

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held as a Virtual meeting, on 29 September 2020 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)
Councillor Carmen Griffiths (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Nathan Bignell
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Conrad Copeland
Councillor David Hughes
Councillor Barry Richards
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Fraser Webster
Councillor Lucinda Wing
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Substitute Members:

Councillor Tony Ilott (In place of Councillor Andrew McHugh)

Also Present:

Councillor Hugo Brown
Councillor Ian Middleton

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Andrew McHugh

Officers:

Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance
Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development
Steve Jordan, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investment & (Interim) Monitoring Officer
Aaron Hetherington, Democratic and Elections Team Leader
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

13 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 August 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman in due course.

14 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

15 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

16 **Budget and Business Planning Process 2021/22 - 2025/26**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Finance which detailed the proposed Budget and Business Planning Process for 2021/22 – 2025/26.

The report was being considered by Executive at its meeting on 5 October and Budget Planning Committee had been asked to provide their comments.

The Director of Finance advised the Committee that since the report had been published, the Government had announced that the Autumn Budget from the Chancellor would not be taking place in November as had been scheduled.

With regards to the already delayed Government Spending Review, the Director of Finance advised that a further announcement was anticipated during November 2020. If the review were to be further delayed, a one year spending review could be announced rather than a three year review.

The Director of Finance explained that due to the current uncertainty around Government funding, and the current funding gap for 2021/22, a savings target of £9.5million pounds had been set for 2021/22. Should the Business Rates reset be delayed, the funding gap arising from this would apply to the council in the 2022/23 year rather than 2021/22 as set out in the existing Medium Term Financial Strategy.

With regards to the proposed timetable for the Budget and Business Planning Process, the Committee requested that the timetable be reviewed to see if it would be possible for Budget Planning Committee to consider the Capital Bids earlier than currently planned.

Resolved

- (1) That the Budget and Business Planning Process 2021/22 – 2025/26 Executive Report be noted

- (2) That the Capital Bids element of the timetable be reviewed to establish whether it would be possible for Budget Planning Committee to consider them earlier in the Budget Planning Process

17 **Cherwell District Council Reserves Policy**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Finance that detailed a proposed Draft Reserves Policy, for Budget Planning Committee to comment on ahead of its consideration by Executive as part of the suite of budget papers later in the financial year.

The Assistant Director – Finance explained that there were currently around 60 different reserves held, some of which had been in place for a number of years without a specific purpose. The reserves currently in place would be reviewed with the directorates that held them, to identify if there were any that could be used for alternative purposes. Once the policy was approved an annual review would take place, as part of the Budget and Business Planning Process to ensure that reserves were being held in line with the policy.

The Chairman encouraged all Committee Members to review the list of existing reserves, and feedback to officers any information which may be useful during the review.

Resolved

- (1) That the Draft Reserves Policy be noted

18 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for 2020/2021.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

Chairman:

Date: