

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 21 January 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves (Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor David Rogers
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Tom Beckett

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration)

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Matt Hodgson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Rob Parkinson

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

31 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

32 Minutes

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024.

33 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

34 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

35 **Monthly Performance Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report on the Council's financial positions at the end of the financial year 2024/25.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Council's forecast outturn position for 2024/25 was an overspend of £0.098k. The overspend was primarily due to variations in Law and Governance, Planning and Development, Property and Environmental Services.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that there was an overspend within Environmental Services in relation to gate fees of £0.200m which was currently being reviewed and consideration being given to what level of market risk policy contingency available to help mitigate this.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that there was a projected in-year underspend of £0.411m with £0.466m to be profiled into future years.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the reported £0.195m under budget forecast variance within policy contingency, the Head of Finance advised that this was due to a higher forecast than needed for the final cost of living adjustment for the staff annual pay award.

Resolved

(1) That the report be noted

36 **Capital and Investment Strategy 2025-26**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report for the Committee to consider the draft Capital Strategy and Investment strategy for 2025-26 and recommend to the Executive.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy must be approved by Full Council annually and must satisfy the requirements of government legislation and CIPFA guidance.

In relation to the Capital Strategy the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that the operation boundary for debt was proposed to be reduced from £290m to £200m. This was due to the Council changing the approach on how the limit had been calculated to better reflect the most likely scenario for external debt.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Capital and Investment Strategy 2025/26 be recommended to the Executive.

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Review of Reserves

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report to update Budget Planning Committee on the Review of Reserves that has taken place in preparation of the budget for 2025/26 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2029/30.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that an annual review of the council's reserves was undertaken as part of the budget setting process to ensure the council maintained a prudent level of reserves over the medium term.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that, after conducting a risk assessment, it was proposed that the council increase its current minimum level of general balances from £6.129m to £7.852m. This was due to the level of uncertainty in the discussions of Local Government funding reforms.

Resolved

- (1) That the outcome of the review of reserves and the forecast over the MTFS period be noted
- (2) That, having given due consideration, Executive be advised that the Budget Planning Committee supports the draft reserve allocations.

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Review of Committee Work Plan

The Committee considered its work plan. It was proposed by Councillor Wood and seconded by Councillor Sibley that at the next meeting of the Committee, the Committee be provided with an update on the Council's transformation project.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to a Committee request for an additional item, update on the Council's transformation project, to the 4 March 2025 meeting, the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.48 pm

Chairman:

Date: