

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 17 January 2017 at 6.30 pm

- Present: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Hugo Brown
Councillor Carmen Griffiths
Councillor Alan MacKenzie-Wintle
Councillor Andrew McHugh
Councillor Tom Wallis
Councillor Sean Woodcock
- Substitute Members: Councillor Mark Cherry (In place of Councillor Barry Richards)
Councillor G A Reynolds (In place of Councillor David Anderson)
Councillor Barry Wood (In place of Councillor Ian Corkin)
- Also Present:: Councillor Lynn Pratt, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy
- Apologies for absence: Councillor David Anderson
Councillor Ian Corkin
Councillor Barry Richards
- Officers: Karen Curtin, Commercial Director
Ian Davies, Director of Operational Delivery
Paul Sutton, Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer
Chris Stratford, Head of Regeneration and Housing
George Hill, Corporate Finance Manager
Sanjay Sharma, Group Accountant
Geni Hotchkiss, Business Support Unit Manager
Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer
Joel Bliss, Assistant Democratic and Elections Officer

61 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

62 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

63 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held on 29 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

65 **Discretionary Rate Relief Policy**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report on the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy which set out the proposals for awarding discretionary rate relief for 2017/2018 and beyond.

When presenting the report, the Business Support Unit Manager outlined new legislation being brought forward to give officers discretionary powers to provide rural businesses that fall within certain thresholds 100% business rate relief in order to support rural communities that would be otherwise diminished without the services that these businesses provide.

In considering the report, the committee were concerned that the policy could be misused. The Business Support Unit Manager assured the committee that the application of certain thresholds pertaining to the size, value and revenue of the businesses in question would prevent businesses from wrongly taking advantage of the scheme.

They were also assured that cases would be examined on their individual merits and that the cost implications would be considered as part of the decision making process.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the Executive be recommended to approve the discretionary Rate Relief Policy with no amendments.
- (3) That the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Management agree the final content of the policy guidelines.

66 **Solihull Partnership Steering Group**

The Head of Regeneration and Housing gave a verbal update on the Solihull Partnership and highlighted three areas of progress since the last meeting:

- Roles and responsibilities had been agreed and circulated to officers and the Solihull Partnership Steering Group.

- Legal documents had been received and a meeting set up between Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and Cherwell District Council (CDC) Legal departments.
- The Commercial Director had arranged a meeting with SMBC to discuss the changes in the contract. SMBC would be looking to recover abortive costs and would be asked to submit full details. CDC would be looking at recovering costs for the consultant who had been employed. The outcome of this meeting will be reported back to the Committee.

The Commercial Director advised the Committee that the scope and nature of the project had changed through the Solihull Partnership's non-delivery and as a result, the budget and number of projects would be reduced.

In response to the verbal update, Members raised concerns about the increase in costs incurred because of the delays and stressed the importance that lessons should be learnt and mistakes not repeated.

The Lead Member for Estates and the Economy would provide an update from the Solihull Partnership Steering Group at the next meeting of the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.

67

Medium Term Revenue Plan and draft 2017/18 Revenue and Capital Budgets

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report on the proposed Medium Term Revenue Plan (MTRP) including the Revenue and Capital budget proposals for the committee to consider for recommendation to Executive

In introducing the report, the Chief Finance Officer advised the Committee that the Efficiency Plan had been accepted and a Medium Term Settlement agreed which included a four year New Homes Bonus scheme

The Chief Finance Officer further advised that the Pension Fund Actuary had recently completed a review of the fund and proposed revised contributions for the Council over the next three years. As an alternative the Council could make a single up-front payment creating a 7% saving for the Council. The Committee was asked to consider the upfront payment and recommend to Executive.

Resolved

- (1) That the Medium Term Revenue Plan (MTRP) be recommended to Executive to recommend to Full Council for adoption.
- (2) That the 2017/18 draft revenue budget be recommended to Executive to recommend to Full Council for adoption.

- (3) That the 2017/18 capital programme be recommended to Executive to recommend to Full Council for adoption.
- (4) That the list of reserves be recommended to Executive to recommend to Full Council for adoption.
- (5) That Executive be recommended to recommend to Full Council that the level of the Council Tax increase for 2017/18 be 0%.
- (6) That Executive be recommended to agree that that a single up-front payment be made to the Pension Fund Actuary instead of spreading the payment over a 3 year period.

68 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Committee considered its work programme. The Solihull Partnership and Solihull Partnership Steering Group would remain on the Committee work plan until all issues had been resolved.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee Work Plan be noted.

69 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

70 **Exempt Appendices: Medium Term Revenue Plan and draft 2017/18 Revenue and Capital Budgets**

The Committee reviewed the exempt appendices.

Resolved

- (1) That the exempt appendices be noted.

71 **Car Parks**

The Director of Operational Delivery submitted an exempt report which sought consideration of a 2017/18 capital programme project associated with

investment in the council's car parks to deliver improved customer service and financial efficiencies.

Resolved

- (1) That Executive be recommended to include the Car Parks Improvement Project in the 2017/18 draft Capital Programme.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Chairman:

Date: