

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 28 July 2015 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Nigel Randall (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Councillor Ian Corkin
Councillor Russell Hurle
Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes
Councillor Barry Richards
Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Apologies for absence: Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Ken Atack
Councillor Colin Clarke
Councillor Carmen Griffiths
Councillor Douglas Webb

Officers: Martin Henry, Director of Resources / Section 151 Officer
Mandy Anderson, Financial Analyst
Joanne Kaye, Service Accountant - Community & Environment Directorate
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections
Lesley Farrell, Assistant Democratic and Elections Officer

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

5 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 17 February 2015 and 19 May 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's Announcements.

7 **Quarter 1 2015-16 - Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Resources which detailed Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring for Quarter 1 of 2015-2016.

In considering the report, Members commented on the cost of Consultancy, the Director of Resources explained that consultants were brought in where there was either a lack of capacity or lack of expertise within the organisation and there was an identified budget. The Committee requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting with more detail regarding consultancy expenditure and requirements.

In response to Members' comments regards the large increase in Housing Benefit payments, the Director of Resources explained that cash flow profiling for housing benefit was difficult to forecast. Whilst CDC does get reimbursed by the Department for Work and Pensions, the council does have to pay these initially and may not always have adequate funds to do so.

Given the complexity of the subject, the Committee agreed that an all member briefing be arranged to include the process, how they are claimed and paid and the drivers of the cost.

With regards to retail income, in particular at Castle Quay which was assumed to be significantly down, the Committee noted that Portas funding received by the council, had been used to pay for two Town Centre Managers and suggested that the occupancy of outlets in Castle Quay should be given higher priority than high street units, as greater occupancy of Castle Quay would be of more financial benefit to the council.

Resolved

- (1) That the projected revenue and capital position at June 2015 be noted.
- (2) That officers be requested to submit a report on the council's use of consultancy, including expenditure and requirements, to a future meeting
- (3) That officers be requested to arrange an all Member briefing on Housing Benefits

8 **2015-2016 Business Rates Quarterly Monitoring Report**

The Director of Resources submitted and presented a report which provided members of the Budget Planning Committee with an update on the business rates position as at the end of Quarter 1 of the 2015-2016 financial year.

The Committee was advised that business rates were higher than anticipated and by year end, income should be higher than budgeted for. The Business Support Unit had been set up to maximise income from business rates and also to explore other avenues of possible income.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding changes to council tax banding, for example when there had been an extension to a property or a house converted into flats, the Director of Resources agreed to circulate a response to Members outside of the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

9 **Medium Term Revenue Plan**

The Director of Resources submitted a report which provided an update on the Council's Medium Term Revenue Plan.

The purpose of the report was to set out the current medium term financial forecast as a base position to then build on and update at each meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

10 **Review of Committee Work Programme 2015-2016**

The Director of Resources and Vice-Chairman gave a verbal update on the Committee Work Programme. They had been in discussions with the Chairman and the work programme would be circulated when finalised.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm

Chairman:

Date: