

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held as a Virtual meeting, on 10 November 2020 at 6.30 pm

Present:

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

Substitute Members:

Councillor Shaida Hussain (In place of Councillor Sean Woodcock)

Also Present:

Councillor Barry Wood - Leader of the Council
Councillor Tony Ilott – Lead Member Financial Management and Governance

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Nathan Bignell
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Officers:

Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

19 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

20 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 September 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman in due course.

21 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

22 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

23 **Monthly Performance, Finance and Risk Monitoring Report**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Finance that summarised Cherwell District Council's forecast revenue and capital outturn position for 2020/21, as at September 2020.

The Assistant Director – Finance explained that this report was the first budget monitoring report since the in-year budget savings of £2.4 million had been agreed.

The Committee was advised that there was currently a projected underspend of £0.3 million. Although costs relating to Covid-19 had created an overspend of £3.4 million, this had been offset against a reduction in business as usual costs of £3.7 million.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Assistant Director – Finance advised that slippage for capital projects would be included as part of the out-turn report to Executive during the Financial year end process.

Resolved

- (1) That the forecast revenue and capital outturn position for 2020/21 as at September 2020 be noted.

24 **CIPFA Financial Management Code**

The Committee considered a presentation from the Director of Finance, that gave details of the recently introduced Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Management Code.

CIPFA had developed the code in order to set out standards of financial management across local government, and to make it clear to Chief Financial Officers that the responsibility for good financial management sat with the entire Leadership Team of an authority, including senior officers and elected members.

The Code had also been introduced as a result of the financial difficulties faced by Northamptonshire County Council, which had led to the reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire.

The Assistant Director – Finance explained that the code covered six key principles, with 17 standards broken down into seven sections – the responsibilities of the chief finance officer and leadership team; governance and financial management style; long to medium-term financial management; the annual budget; stakeholder engagement and business plan; monitoring financial performance; and external financial reporting.

The code required local authorities to prepare for the code during 2020/21, with full compliance expected during 2021/22. Local authorities could decide themselves how to monitor, report and scrutinise compliance with the code.

The Assistant Director – Finance explained that an early assessment of the requirements of the code had been undertaken. One area for improvement had been identified in relation to balance sheet monitoring.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Director of Finance said that there was not currently any reference to external auditors needing to audit against the code, however that could change.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation on the CIPFA Financial Management Code be noted

25

Review of Committee Work Plan

The Committee considered the indicative work plan for 2020/21.

With regard to the December 2020 meeting of the Committee, the Director of Finance advised that the Council would not have received final details of the settlement figure, meaning that funding gap figures included in the Revenue and Capital proposals would still be assumptions.

Resolved

- (1) That the work plan be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.18 pm

Chairman:

Date: