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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Virtual meeting, on 20 August 2020 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council
Councillor George Reynolds (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Colin Clarke, Lead Member for Planning
Councillor Ian Corkin, Lead Member for Customers and Transformation
Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Housing
Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Financial Management and Governance
Councillor Andrew McHugh, Lead Member for Wellbeing
Councillor Richard Mould, Lead Member for Performance
Councillor Lynn Pratt, Lead Member for Economy, Regeneration and Transformation
Councillor Dan Sames, Lead Member for Clean and Green

Also Present: Councillor Sean Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group

Officers: Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Ansaf Azhar, Corporate Director of Public Health & Wellbeing
Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director Adults & Housing Services
Steve Jordan, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investment & (Interim) Monitoring Officer
Paul Feehily, Executive Director: Place and Growth (Interim)
Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development
Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
Sukdave Ghuman, Head of Legal Services
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

34 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

35 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

36 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record and to be signed by the Chairman in due course.

37 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

38 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

39 **Revised Budget 2020/2021**

The Director of Finance submitted a report which proposed a revised budget for 2020/21 to reflect the financial impact of Covid 19 and includes proposed savings required in order to achieve a balanced budget.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for Financial Management and Governance commended all staff for their hard work in continuing to deliver services and support residents during the height of the Covid 19 pandemic and as restrictions were being eased.

The Lead Member for Financial Management and Governance explained that whilst the council was doing all it could to address the financial impact of Covid 19, the on-going lobbying of Government by Local Authority Leaders, the Local Government Association and District Councils Network for additional funding for local Government was supported.

The Chairman referred to the comments submitted to Executive following the Budget Planning Committee's scrutiny of the proposals at the Committee's meeting of 18 August 2020 and thanked the Committee for their in-depth review and comments.

In response to a question from the Leader of the Labour Group seeking clarity with regards the vacant Community Warden post, the Lead Member for Wellbeing clarified that there were currently three Community Wardens. The one vacant post would not be recruited to this financial year to help achieve the required in-year savings.

Resolved

- (1) That Council be recommended to approve the savings as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (2) That Full Council be recommended to a £1.2m use of the reserves as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).

- (3) That Full Council be recommended to approve the revised budget as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (4) That the revised fees and charges relating to Building Control Fees from 1 October 2020 as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (5) That authority be delegated to the Director of Finance, in conjunction with the Finance Portfolio Holder, to carry out further virements between service budgets, Government grant income and reserves when actual sales, fees and charges income losses are known and when actual leisure costs are known.

Reasons

It is recommended that the Executive approves an revised budget for 2020/21 in order to address the net increase in costs the Council faces as a result of Covid-19. Formalising the net forecast underspend the Council has identified within its "Business as Usual" spend as well as further savings plus reflecting additional costs related to Covid-19 will ensure that service managers know the budget within which they are operating. This will help the Council to control its costs for the remainder of the year.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do nothing

The Council has the option to do nothing and not introduce a revised budget. However, this would mean that services are operating with budgets which do not reflect service delivery and would make it more difficult for services to control costs.

40 Quarterly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report - Quarter 1 2020/2021

The Director of Finance and the Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes submitted a report which summarised the Council's Performance, Risk and Finance monitoring position as at the end of the first quarter of 2020/2021.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for Performance explained that the Council reported on performance against 41 Business Plan Measures monthly, with 22 Programme Measures and 19 Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Due to the Covid-19 lockdown measures, it had not been possible to report on 2 KPI measures. Whilst Covid-19 had impacted on some indicators, service delivery had adapted in various areas and 61% of programme measures and key performance indicators were reporting in target at the end of Quarter 1.

The Lead Member for Performance and the Chairman confirmed that despite the challenges of Covid-19, performance measures would not be amended. Continuing to measure against existing KPIs would demonstrate the impact of Covid-19.

Lead Members commended all staff and paid particular tribute to the staff within their portfolio for their hard work during the Covid-19 lockdown to ensure ongoing service delivery, adapted where necessary, and support for residents.

Resolved

- (1) That the 2020/2021/ quarter 1 Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report be noted.

Reasons

The Council is committed to performance, risk and budget management and reviews progress against its corporate priorities on a monthly basis. Due to the current unprecedented situation, the present report reviews Quarter 1 performance measures for 2020-21, from July onwards monthly reporting will be resumed.

This report provides an update on progress made so far in 2020-21 to deliver the Council's priorities through reporting on Performance, the Leadership Risk Register and providing an update on the financial position.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report illustrates the Council's performance against the 2020-21 business plan. As this is a monitoring report, no further options have been considered. However, members may wish to request that officers provide additional information.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm

Chairman:

Date:

2020/21 In-Year Savings Proposals

1. Place and Growth has identified total proposed savings of £0.426m across its two principal areas of activity – Planning and Development (incorporating Development Management, Planning Policy and Building Control) and Growth & Economy, (incorporating Economic Development, Build! and the Bicester team). In the main savings would be taken from a robust approach to vacancy management which includes deleting unfilled posts that had been planned to be created as part of last year’s growth bid to support Growth Deal work and holding over vacancies in Development Management. Increasing fee income in Building Control would provide a small but helpful additional contribution.

- 1.1 Place and Growth – Planning and Development – proposed savings £0.202m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.020)
Vacancy Management	Deletion of two vacant posts and holding over vacant posts	(0.115)
Consultants	Reduce expenditure on agency fees to cover difficult-to-recruit-to posts	(0.056)
Income	Increase Building Control income in accordance with the revised Fee Schedule set out in Appendix 2 by 5% from 1 st October	(0.011)

- 1.2 Place and Growth – Growth and Economy – proposed savings £0.224m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Growth Deal	Delete CDC Growth Deal workstream posts	(0.126)
Kidlington	Due to Covid restrictions we have had to delay the start of recruitment to a new post of Kidlington co-ordinator until later in the year	(0.025)
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.008)
Vacancy Management	Paused recruitment on three posts to respond to Covid related delays to progressing the Cherwell Industrial Strategy and by finding an alternative approach to providing specific in-service support.	(0.065)

2. Customers and Organisational Development has identified total proposed savings of £0.301m as described in paragraphs 2.1 – 2.4.

- 2.1 Customers and Organisational Development – Customer Contact Centre and Land Charges – proposed savings £0.055m.

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Land Charges	Land Charges saving by using internal resource to undertake scanning and indexing of records to go ‘paper light’ rather than external resource. Able to achieve this shift to internal resource through reduced demand during closedown.	(0.005)
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.015)

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Vacancy Management	Reduction in Customer Contact Centre staffing budget through a combination of holding vacancies, utilisation of part time hours and releasing pension contributions from budgets where they are not required.	(0.032)
Customer Contact Centre	Non-essential spend saving – reduction in uniform budget.	(0.003)

2.2 Customers and Organisational Development – Human Resources – proposed savings £0.050m.

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
iTrent implementation (IT system)	Reduction in contingency for iTrent implementation (HR/Payroll IT system). It was expected that additional payroll support for data cleansing would be required, this has not been the case). Budget was 45k reduced with a 10k contingency.	(0.035)
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.003)
Apprentice Post	Hold recruitment	(0.012)

2.3 Customers and Organisational Development – IT – proposed savings £0.117m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Vacancy Management	Not recruiting to several current vacancies. Deliverable in the short term and the service will seek ways to maintain this saving through working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver IT projects.	(0.055)
IT Applications	Citrix support saving.	(0.010)
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.005)
IT Contracts	Reductions from various contracts including Adept/Printers/Daisy/Log-Me-In/HSO/Azure Backup.	(0.047)

2.4 Customers and Organisational Development – Communications, Strategy and Insight – proposed savings £0.079m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Misc.	IT equipment, software, advertising and subscriptions	(0.025)
Vacancy Management	Delivery of savings through delayed recruitment to the new joint communications, strategy and insight service.	(0.046)
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.008)

3. Adults and Housing Services has identified total proposed savings of £0.272m as described in paragraph 3.1.

3.1 Adults and Housing Services – Housing – proposed savings £0.272m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Growth Deal Top Up	A saving from the £880,000 top up fund means we will not contribute to a small shared ownership scheme.	(0.138)
Vacancy Management	Current vacancies will not be filled.	(0.091)
Enforcement Activity	Penalty charges collected as a result of enforcement	(0.033)
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.010)

4. Public Health and Wellbeing has identified total proposed savings of £0.484m as described in paragraph 4.1.

4.1 Public Health and Wellbeing – Wellbeing – proposed savings £0.484m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Impact of CQ2 build on Spiceball Leisure Centre	Growth bid to mitigate the impact of the building works on footfall /income to Spiceball Leisure Centre due to the removal of local car parking and the pedestrian bridge access	(0.330)
Vacancy Management	Pause recruitment to 2 vacant posts for 6 months	(0.017)
Remote Working	Travel, Print, Stationery Contraction of budgets due to remote working	(0.010)
Vacancy Management	Release of difference in budget between establishment and current staff levels, unneeded pension costs for non enrolled staff	(0.034)
Various service savings	Small budget corrections covering contraction in venue hire costs for Hubs, Reduced utility costs for Banbury Museum, Less promotion for Cherwell Lottery	(0.027)
Vacancy Management	Holding 5 p/t vacancies until 21/22	(0.066)

5. Commercial Developments, Assets and Investments has identified total proposed savings of £0.694m as described in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.4.

5.1 Commercial Developments, Assets and Investments – Pace, Growth and Commercial – proposed savings £0.016m.

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Growth Deal	The £16k was an amount set aside as part of the Growth Deal bid (CDC funded). It was to be used to pay for external support to carry out a review of the Project Management Office function to identify areas for further improvement.	(0.016)

5.2 Commercial Developments, Assets and Investments – Property – proposed savings £0.369m.

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
LED Project	A plan to save money by introducing LED lighting spend to save investment in Bodicote House is proposed to be deleted due to the payback period being in excess of 7 years	(0.069)
Asset Management Software Licence	PAM software acquisition as currently all data managed in Ms Excel.	(0.020)
Asset Management Software Acquisition	PAM professional fees for buying and properly set up software.	(0.050)
Banbury Canalside	The budgeted £230k consultancy fee was expected to cover a feasibility study that links into the Masterplan works currently being undertaken. This is being paused and will be delivered in 2021/22. This proposal is not linked to Banbury Town Centre or Castle Quay 2.	(0.230)

5.3 Commercial Developments, Assets and Investments – Finance – proposed savings £0.189m.

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.007)
Vacancy Management	Vacancy held for capital accountant until this can be recruited to and savings linked to Procurement based on recharge expected from OCC.	(0.018)
New Burdens Grant	Grant received from Government for the work carried out paying grants to small business as part of the response to COVID19	(0.130)
Budget Review	Legal costs and salary recharge in Revenues and Benefits CDC budget no longer required	(0.026)
Non-essential spend	Anticipated underspends on computer hardware due to all staff having recent laptops and on conferences due to less major conferences being available due to COVID19.	(0.008)

5.4 Commercial Developments, Assets and Investments – Legal and Democratic Services – proposed savings £0.120m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Vacancy Management	Director of Law and Governance	(0.003)
Vacancy Management	Practice Manager	(0.027)
Computer Software	Adjustments to software budgets resulting in savings	(0.013)
Professional Fees		(0.004)
Members Training	Adjustments to members Training budget	(0.005)
Chairman's Expenses	Reduction in Chairman's expenses due to Covid-19 lockdown.	(0.006)
Advertising	Reduction in Democratic Services Advertising budget	(0.002)
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This	(0.010)

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
	mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	
Election Costs	Savings from District Elections being postponed due to Covid-19	(0.050)

6. Communities has identified total proposed savings of £0.195m as described in paragraphs 6.1 – 6.2.

6.1 Communities – Environmental Services – proposed savings £0.081m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Vacancy Management	Delays to recruitment of posts (not Waste Collection)	(0.042)
Income	Increase in income following additional marketing of bulky waste services	(0.030)
	Increase in income from MOT inspections	(0.009)

6.2 Communities – Community Safety and Regulatory Services – proposed savings £0.114m

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Vacancy Management	Safer Communities & Environmental Enforcement Manager (end of interim arrangement in Septmeber)	(0.048)
Vacancy Management	Community Warden (1 of 4 currently vacant)	(0.026)
Vacancy Management	Business Support Assistant (current vacancy)	(0.014)
Agency Spend Reduction	Reduce agency spend to support Primary Authority Partnership	(0.008)
Remote Working	Reduced spend linked to staff working at home. This mainly relates to reductions in energy costs, travel expenses, printing and stationery costs.	(0.018)

7. Proposed corporate savings of £0.472m have been identified.

Title of Proposal	Brief Description	£m
Treasury Management	Reduced borrowing costs and lower interest rates are creating a positive variance against budget for 2020/21.	(0.472)

Proposed New Building Control Fees from 1 October 2020

BUILDING REGULATION FEES AND CHARGES
REVIEW JULY 2020
PROPOSALS AND COMPARISONS WITH NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES

	WARWICK	STRATFORD	AYLESBURY	OXFORD	W. OXON	S/VALE	RANGE OF OTHERS	CHERWELL CURRENT	CHERWELL PROPOSED	PROPOSED % INCREASE
New Dwellings										
1 Dwelling	775	770	720	750	485	910	485-775	600	750	25.0%
2 Dwellings	967	1045	1000	996	Q	1820	967- 1820	900	1000	11.1%
3 Dwellings	1200		1208	Q	Q	Q	1200- 1265	1200	1250	4.2%
4 Dwellings	1367	1436	1542	Q	Q	Q	1367- 1542	1350	1400	3.7%
5 Dwellings	1558	Q	1750	Q	Q	Q	1558- 1750	1500	1600	6.7%
Other New Builds										
New Garage <40m2	254	275	333	658	284	350	254-688	200	300	50.0%
New Garage 40m2 - 60m2	254	275	400	688	284	420	254-688	X	380	New Category
Extensions										
Extn <10m2	400	33-0	417	442	367	420	330-442	320	350	9.4%
Extn 10m2 - 40m2	400	440	583	567	485	630	400-630	550	550	nil
Extn 40m2 - 80m2	517	770	792	750	732	840	517-840	650	650	nil
Conversions										
Garage Conversion	254	275	400	354	257	420	254-420	225	300	33.3%

	WARWICK	STRATFORD	AYLESBURY	OXFORD	W. OXON	S/VALE	RANGE OF OTHERS	CHERWELL CURRENT	CHERWELL PROPOSED	PROPOSED % INCREASE
Loft Conversion <80m2	517	385	550	517	568	700	385-700	480	500	4.2%
Loft Conversion 80m2 - 100m2	Q	385	792	517	568	700	385-700	480	550	14.6%
Miscellaneous Works										
Underpinning	333	X	X	X	X	X	333	X	350	New Category
Up to 6 doors/windows	-	150	167	175	106	175	106-175	100	130	30.0%
Each additional door/window	X	10	X	X	X	X	10	10	15	50.0%
Heating Appliance	X	X	167	329	X	X	167-329	80	150	87.5%
Electrical Appliance	X	X	292	X	437	X	292-437	500	500	nil
Thermal Upgrade	X	220	292	216	X	X	216-292	150	180	20.0%
Up to 6 Solar Panels	X	X	X	221	X	X	221	15	180	20.0%
Based on Construction Value										
0-£10k	254	248	396	329	284	350	248-396	300	300	X
£10k - £40k	483	440	583	629	676	490	440-676	350	480	37.1%
£40k - £100k	Q	605	717	1196	1136	X	605-1196	400	720	80.0%
Building Notice	Nil	10%	20%	Nil	Nil	Nil	10%-20%	Nil	10%	10%

	WARWICK	STRATFORD	AYLESBURY	OXFORD	W. OXON	S/VALE	RANGE OF OTHERS	CHERWELL CURRENT	CHERWELL PROPOSED	PROPOSED % INCREASE
Supplement										
Supplementary Fees										
Additional Visits	X	X	X	65	X	X	65	X	65	New Item
Copies of Certificates	X	X	25	32	X	23	23-32	40	40	nil
Reopening applications after less than 3 years	X	X	50	X	X	110	50-110	50	50	nil
Reopening applications after more than 3 years	X	X	75	X	X	110	75-110	50	100	100.0%

NOTES

1. All charges are in £ and EXCLUSIVE of VAT
2. Charges rounded up or down to nearest £
3. Q = Ask for quotation
4. X – Fee for item not quoted
5. Some building ranges (eg extn 10m² - 40m²) are not all the same for all Authorities so charges have been interpolated