

# HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Hari Sharma (Chairman), Malcolm Beer, Marius Gilmore, Maureen Hunt, Paul Lion and Julian Sharpe

Also in attendance: Cllr Phillip Bicknell

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Andy Jeffs, Wendy Binmore, Mark Lampard and Ben Smith and Rob Stubbs

## APOLOGIES

None received.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

**Cllr Beer** – Declared a personal interest as he is a member of Old Windsor Parish Council and was also a member of the Old Windsor Carnival Committee.

**Cllr Gilmore** – Declared a personal interest as he works for Airbus.

**Cllr Sharma** – Declared a personal interest as he works for First Group.

## MINUTES

**RESOLVED: That the Part I minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 6 December 2016 and also 9 January 2017 be approved.**

## BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2017/18

Rob Stubbs, Head of Finance/Deputy Director Corporate & Community Services gave a presentation on the Budget 2017-2018 where the following key points were highlighted:

- Local Revenue Investments:
  - Expanding the planning team's expertise and capacity: £196,000
  - Increasing the care and maintenance of public trees: £100,000
  - More grants for voluntary organisations: £160,000
  - Funding the apprenticeship levy: 280,000
- Revenue recommendations:
  - In 16/17 it was £373 less than the average unitary, £213 less than any other Berks unitary and £189 less than any unitary authority.
  - 3% adult social care precept at band D of £27,75, adding to the 2% in 16/17 of £18.14
  - 0.95% increase in council tax at band D, adding £8.62 to the £906.95 which did not increase from 15/16 to 16/17
  - 0.95% is half of the reference inflation of 2.0% in September 2016 and the 1.99% increase permitted without a local referendum
  - Fees and charges are either not increased, or are increased at or below 2.0%, or are aligned to other council
  - Increases the real terms reduction in core council tax over eight years to 32.5% plus a priority social care levy of 5%
- 17/18 Capital investment:

- Used internal balances to fund Capital – will turn to significant borrowing in 2017/18
- Interest costs avoided in recent years by funding capital projects from available cash balances
- Capital receipts from the Maidenhead regeneration from 2018-2025 justify £73m of medium term borrowing in 17/18 for various capital projects.
- Business Rates – for business
  - Small business rate relief doubling to 100% up to £15,000 – to continue to extend to all commercial and industrial units.
  - Local newspaper business rate relief of £1,500 per title
  - All locally controlled rate reliefs maintained
  - Rural rate relief extended and redefined from large parishes to smaller voting wards
  - Relief for reinvigorating vacant retail units to be extended to all commercial and industrial premises
  - Ongoing deliberations and consultations on how local government will retain all business rates by the end of this Parliament.
- Context:
  - The Council continued to provide services with value for money for residents
  - Increased demand in adult social care with a permitted precept of up to 3% in each of 17/18, 18/19 and 19/20 capped at 6% in total, plus a one-off 17/18 £0.5m grant
  - New Homes Bonus £3.7m in 17/18, although reduced from six years to five years in 17/18 and then five to four in 18/19
  - Transition Grant £1.3m in 17/18
  - DSG increased by £4.8m in 17/18 to £109.8m largely due to rising pupil numbers, increases in SEN and Early Years
  - £280,000 0.5% apprenticeship levy on all payroll from 17/18

The Chairman welcomed the budget and appreciated the difficult times councils across the country faced. He added there were good investments in the transport system and public rights of way. He noted that additional investment was being made in Home to School Transport Services..

In response to a question about FTEs in the Highways & Transport section of the Revenue budget, Mark Lampard, Finance Partner - Corporate Services & Operations confirmed that the budget had been prepared on the basis for the existing business model, as details of the new contracts were at that time unconfirmed.. Ben Smith, Head of Highways & Transport stated that the numbers of staff affected were included in the previous presentations discussed in Part II at the previous meeting. The figures were not presented in the same way in the Budget report.

Ben Smith confirmed that the Highways & Maintenance contract was a five year contract and with an option to extend for two years.. Ben Smith, Head of Highways confirmed that school crossing patrols were being kept in house, as well as the rights of way team.

Members discussed income from waste recycling, and noted that the budget benefit for the Borough relates to lower tonnage rates for recyclables compared to those for black bin waste. It did not generate income but, saved the Borough money and helped the environment.

Mark Lampard, confirmed that the reason the figure had increased for licensing and enforcement was because of the number of licences within that category which reflected a small rise.

Mark Lampard, confirmed that the budget shows a rise in income from car parking, due to Increased activity particularly in the Borough's Town Centres.

Cllr Beer requested that the borough take on the costs for road closures for voluntary organisation events such as the Old Windsor Carnival as the fees it costs to advertise the road closures etc. could make the carnival procession unviable for the future. Cllr Bicknell stated there was a financial issue in the council having to save money and it was unable to help everyone as that would run into thousands. Those groups that needed to could talk to the Highways team and their requests could be looked at on a case by case basis.

Cllr Bicknell confirmed that parking charges were variable from site to site. However, he did not think that any Ward Members were against reviewing the times of charges at the various parking facilities within the Borough.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: Members of the Highways, Transport and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommend to Cabinet That: Cabinet recommend to Council that they note the report and approve the:**

- i) Detailed recommendations contained in Appendix A which includes a Council Tax at band D of £915.57, including a 0.95% increase of £8.55.
- ii) Adult Social Care Precept of 3% (an increase of £27.75 on the £18.14 precept included in the 2016/17 budget) to be included in the Council's budget proposals, making this levy the equivalent of £45.89 at band D.
- iii) Fees and Charges contained in Appendix D are approved.
- iv) Capital Programme, shown in appendices F and G, for the financial year commencing April 2017.
- v) Prudential borrowing limits set out in Appendix L.
- vi) Business rate tax base calculation, detailed in Appendix O, and its use in the calculation of the Council Tax Requirement in Appendix A.
- vii) Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Members for Finance and Children's Services is authorised to amend the total schools budget to reflect actual Dedicated School Grant levels.
- viii) Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance is authorised to make appropriate changes to the budget to reflect the impact of the transfer of services to Achieving for Children and Optalis.
- ix) Responsibility to include the precept from the Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority in the overall Council Tax charges is delegated to the Lead Member for Finance and Head of Finance once the precept is announced.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.42 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....