

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 5 December 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Patrick Clarke (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE
Councillor Donna Ford (also, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration)
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Adam Nell (also, Portfolio Holder for Finance)
Councillor Dorothy Walker
Councillor Barry Wood (also, Leader of the Council)
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Also Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities
Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Andrew McHugh, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Eddie Reeves, Portfolio Holder for Property
Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Amanda Watkins

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development

Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
David Spilsbury, Head of Digital and Innovation

26 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

27 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed all non-Budget Planning Committee Members who were attending the meeting.

29 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

30 **2024/25 Budget Proposals - Revenue and Capital and Fees & Charges**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report which set out the capital bids, revenue savings proposals and budget pressures for Cherwell District Council for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29 and proposed Fees & Charges schedule for 2024/25. This was an opportunity for the Budget Planning Committee to consider the proposals and provide feedback to Executive to consider in finalising its budget proposals which would be presented to the 26 February 2024 Full Council meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report and advised the Committee how the budget proposals had been determined and outlined that the forecasts had been updated by Officers by using all information available

at that time. The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that a number of the grants to the Council were to be confirmed by the Government in late December so some of the proposed plans were liable to change.

The Assistant Director of Finance presented an update on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and advised that inflation, funding assumptions, pay inflation, the delay in the business rates reset until 2025/26 and the assumption that the new homes bonus will continue on a one-year basis had been included when updating the MTFS position.

The Assistant Director of Finance advised the Committee that as the council was going through a considerable amount of transformation it needed to ensure that there were the right level of support services in the future for the organisation.

In response to questions from the Committee on the current budget and decrease in the budget over future years, the Assistant Director of Finance advised that over the lifetime of the MTFS, the council expected a decrease of £13mil in the net revenue budget and most of that figure would be taken from funding so there would be a reduction in net spend. The Portfolio Holder for Finance explained that the council's Gross Revenue budget included income from fees and charges,

The Assistant Director of Finance also provided an update on the overall capital position advising that of the £10.484m capital bid total, £9.267m was funded from external contributions.

Executive Portfolio Holders, Corporate Directors and Assistant Directors gave an overview of the pressures, proposed saving and capital bids by service area within each directorate and answered questions from the Committee.

In response to Members' questions regarding the future ownership of the proposed 3G sports pitch at North Oxfordshire Academy, the Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services advised that the council would own the pitch, run it and receive any income received and the contribution from the school is the land. In response to a further question regarding if Banbury United could use the proposed 3G pitch for training, the Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services advised that the Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities was in regular contact with the Chairman of Banbury United Football Club.

Following a question from the Committee regarding how the proposed net zero capital project funds would be issued, the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities advised that there would be business cases for each proposal setting out what would be achieved and that how would help achieve the goals within the Climate Action Plan. The Corporate Director of Communities explained that the Climate Action Plan was an annual plan and would therefore be reviewed annually with the proposals needing to meet the initiatives set in the Plan.

In response to a question seeking clarification on what would be included within the council's Digital Futures Programme, the Head of Digital and Innovation advised that the council had been working on some proofs of concept to show what was possible to provide attractive solutions for savings. The Head of Digital and Innovation gave examples of projects that IT were working on and explained that these projects were to save money in the future and transform the council to provide better services.

In response to comments from the Committee regarding the proposed reduced spend on CCTV cameras across the district and who determines which were no longer needed, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities advised that with new housing developments, the population shifts around and the focus on what needs to be covered by CCTV changes.

Following a question from the Committee regarding the proposed charge for the replacement of a waste bin, recycling bin or food waste caddy and if the age of a bin would be taken into consideration when a replacement request was submitted, the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities advised he would speak to officers and provide a written response to the Committee.

In response to a query from the Committee regarding the increase in the cost of bulky waste charge and possible increase in fly tipping, the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities advised that the proposed increase was to meet the cost of the service however the Committee's concerns were noted.

The Portfolio for Finance advised the Committee that the council had a statutory requirement to agree a balanced budget and at this stage, proposals were being put forward for public consultation to the public. The feedback received during the consultation would be considered and the budget would be submitted to the 26 February 2024 Council meeting.

In response to a question regarding the higher cost of Local Plan examinations to the previous figure given, the Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised it had been some time since the budget had been reviewed and with submission of the new Local Plan expected to be in January 2025, this needed to be reviewed.

It was proposed by Councillor P Clarke and seconded by Councillor Wood that the meeting move into private session to consider exempt appendix 2b, Operational Efficiencies.

Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that

exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 2 and 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

32 **2024/25 Budget Proposals - Revenue and Capital and Fees & Charges - Exempt Appendix**

The Assistant Director of Finance advised the Committee that as part of the council's commitment to delivering value for money, and through a process of continuous improvement, operational efficiencies of £1.221m had been identified for 2024/2025. These did not have an impact on service delivery or impact Cherwell residents so were not included in the public consultation.

Portfolio Holders, Assistant Directors and Corporate Directors presented the operational efficiencies for their services and answered questions from the Committee.

33 **Readmittance of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

34 **2024/25 Budget Proposals - Revenue and Capital and Fees & Charges**

The Committee continued considering the 2024/2025 budget proposals - revenue and capital and fees and charges.

Following a question from the Committee to why there had been a significant increase to the Building Control charge for installation for a heating appliance, the Assistant Director for Planning and Development advised he would speak to Officers and provide a written response to the Committee.

In response to a question regarding the increase in the fee for a day booking of a holiday activity, the Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services advised that the increase was to bring the cost in line with similar provision and cover costs of the service. The proposed increased fee was still cheaper than other day offers.

The Assistant Director of Finance advised the Committee of the key dates and next steps regarding the budget which would culminate in Council considering the budget at their 26 February 2024 meeting as recommended by Executive at their 5 February 2024 meeting.

- (1) That, having given due consideration, Executive be advised that the Budget Planning Committee have no feedback, comments or

recommendations in relation to capital bids, revenue savings proposals and budget pressures and fees and charges for inclusion as part of the 2024/25 budget proposal.

(2) That the Budget Proposals 2023/24 - 2027/28 report be noted.

(Councillor Woodcock, Councillor Hodgson and Councillor Becky Clarke MBE requested that their abstention from the vote be recorded in the Minutes)

35

Review of Committee Work Plan

The Assistant Director of Finance gave a verbal update on the Budget Planning Committee Work Plan.

The Assistant Director of Finance advised that the Committee would consider the draft 2024/2025 capital and investment strategy, the 2024/2025 reserve strategy and reserves plan and the finance monitoring report P8 November 2023 at their next meeting on 23 January 2024.

Resolved

(1) That the update on the Committee Work Plan update be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.37 pm

Chairman:

Date: