

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 8 October 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Andrew Beere
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Tim Emptage
Councillor Russell Hurle
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Substitute Members: Councillor John Donaldson

Apologies for absence: Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Neil Prestidge
Councillor Barry Wood

Officers: Martin Henry, Director of Resources / Section 151 Officer
Tim Madden, Interim Head of Finance and Procurement
Nicola Jackson, Corporate Finance Manager
Dave Parry, Democratic and Elections Officer

17 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

18 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

19 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 July, 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20

Medium Term Financial Strategy Update and Latest Position

The Director of Resources gave a presentation on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which covered the reductions in Revenue Support Grant already imposed, the likelihood of a further 20% reduction in 2015/16 and the top-slicing of £400m in New Homes Bonus (NHB) monies to the Local Enterprise Partnerships. The presentation also referred to Localised Business Rates (LBR), the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to joint working arrangements.

The Committee thanked the Director of Resources for the presentation. The Committee raised some concern in respect of future joint working arrangements. Whilst Members supported current permanent and interim arrangements and the Council's appetite for seeking further opportunities, it would be important to ensure this did not lead to the influence of individual Members being diluted. The Committee also raised concern that where other authorities failed to grow and generate income from NHB and LBR, the Government might reduce the Council's resources still further in order to provide additional support.

21

Budget Strategy 2014 to 2015 and Beyond

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Resources detailing the Budget Strategy 2014 to 2015 and beyond which had been submitted to the Executive the previous evening.

The Committee noted the 'Budget Deliverables' and suggested that previously approved Capital Projects that had not progressed to the originally reported timeframe should be re-examined, with lead officers attending to provide justification for schemes being retained in the programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

22

2013/14 Capital Programme Review and 2014/15 Capital Strategy

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Resources providing a summary update on the Council's capital programme.

The Committee considered the merits of future reports including information on whether schemes had commenced, were on-schedule and on-target (budgetary), and whether they were still viable. This would help identify common themes and also whether previously introduced efficiency measures were in fact having a detrimental effect. It was suggested that an additional meeting of the Committee be scheduled to allow for detailed consideration of the Capital programme and the scoring of new bids with appropriate Lead Members and Officers invited to attend in order to advise on specific schemes.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a further meeting of the Committee take place on a date to be arranged during November with a view to reviewing the Capital Programme and scoring new Capital bids.

23 **Investment Opportunities**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement regarding setting the context for discussions on the options for how the Council might use its resources as investments which, in-turn would provide income to the authority. Members noted that a report would be submitted to the Executive detailing the Councils property and other assets with a view to identifying whether these were producing the maximum return.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

24 **Update on Business Rates Incentives**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement which detailed the Business rates incentives available to support businesses in the District.

The Director of Resources undertook to bring a report to a future meeting regarding Rate Relief, which would include details of applications and the types of award given. The Committee expressed particular interest in what the Council could do for smaller rural and High Street based businesses, and whether incentives could be used not only to bring in new businesses, but also influence where these located.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

25 **Welfare Reform Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Finance and Procurement which provided an update national welfare reforms.

The Interim Head of Finance and Procurement advised that, since the production of the report, further information had become available regarding the number of households potentially affected by the new size criteria for Housing Benefit claimants (the spare room subsidy). This suggested that 698, rather than 905 households were affected. The Interim Head of Finance and Procurement agreed to circulate further information regarding the application of the new size criteria rules.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

26 **Work Programme 2013/14**

The Committee reviewed the Work Programme 2013/14.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme be noted.
- (2) That the work programme be adjusted to reflect the additional meeting to take place during November, 2013.

27 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

28 **Budget Building Blocks**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Resources which detailed the category 1 budget reductions currently identified.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.57 pm

Chairman:

Date: