

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 9 December 2021 at 6.30 pm

Present Virtually:

Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Chairman
Councillor Carmen Griffiths
Councillor Phil Chapman (and Lead Member for Leisure and Sport)
Councillor Conrad Copeland
Councillor David Hughes
Councillor Shaida Hussain
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Lucinda Wing (and Lead Member for Housing)
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Substitute Members present virtually:

Councillor Adam Nell (in place of Councillor McHugh)
Councillor Les Sibley (in place of Councillor Fraser Webster)

Executive Members in attendance virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood - Leader of the Council
Councillor Colin Clarke - Lead Member for Planning
Councillor Ian Corkin - Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Customers and Transformation
Councillor Tony Ilott - Lead Member for Finance and Governance
Councillor Richard Mould - Lead Member for Performance
Councillor Lynn Pratt - Lead Member for Economy, Regeneration and Property

Apologies for absence:

Councillor John Donaldson
Councillor Andrew McHugh
Councillor Fraser Webster

Officers present virtually:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Stephen Chandler, Corporate Director Adults & Housing Services
Bill Cotton, Corporate Director Environment and Place
Steve Jordan, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investment
Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources

Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director: Wellbeing
Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
Joanne Kaye, Strategic Business Partner
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Lesley Farrell, Democratic and Elections Officer

24 **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed Members and officers to the virtual meeting. The Chairman explained that in light of the new COVID measures and following discussion with officers he had agreed that we hold this meeting virtually rather than meet in person to follow the guidance, protect public health, minimise risks and also to comply with statutory requirements for our meetings.

25 **Adjournment and Reconvening of the Meeting**

Due to technical issues with the webcast, the meeting adjourned at 6.45pm and reconvened at 7.00pm.

26 **Declarations of Interest**

6. Budget Proposals 2022/23 - 2026/27.

Councillor Shaida Hussain, Non Statutory Interest, as a Trustee of Banbury Museum.

27 **Minutes**

The Committee indicated agreement of the Minutes of the meeting of the 26 October 2021 as a correct record. The Chairman advised that the minutes would be formally agreed at the next in person meeting of the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

28 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reminded the Committee that any staffing matters arising from budget proposals should not be discussed at the Budget Planning Committee meeting but would be considered by the council's Personnel Committee as per its remit in the constitution.

29 **Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business.

Budget Proposals 2022/23 - 2026/27

The Director of Finance submitted a report which set out the capital bids and revenue savings proposals and budget pressures for Cherwell District Council for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27.

The Director of Finance explained that the Government's spending review announcement on 27 October 2021 had provided some clarity with regards to funding, however the Local Government Finance Settlement had not yet been announced so there was still an unknown element in the figures for 2022/23. A provisional settlement figure was due to be announced the week commencing 13 December and it was not known if this would be a one or multi-year settlement. Due to a consultation linked to some of the elements, the final figure would not be known until February 2022. The assessments would then be included with the full budget papers to be considered by Executive in February 2022 for recommendation to Full Council in February 2022.

The Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources gave an overview of the results of the resident's survey. The key findings gave an overall satisfaction and the main priorities for residents were recycling and anti-social behaviour.

In response to Members' questions the Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources explained that the survey questions were consistent with previous resident's survey questions. The survey had been undertaken prior to the food waste collection changes and therefore the responses would not reflect these changes.

Following additional questions from the Committee the Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources undertook to provide Members with a copy of the resident's survey questions and a demographic breakdown of the respondents.

Executive Lead Members and Directors gave an overview of the pressures and proposed savings by service area within each directorate and answered questions from the Committee.

In relation to the housing proposals, and a Committee Member query regarding the proposals setting out there would be no impact on service delivery, the Lead Member for Housing explained service delivery would continue and a change of accounting procedure resulted in savings.

In relation to the leisure facilities savings proposals, in response the questions from the Committee seeking clarity of the changes to achieve the savings, the Assistant Director - Wellbeing explained that the priority was to retain a core offer in the three urban centres. The Assistant Director – Wellbeing undertook to provide a detailed note to Members explaining the review and savings in Leisure Facilities outside of the meeting.

With regards to proposals in the Environment and Place directorate, the Corporate Director, Environment and Place responded to questions regarding the economic impact and health benefits to the district of the Women's Tour Cycling Race and advised that the council had contributed a relatively modest budget. He was not aware of any direct studies but would liaise with Experience Oxfordshire and circulate any relevant information to Members.

In response to a query regarding the certainty of savings arising from reduced waste facility processing changes as a result of improved recycling material prices, the Corporate Director Environment and Place explained that the proposal was prudent and a figure officers believed was sustainable.

Some members of the Committee raised concerns that the Car Parking Equality and Climate Impact Assessment statistics did not show a fair and reasoned representation of comparator towns and local car parks. The Corporate Director, Environment and Place undertook to provide Members with details of the metrics used to choose the car parks included in the benchmarking.

Regarding pressures and savings proposals for the Commercial Development, Assets, and Investment directorate, following a Committee Members request for more information on the proposed annual savings for Castel Quay, the Assistant Director of Finance explained that the assessment was based on demand for Castle Quay and the ongoing impact of improvements against the initial assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Corporate Director, Commercial Development, Assets, and Investment advised that Castle Quay was recovering well from the impact of COVID and that Banbury itself was improving as a town and offered to meet with interested Members to provide further details on the figures relating to Castle Quay.

Some members of the Committee raised concerns in relation to the proposal to end the financial support for public space CCTV, highlighting that the residents survey had identified anti-social behaviour as a key priority. that it was proposed to cut funding for CCTV from the budget.

In the course of discussion on the CCTV savings proposals, some Members highlighted that there were still a number of unknowns, including the Local Government Settlement which may put the council in a better position. Executive could therefore be requested to remove this savings proposal were that the case.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that the proposals were out for consultation and the responses would be considered when finalising the proposals. In addition, there were different ways and schemes to fund CCTV.

It was proposed by Councillor Woodcock and seconded by Councillor Hussain that the proposal to end the financial support for CCTV be removed from the budget proposals.

On being put to the vote the proposal was lost and the motion subsequently fell.

The Chairman confirmed that when he report the Budget Planning Committee feedback to Executive, he would reflect the strength of feeling and Committee debate on the proposal to end funding for CCTV.

The Chairman confirmed that when he reported the Budget Planning Committee feedback to Executive, he would reflect the strength of feeling and Committee debate on the proposal to end funding for CCTV. include comments from the Committee regarding CCTV in his feedback to Executive.

Regarding proposals to make savings through stopping leasing space for customer services at Exeter Hall, Kidlington and letting the former customer service office at Franklin House, Bicester, in response to a query about what would replace these services, the Lead Member for Economy, Regeneration and Property explained both customer service link point sites had been closed since the start of the first lockdown in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. No complaints had been received about the sites being closed and it was not intended to re-open either site.

In response to a query from a Committee Member, the Corporate Director for Customers, Organisational Development and Resources explained that usage of the link points had reduced prior to the pandemic due to the increased availability of digital services and agreed to provide details of services offered at the Bicester and Kidlington link points prior to their closure due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

In relation to the proposal to stop providing dog fouling bags to residents, it was recommended by Councillor Sibley that as the saving was relatively small and given that this was a valuable service to the community, especially with the increase of dog ownership, the proposal should be removed.

The proposal was not seconded. Members of the Committee commented that dog fouling bags were relatively cheap to purchase and most councils did not provide this service. If minded, it was a service Town and Parish Councils could provide. Notwithstanding, the Chairman undertook to reflect the comments in his feedback to Executive.

Feedback on the savings proposals would be taken into account as part of the overall response to the budget consultation. Feedback from the Committee on the revenue pressures and capital bids will be provided to the Executive to consider in finalising its budget proposals for Council.

The Assistant Director of Finance gave an overview of the 2022/2023 capital bids. All bids were unanimously endorsed by the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, Executive be advised that the Budget Planning Committee endorse the proposed capital bids, for inclusion as part of the 2022/23 budget proposal.
- (2) That, having given due consideration, Executive be advised that the Budget Planning Committee have no recommendations for the proposed revenue savings proposals or budget pressures for inclusion as part of the 2022/23 budget proposal.
- (3) That officers be requested to provide the following additional information on the following areas of the budget 2022/23 proposals:
 - a copy resident's survey questions and a demographic breakdown of the respondents.
 - details of the Leisure Facilities review and savings.
 - information on the economic impact and health benefits to the district of the Women's Tour Cycling Race.
 - In relation to the car parking Equality and Climate Impact Assessment, details of the metrics used to choose car parks in the assessment.
 - details of services offered at the Bicester and Kidlington link points prior to their closure due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

31

Review of Committee Work Plan

The Committee considered its work plan.

Resolved

- (1) That the Committee Work Plan be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

Chairman:

Date: