

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held as a Virtual meeting, on 15 December 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 Andrew McHugh
Councillor Barry Richards
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Fraser Webster
Councillor Lucinda Wing
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Also Present:

Councillor Ian Corkin - Lead Member for Customers and Transformation
Councillor Tony Illott - Lead Member for Financial Management and Governance
Councillor Barry Wood – Leader of the Council

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director Adults & Housing Services
Steve Jorden, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investment & (Interim) Monitoring Officer
Jane Portman, Corporate Director (Interim)
Jason Russell, Director Community Operations
Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development
Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

27 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 November 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman in due course.

28 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

29 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

30 **Budget Proposals 2021/22 - 2025/26**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Finance that detailed savings proposals and budget pressures for Cherwell District Council for the period 2021/22 to 2025/26.

The Director of Finance explained that the Government's spending review announcement on 25 November had provided some clarity with regards to funding, however the Local Government Finance Settlement had not yet been announced so there was still an unknown element in figures for 2021/22. A provisional settlement figure was due to be announced this week (week commencing 14 December), but due to a consultation linked to some of the elements the final figure would not be known until February 2021.

Regarding the pressures and proposed savings, the Assistant Director – Finance explained to the Committee that full Impact Equality Assessments would be completed for each savings proposal, taking into account the results of the public consultation that was currently underway. The assessments would then be included with the full budget papers to be considered by Executive in February 2021.

In response to questions from the Committee relating to the predicted reduction in rental income from Castle Quay, the Director of Finance confirmed that the figures given in the report were recent and reflected the current situation.

The Corporate Directors then gave more detail of the pressures and proposed savings for their directorates, and answered questions from the Committee.

Following questions to the Corporate Director Adults and Housing Services on the possible staffing implications of the housing service proposals, the Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development explained to the Committee that there were a number of proposals across directorates which involved staffing. The legally required formal consultation processes

had not yet taken place, and it was therefore not possible for any further detailed information to be given to the Committee at this stage. Once the relevant processes had been completed, more information would be brought to Budget Planning Committee.

The Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development added that the Personnel Committee would consider detailed staffing implications of any proposal, as per its remit detailed in the Council's constitution.

Regarding the savings proposals for the Place and Growth directorate, the Corporate Director clarified that the rental increase of 3% for affordable homes and shared ownership properties was incorrect. The increase proposed was 1%, which was in line with Government guidelines. The correct increase had been included in the revised appendix that had been published as a supplement to the agenda.

In response to questions from the Committee on the possible impact of a rent increase on tenants, the Corporate Director agreed to provide further information in writing after the meeting.

Regarding savings proposals for the Communities directorate, the Committee questioned how the introduction of a food waste collection and a chargeable green waste service would be received by residents. Any changes to the existing service could lead to confusion, and a reduction in the amount of green waste collected. Members also queried which Committee would consider whether or not the changes be introduced.

The Corporate Director – Communities clarified that the proposals were part of the overall budget proposals and would therefore be agreed by Full Council as part of the overall budget. The Committee was advised that legally the council could not charge for food waste collections. It was therefore proposed to introduce a weekly food waste collection, and move to a chargeable green waste collection from July 2021. The proposed fee for the garden waste collection was £36 a year, which was comparable with services offered by neighbouring authorities. If these changes to services were made, they would be phased in from April 2021 and a detailed communications plan would be put in place to help residents understand the changes.

The Committee requested that, in light of the proposal to introduce a food waste collection, consideration be given to introducing kerbside glass recycling. It was an area that was regularly raised with members in terms of residents asking if such a service could be introduced, and Committee felt that if new vehicles would be needed for the food waste collections, it would be sensible to consider glass collections at the same time.

Resolved

- (1) That the 2021/22 Budget Consultation proposals be noted.
- (2) That the Executive be advised of the following comment from the Budget Planning Committee:

- That high level discussions take place to determine whether or not kerbside collection of glass recycling would be possible alongside the proposed food waste collection service.
- (3) That officers be requested to provide the following additional information to inform further Budget Planning Committee comments to Executive:
- Additional information regarding the impact of the proposed rental increase for affordable homes and shared ownership properties
- (4) Where suggested savings involve the potential for staffing reductions, further information regarding the value of reductions will be provided to Budget Planning Committee members when the formal consultation process has been completed and figures are confirmed and available. It was noted that Personnel Committee has the remit to review staffing implications as per the Council's constitution and that this is the appropriate body for these deliberations.

31 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Assistant Director – Finance gave a verbal update regarding the work plan for the rest of the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.

An additional meeting had been scheduled for 5 January 2021 to consider Capital Bids, with the provisional settlement, reserves and fees and charges being considered at the meeting on 19 January 2021.

Resolved

- (1) That the update be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.23 pm

Chairman:

Date: