

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 23 July 2019 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)
Councillor Carmen Griffiths (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Nathan Bignell
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Barry Richards
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Substitute Members: Councillor Tony Ilott (In place of Councillor Andrew McHugh)
Councillor Barry Wood (In place of Councillor Lucinda Wing)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Conrad Copeland
Councillor David Hughes
Councillor Andrew McHugh
Councillor Fraser Webster
Councillor Lucinda Wing

Officers: Adele Taylor, Executive Director: Finance (Interim) & Section 151 Officer
Dominic Oakeshott, Assistant Director (Interim) - Finance
Belinda Green, Operations Director - CSN Resources
Tallulah Willis, Systems, Performance and Subsidy Officer
Adam Bennett, Senior Entitlements Officer
Emma Faulkner, Democratic and Elections Officer

11 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

14 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

15 **Finance Monitoring Report - May 2019**

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Executive Director – Finance that summarised the finance monitoring position as at the end of May 2019.

The Interim Executive Director – Finance explained that detailed forecasts on funding were not available until the end of Quarter one, so future updates would contain more up-to-date information.

In response to Members' questions the Interim Executive Director – Finance explained that there would be a role for the Committee in the reviewing of reserves, which would form part of the budget setting process later in the year.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted

16 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020-21**

The Committee considered a report and presentation regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020-2021.

The Operations Director – CSN Resources explained that work had been carried out on modelling a banded scheme for possible introduction in 2020-21. The scheme would assess the level of income of applicants and place them in a corresponding Band, with the level of Council Tax Reduction on a sliding scale linked to the level of income.

The presentation provided some anonymised working examples of how a banded scheme could change the level of Council Tax Reduction for existing claimants, however the Operations Director – CSN Resources stressed that as the caseload for Council Tax Reduction fluctuated from day to day, it was difficult to say exactly how existing numbers of claimants could change.

The Committee agreed that the rationale behind the possible introduction of such a scheme was to try to reach more residents who required assistance, but acknowledged that as with any scheme involving means testing, there would be some residents who no longer qualified for a reduction or would have a reduced assessment if such a scheme were introduced.

The Committee and the Interim Executive Director - Finance thanked the officers for the complex work undertaken in modelling a banded scheme for consideration.

It was proposed by Councillor Nick Mawer and seconded by Councillor Carmen Griffiths:

- (1) That the report and financial implications to the Council be noted.

- (2) That Option 1 – A new banded income Council Tax Reduction scheme for those of working age, be recommended to Executive for consultation.
- (3) That Executive also be recommended to consider a transition fund that would be available for those most affected, should a banded income Council Tax Reduction scheme be introduced.

Resolved

- (1) That the report and financial implications to the Council be noted.
- (2) That Option 1 – A new banded income Council Tax Reduction scheme for those of working age, be recommended to Executive for consultation.
- (3) That Executive also be recommended to consider a transition fund that would be available for those most affected, should a banded income Council Tax Reduction scheme be introduced.

17 **Verbal Update: Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The Interim Executive Director – Finance gave a verbal update advising the Committee that no detailed information had yet been received regarding possible settlement figures for the coming year from central government, and it was therefore not possible to provide a detailed update as had been the original intention in developing the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the meeting.

The Interim Executive Director – Finance explained that the budget setting process for 2020-21 had already commenced, and there would be work for the Committee to undertake during the coming months.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.

18 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for 2019-2020.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding Brexit and any financial implications of the UK leaving without a deal, the Interim Executive Director – Finance agreed to incorporate the query into budget setting discussions at the appropriate time.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme be noted.

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The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

Chairman:

Date: