

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 25 July 2017 at 6.30 pm

- Present: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Ian Corkin
Councillor Carmen Griffiths
Councillor David Hughes
Councillor Andrew McHugh
Councillor Barry Richards
Councillor Tom Wallis
Councillor Sean Woodcock
- Substitute Members: Councillor Tony Ilott (In place of Councillor David Anderson)
Councillor Barry Wood (In place of Councillor Alan MacKenzie-Wintle)
Councillor Tim Hallchurch (In place of Councillor Hugo Brown)
- Apologies for absence: Councillor David Anderson
Councillor Hugo Brown
Councillor Alan MacKenzie-Wintle
- Officers: Paul Sutton, Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer
Richard Stirling, Corporate Procurement Manager
Geni Hotchkiss, Business Support Unit Manager
Belinda Green, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer
Joel Bliss, Assistant Democratic and Elections Officer

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Budget Planning Committee held on 28 February, 6 April and 15 May 2017 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

6 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

7 **2016-17 Revenue and Capital Outturn Report**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report on the Revenue and Capital Outturn position at the end of the 2016-17 financial year. The Committee was advised that whilst there had been issues surrounding Regeneration and Housing, new management and processes were in place and the issues were being addressed and resolved.

In response to Members' comments regarding poor budgeting and the Solihull Partnership, the Chief Finance Officer explained that areas where problems had occurred had been reviewed. The majority of the Solihull Partnership work had now been completed and a more productive relationship was now in place.

Members raised concerns about the amount of slippage from 2016-17 and requested more information as to why these projects had slipped. The Committee also requested that greater context to the slippages be provided to ensure that the same projects had not slipped repeatedly.

Some members of the Committee raised concerns about the distribution of New Homes Bonuses. The Chief Finance Officer suggested that a review of the use of New Homes Bonus be brought to Committee in September.

Resolved

- (1) That it be recommended to the Account Audit and Risk Committee that the carry forward of the budget underspends from 2016-17 to 2017-18 be agreed.
- (2) That it be recommended to the Account Audit and Risk Committee that the capital out-turn position for 2016-17 be noted.
- (3) That it be recommended to the Account Audit and Risk Committee that the review of reserves be agreed.
- (4) That it be recommended to the Account Audit and Risk Committee that the balances on slipped capital schemes in 2016-17 be agreed and carried forward into the 2017-18 capital program.

8 **Business Rates Monitoring 2016-2017**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report which provided Members with the business rates position as at the end of 2016-2017 financial year.

The Business Support Manager explained that a number of large projects were outstanding with the Valuation Office Agency and once included would even out the decline in business rates.

In response to concerns raised by members over the increasing rates that many businesses faced; which could cause companies to reduce in size, leave the area or even close completely, the Business Support Manager explained that there would be business rate relief schemes in place to assist with the transitional period.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted

9 **Review of Procurement Strategy Progress**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report that summarised the Council's Procurement Strategy progress for Quarter 4 of the financial year 2016-2017. In response to Members' comments regarding the suitability of contractors, the Procurement Manager informed the Committee that when looking for contractors, a company's prior record would be taken into account and that regarding the success of a contract; contract management was a key element.

The Committee commented that the format of the report had improved and was much more informative than previous reports.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress made in implementing the Council's Procurement Strategy during Quarter 4 2016-17 be noted.

10 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018-2019**

The Chief Finance Office submitted a report to provide members with an update on the implications of the current council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) and the changes to discounts, including the impact on collection rates, and to provide members with options to consider for a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018-2019.

The Committee were satisfied with the current scheme and agreed that Executive be recommended to agree there be no change to the scheme.

Resolved

- (1) That the financial implications of the report be noted.
- (2) That Executive be recommended to agree Option 1 - No change to the current local Council Tax Reduction scheme, as the preferred Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018-19 in order for consultation to be undertaken

11 **Spring Budget 2017 - Business Rates Relief Schemes**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report on the spring budget 2017 changes to Business Rates and provided members with details of the proposed local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme and Pubs Relief Scheme.

In response to Members' questions, the Business Support Manager explained that one hundred and twenty seven businesses would be eligible to benefit from the proposed scheme. Support to local Business would be maximised as there would be a 100% refund from central government.

At the request of Members, the Chief Finance Officer agreed to circulate the list 127 businesses which would be eligible to benefit from the proposed schemes outside of the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That no amendments be recommended to Executive to the proposed local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme.
- (3) That Executive be recommended to adopt the final local Discretionary Relief Business Rate Relief Scheme and the Pubs Relief Scheme.
- (4) That Executive be recommended to consider a more robust connection with the business community.

12 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Committee considered its work programme. As discussed under agenda item 6, 2016-2017 Revenue and Capital Outturn Report, a review of the New Homes Bonus allocation was added to the Work Programme.

Resolved

- (1) That a review of New Homes Bonus allocation be added to 26 September 2017.
- (2) That subject to resolution (1), the work program be noted.

13 **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.”

14 **Medium Term Revenue Plan - 2017/18 to 2021/22**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted an Exempt report on the Medium Term Revenue Plan 2017-18 to 2021/22.

Resolved

- (1) That the exempt report be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Chairman:

Date: