Act 1992,

has confirmed the following precepts to the Council for each of the categories of dwellings:

Table C – Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority Council Tax

VALUATION BANDS							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
52.97	61.80	70.63	79.46	97.12	114.78	132.43	158.92

- (i) That as a result of the above, the amounts of Council Tax (shown in Annex A and B) be set in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwelling shown in the Schedule.
- (j) That the 2024/25 levies payable to the Buckingham and River Ouzel Internal Drainage Board and the Environment Agency be noted.
- (k) That the summary results of the CIPFA Resilience Index 2022/23 (shown in Annex C) be noted.
- (l) That the position for the Dedicated Schools Grant of £367.347m and the Schools block funding formula for 2024/25 be noted and the budget and formula allocations for the High Needs and Early Years blocks be approved.
- (m) That the forecast parking surplus be noted.
- (n) That the Housing Revenue Account Revenue Budget 2024/25 be approved.
- (o) That increases to housing rents are set at 7.7% for tenants (an average increase of £7.50 per week) and 7% for shared owners (an average increase of £3.92 per week), the maximum level allowable under the Rent Standard (CPI + 1%) (para 3.26) be approved.
- (p) That following consultation with tenants and leaseholders, changes to Housing Revenue Account service charges be approved and implemented from 1 April 2024.
- (q) That the Housing Rent Affordability and Market Context Report be noted.
- (r) That the fees and charges for 2024/25 (including those fees and charges which are exceptions to the Income and Collection Policy) be approved.
- (s) That the Capital Strategy be approved.
- (t) That the Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29 be approved.
- (u) That the resource allocation for the 2024/25 Tariff programme be noted and approved.
- (v) That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and the Treasury Policy Statement, including the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, Borrowing Limits be approved.

- (w) That the financial forecast set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), in relation to both resources and expenditure, be noted.
- (x) The equalities impact assessments for the Revenue Budget 2023/24 be noted.
- (y) That the final 2024/25 Business Rates Baseline estimate as reported in the NNDR1 return be noted

The Mayor briefly adjourned the meeting between 8.10 pm and 8.25 pm because of a power outage affecting Civic Offices and the wider area.

Upon the meeting reconvening, the Mayor proposed (with the consent of the Leaders of Political Groups), and with the agreement of the meeting, that in the exceptional and unprecedented circumstances of a power outage (and limited prospect of power returning), time limited emergency lighting, and the legal requirement to agree a budget within a timeframe, and secure timely printing of Council Tax notices, that the Council depart from its usual practice of debate, and that accordingly amendments be moved, seconded and voted upon without further discussion. Additionally, that the substantive motion which had already been moved and seconded also be voted upon without discussion.

Councillor Geary moved the following amendments on behalf of the Conservative Group, which were seconded by Councillor McLean:

1. That a thorough investigation is carried out across all Milton Keynes City Council-owned play parks to understand the extent of current liabilities and the upgrades required. That this should be reported to Corporate Oversight and Scrutiny Management Committee in September and considered as part of the 25/26 budget proposals.
2.
 - (a) That in light of the regretful closure of YIS, that a comprehensive analysis of independent providers of youth services is carried out to determine which providers are at risk of closure and how this Council can allocate it's funding most appropriately. The findings of this investigation will be considered as part of the 25/26 budget proposals.
 - (b) That this Council requests the Youth Council to investigate and assess the needs of youth services for young people in Milton Keynes, that these findings are costed, reported to Corporate Oversight and Scrutiny Management Committee in September and considered as part of the 25/26 budget proposals
3. That this Council commits to the principle of moving to All Out Elections and (subject to consultation, a further resolution and other legislative requirements) allocates the saving of approximately £150,000 per annum to public transport services from 2027/28 with base line contingency used from 2024/25 until the savings can be realised, or until the Council resolves not to do so.

4. That £200,000 from the Parking Reserve is allocated to further road improvement works and all remaining unallocated one-off contingency is reserved to fill potholes, repaint road markings and replace street signs.
5. That £150,000 of one-off contingency funding is allocated to procure engagement sessions for all year 5 and 8 children in Milton Keynes for next three years (£50,000 per year).
6. That £100,000 funding be allocated from the Public Health Reserve to commission an independent report into the impact of construction dust on resident's health.
7. That the council tax increase be limited to 2.34%, funded from and reducing the base line contingency, and that £1.55m of the base line contingency be reserved for urgent in year pressures with any remaining balance ring fenced for finding a sustainable approach to public transport."

Councillor Marland, mover of the motion, did not accept any of the amendments.

Councillor D Hopkins moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Andrews:

1. That a £20,000 package of support measures, funded from unallocated one off contingency, with future commitments to be determined to help support the essential 450 (89) bus route(s) linking Woburn Sands and Wavendon with MK City Hospital and MK City Centre and which otherwise would be threatened with closure. Such support being subject to all relevant licencing and operating licences being in place.

Councillor Marland, mover of the motion, did not accept the amendment.

The voting on the Conservative Group amendments was as follows:

For: 11 / Against: 39 / Abstentions: 1

The Mayor declared the Amendments lost.

The voting on Councillor D Hopkins amendment was as follows:

For: 11 / Against: 39 / Abstentions: 1

The Mayor declared the Amendment Lost.

The Mayor reminded members that there was a legal requirement for a recorded vote to be taken on the budget.

The Voting on the Substantive Motion was as follows:

FOR:	Adewale, Ahmad, Bailey, Bell, K Bradburn, R Bradburn, Brown, Cannon, A Carr, J Carr, Crooks, Darlington, Exon, Ferrans, Fuller, Hearnshaw, Hume, Hussain, Kendrick, M Khan, N Khan, Lancaster, Legg, Long, Mahendran, Marland, McQuillan, Middleton, Nayee, Nolan, Oguntola, Oyakhire,
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	Petchey, Priestly, Smith, Townsend, Trendall, Whitworth, Wilson-Marklew (39)
AGAINST:	Andrew, Andrews, Geary, Hall, D Hopkins, Imran, McLean, Muzammil, Rolfe, Verma and Wardle (11)
ABSTENTIONS:	M Bradburn (1)

The Substantive Motion was declared carried.

Note – Councillor Clarke left the meeting prior to the recorded vote taking place.

RESOLVED:

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- (i) That as a result of the above, the amounts of Council Tax (shown in Annex A and B) be set in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwelling shown in the Schedule.
- (j) That the 2024/25 levies payable to the Buckingham and River Ouzel Internal Drainage Board and the Environment Agency be noted.
- (k) That the summary results of the CIPFA Resilience Index 2022/23 (shown in Annex C) be noted.
- (l) That the position for the Dedicated Schools Grant of £367.347m and the Schools block funding formula for 2024/25 be noted and the budget and formula allocations for the High Needs and Early Years blocks be approved.
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- (s) That the Capital Strategy be approved.
- (t) That the Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29 be approved.
- (u) That the resource allocation for the 2024/25 Tariff programme be noted and approved.
- (v) That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and the Treasury Policy Statement, including the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, Borrowing Limits be approved.
- (w) That the financial forecast set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), in relation to both resources and expenditure, be noted.
- (x) The equalities impact assessments for the Revenue Budget 2023/24 be noted.
- (y) That the final 2024/25 Business Rates Baseline estimate as reported in the NNDR1 return be noted

Refer to Decision Sheet Annex for Annex A (2024/25 Basic Amount of Council Tax) and Annex B (2024/25 Total Amount of Council Tax)

CL103 Councillors' Questions

None received.

CL104 Notices of Motions:

None received.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 20.36.