

# **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE – 1 DECEMBER 2015**

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**Title:**

**SETTING OF COUNCIL TAX BASE AND  
BUSINESS RATES BASE FOR 2016/17**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for:

1. the 2016/17 council tax base which, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council is required to determine prior to approval of the Council's budget for 2016/17; and
2. the business rate forecast for 2016/17 which, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, forms a major element of Waverley's estimated core funding for its General Fund Budget.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

This report is a key part of Waverley's budget setting which underpins the delivery of all of the Council's Corporate Priorities.

**Financial Implications:**

The council tax base is a measure of the taxable capacity within the Borough for council tax setting purposes. This report explains how the tax base is calculated, what estimates are used and how they impact on the budget and council tax charges. From 2013/2014 under the business rate retention scheme, Waverley's forecast of business rate income is critical to the estimated core funding. This report explains the estimated business rate figures put forward for approval.

The incorporation of the council tax reduction scheme into the council tax base calculation from 2013/14 transfers significant risk to all precepting authorities. Increases in the take up for council tax reductions will lead to a shortfall of council tax income which will need to be recovered in the subsequent year's budget-setting process. Also, under the business rates retention scheme, Waverley takes the additional risk of fluctuations in the value of rates payable and amount of rates collected including reductions resulting from successful rating appeals. The position on both issues are closely monitored in the year.

**Legal Implications:**

Waverley has a statutory duty to determine its council tax base by the 31 January each year as part of the budget process. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 included the requirement for Councils to set and operate a local council tax reduction scheme. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 also introduced the business rate retention scheme which fundamentally changed the way that business rates are used nationally to fund local government.

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## Council Tax Base 2016/17

1. Under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), the Council must determine the council tax base to be used in setting the council tax in any year before approval of the Council's Budget for that year. The council tax base is the estimated total net number of properties subject to a council tax charge in the forthcoming year. The tax base figure is expressed in equivalent number of Band D properties using the specified band proportions (see below). The total band D equivalent council tax base is divided into Waverley's net budget requirement to determine the council tax charge for the year. Each individual town and parish council's tax base is also used to calculate the share for each authority.

### Calculation of the Council Tax Base

- a) The starting point for the council tax base calculation is the return (Form CTB (October 2015)) which all billing authorities are required to submit to the Government each October which gives an estimate of the tax base position at that time. The return is based on the Valuation List provided by the District Valuation Officer which details the actual number of dwellings in the Borough broken down over each of the eight valuation bandings. The calculation then takes into account discounts and exemptions in place at that time plus assumptions about potential change in the year ahead (for example changes in uptake of the council tax reduction scheme). The resultant net number of dwellings in each band is then converted to Band D equivalents by applying the following ratios:

Band	Ratio to Band D
A	6/9 ths
B	7/9 ths
C	8/9 ths
D	1
E	11/9 ths
F	13/9 ths
G	15/9 ths
H	18/9 ths

- b) The total of all Band D equivalents is then multiplied by its estimate of the 'collection rate' for the year, i.e. the Council's estimate of the percentage of the net collectable debit for the year it will ultimately collect. In view of the high level of council tax collection in Waverley in recent years it is considered that a 'collection rate' of 99.0% remains appropriate in respect of the 2016/17 council tax year.
- c) There are twenty one Town/Parish Councils in Waverley and it is necessary for the information shown on Form CTB 2016/17 to be analysed over each of the Town/Parish Council areas in order to determine the number of Band D equivalents for each of those areas. The potential ongoing impact of the council tax reduction scheme is also assessed for each town and parish council.

- d) The estimated council tax base, after taking account of assumptions about discounts, exemptions and council tax support, for each town and parish and for Waverley in total is shown in Annexe 1. The total figure will be used to determine Waverley's council tax charges for 2016/17 and each town and parish council will be notified of their individual council tax base figure to enable them to approve their local council tax charge for the year.
- e) The total net estimated council tax base in 2016/17 is 53,645.9 band D equivalent properties (52,832 in 2015/2016). The following table summarises the key changes on the overall 2016/17 estimated council tax base compared to 2015/16

Changes from 2015/16	Additional Properties	Band D Equivalent properties
Houses on VO List	+327	+404
Movement in assumptions on discounts, exemptions and the council tax support scheme	+384	+419
<b>Growth in Tax Base</b>	<b>+711</b>	<b>+823</b>

### **Business Rates Estimates 2016/17**

2. The Business Rates Retention scheme replaced the previous central pooling system from 1 April 2013. The Government continues to set the rateable value of all businesses and the rate multiplier and dictates the proportions of rate income that local authorities can keep. In January 2013 the Council delegated authority to the Executive for setting the business rates base.
3. The retained part of business rates (after payments to Government and Surrey County Council) forms a key part of Waverley's core General Fund resources and it is, therefore, essential to make robust estimates of net business rate income to feed into the budget calculation. The following table illustrates how business rates links to the Council's funding for 2016/17:

Element	Estimate 2016/17 £'000
Non-domestic Rating Income net yield – as per estimated NNDR1 for 2016/17	36,875
Less – 50% central share paid to Government	-18,437
Less – 10% county share paid to Surrey County Council	-3,688
<b>Waverley's share before tariff and levy deductions</b>	<b>14,750</b>
Less – estimated tariff	-12,690
Less – estimated levy	-566
<b>Total estimated net Business Rates income due to WBC</b>	<b>1,494</b>

Waverley's share of the estimated Business Rates income is brought into the General Fund together with Government grants from certain reliefs and concessions. The tariff (estimated £12,690,000) and levy (estimated £566,000) are then paid out of these General Fund receipts before a final General Fund position for Business Rates is reached.

4. Waverley has to submit a statutory form NNDR1 by 31 January each year which sets out the Council's estimated business rate position for the coming year. This form will confirm the payments to the Government, Surrey County Council and Waverley that will need to be made out of the collection fund during the year. If the actual position for the year is different from the estimate, adjustments are made through the collection fund and surpluses/deficits are apportioned across the organisations in line with the above proportions.
5. The Government are currently consulting with CIPFA on the format and calculations inherent in the 2016/17 NNDR1 expected to be published in December 2015. It is this form and its resultant calculations which will drive the retained Business Rates for Waverley in 2016/17, the General Fund levy charge and compensation grants. The figures provided in this report are based on the current 2015/16 Business Rates system of reliefs and compensation but assuming a 0.8% increase in the small Business Rate multiplier (being the RPI for September 2015). Assumptions may need to be amended in the light of the 2015 Spending Review and Autumn Statement expected on 25 November 2015.
6. The year end calculations guidance for 2015/16 is not expected to be published until March 2016. It is the calculations inherent in this form which drive the actual surplus/deficit on the collection fund for Business Rates for 2015/16. In advance of this an estimated surplus/deficit will need to be assessed as at 31st January 2016, brought into Waverley's General Fund budget for 2016/17 and notified to Surrey County Council for precepting purposes.
7. Annexe 2 sets out the key figures estimated to form the business rate base for 2016/17. The figure that determines the payments to the Government, Surrey County Council and Waverley's budget is the 'Non-domestic Rating Income' amount. Members are requested to approve the figures proposed for 2016/17 and a delegation is requested to enable officers, in conjunction with the finance portfolio holder, to make adjustments if necessary before submitting the final form by 31 January. The adjustments will be as a result of updated estimates and clarifications from the 2015 Spending Review and Autumn Statement. Estimates currently show that Waverley will be able to retain rates in excess of the assumed Government's baseline funding level of £1,833k in 2016/17. It is proposed that the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve continues to be used to mitigate the risks of a fluctuating rateable value base going forward. This reserve is also used to balance significant timing differences between years due to statutory requirements. If the budget position requires this approach, approval will be sought for this measure in the budget report to be considered by the Council in February.

## New Business Rates Developments

8. The Chancellor announced on 5 October 2015 major plans to allow local government nationally to retain 100% of local business rates and business rates growth by 2020. Based on the details announced so far it looks like Waverley may be no better off from Business Rates at the start of the new system because the Government will continue to balance out the rates collected across all authorities through the tariff system.

## Recommendation

It is recommended that

1. the council tax base for Waverley be approved for the year 2016/17, as shown in Annexe 1; and
2. the business rate estimates for 2016/17 be approved, as set out in Annexe 2, and that authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources, in conjunction with the Finance Portfolio Holder, to make any final changes necessary before the NNDR1 return is submitted to the Government on 31 January 2016.

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## Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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