

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 26 July 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Patrick Clarke (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Hugo Brown
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor John Donaldson
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Also Present:

Councillor Adam Nell, Portfolio Holder - Finance

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Angus Patrick
Councillor Fraser Webster

Officers:

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Joanne Kaye, Strategic Finance Business Partner
Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Support and Reporting
Jacey Scott, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Sandra Ganpot, Benefits and Performance Manager
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 8 March and 18 May 2022 were confirmed as correct records and were signed by the Chairman.

5 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

6 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

7 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023 - 24**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director of Finance that detailed the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) and outlined options regarding the scheme for the 2023/24 financial year.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that since the existing income banded scheme was introduced in April 2020, annual Council Tax collection rates had increased and 98% of Council Tax had been collected during the 2021/2022 financial year.

A banded scheme also helped reduce the amount of letters being sent to residents, as previously every change in income for a resident had a knock-on effect to their council tax bill and benefits. Print and postage costs for the first quarter of 2022 were 27% lower than the first quarter in 2019, when the previous scheme was in place.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that the existing scheme was understood by customers and provided more effective personal budgeting, which was extremely important in the current financial climate.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding a possible increase in workload related to the current financial climate, the Revenues and Benefits Manager advised that a help page had been set up on the council's website to signpost various support schemes and advisory authorities that residents may find useful.

It was proposed by Councillor Donna Ford and seconded by Councillor Douglas Webb that Executive be recommended to retain the current Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2023/24.

Resolved

- (1) That the report and financial implications for the Council be noted.
- (2) That Executive be recommended to retain the current Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2023/24.

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

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director of Finance that summarised the council's revenue and capital outturn position for 2021/22.

The Strategic Business Partner – Business Support and Reporting explained that Budget Planning Committee focussed on the financial aspects of the monitoring. Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee looked at risk elements, and Overview and Scrutiny looked at performance.

The Strategic Business Partner – Business Support and Reporting explained that the council had monitored the budget closely during the 2021/22 financial year, acting in a financially responsible way. The outturn position showed an overall underspend of £430,000, which had been achieved against the financial difficulties of the ongoing covid pandemic.

The Capital budget had ended the year with a £25m underspend, however £15m of this was re-profiled into future years, as a result of scheduling changes to projects.

In response to the following questions from the Committee, the Strategic Business Partner – Business Support and Reporting advised that further information would be sought from relevant officers and circulated after the meeting:

- Details regarding the surplus amount identified in the 'year end position' table.
- The calculations behind the capital spend 2021/22 variance figure of £0.133 in Customers, Organisational Development & Resources total.
- Clarity regarding the Garden Town roundabout capital funding (reference 40206), and the involvement of CDC rather than OCC as highways authority.

In response to a question regarding aged debt, the Strategic Business Partner – Business Support and Reporting explained that a review into the debts was ongoing, and a report would be submitted to Executive later in the year.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

9 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for 2022/23.

The Strategic Business Partner – Business Support and Reporting advised the Committee that due to changes in government it was now unlikely that the Settlement Consultation would be available for consideration in September.

The Assistant Director of Finance was monitoring the item and would keep the Chairman updated.

In response to comments from the Committee regarding the full performance monitoring report and the need for Budget Planning Committee to focus on financial elements, the Chairman agreed to feedback the comments to relevant officers so that discussions could take place regarding a possible change of approach.

Resolved

- (1) That the Committee work plan be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.53 pm

Chairman:

Date: