

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), Dr Lilly Evans, Mohammed Ilyas, Eileen Quick, Lynne Jones and Gerry Clark.

Also in attendance: Councillor MJ Saunders

Officers: Alison Alexander, Andy Jeffs, Rob Stubbs, Russell O'Keefe and David Cook.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Burbage.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

BUDGET PREPARATION 2018/19

The Panel received a presentation on preparations for the 2018/19 budget. It was explained that the report was being brought three months earlier than normal to allow for full scrutiny with this panel reviewing the full report. Other scrutiny panels would review those elements pertinent to their remit.

The report contained Initial recommendations on overall spending, capital investment and council tax levels for 2018-19 and was the start of a decision making process which would result in the February 2018 Cabinet and Council report that would agree the final budget including council tax levels.

It was noted that figures in the proposed budget may change as the local government settlement become clear and feedback from the early release of the budget had been analysed.

The presentation informed that the main objectives of the budget were:

- Having a borough where everyone could enjoy living and working, nurturing their futures and their family.
- Invest circa £350m by 2025 in education, transport, leisure and other infrastructure to fully support the emerging Borough Local Plan and the regeneration programmes.
- Protect and enhance services and meet the growing needs for adult and children's social care.
- Manage the council's finances with the ability to fund investment and obligations from regeneration receipts.
- Deliver sustainable and effective partnerships.
- Commitment to increase the council's spending on wages by circa 2.5% to cover award, reward and promotion.
- Manage responsible and competitive levels of council tax, adult social care levy, fees and charges.
- Fulfil all pension obligations to council employees.

The Panel were informed that it was proposed to have and given examples of:

- Additional Services Spend : £3.7m.

- The proposed fees and charges that had been benchmarked.
- A list of saving opportunities and income generation totalling £4.1 million.
- Pension contributions to meet the authorities obligations.
- Capital investments totalling £54 million.

The Panel were informed that there was an indicative need to raise council tax by 1.95% and an Adult Social Care levy of 3%. This would result a total increase of £74.74 to date for a band D property.

Cllr Jones asked for clarification on the 3% Adult Social Care levy and was informed that 3% was the maximum up to 2020.

Cllr Jones mentioned that with regards to the list of saving proposals it would be useful to know which ones had already been realised and which ones were estimated what could be achieved. She recommended that the final report should show which saving proposals had already been implemented opposed to those that were yet to start.

The Lead Member for Finance informed that officers had already proposed the budget they required for their service and to provide saving proposals. There were plans to deliver all the savings for 2018/19. Although there were no guarantees everything was already in place or planned to start.

Cllr Clark asked for clarification on the additional pension contributions and was informed that the Berkshire Pension Fund set its strategy to meet pension obligations but funding levels had not reached 100% as there had been a decrease in investment returns and therefore there was an increased pension deficit that required attention.

Cllr Quick questioned if the 3% Adult Social Care levy was split between increased demand for both adult and children services. The Panel were informed that the Government required that the increased levy is shown to be spent on adult social care and thus it was to be used to continue the planned investment in that area that was started the previous years.

The Chairman asked why coach parking in Windsor had not increased whilst it was proposed to increase car parking levies. The Panel were informed that it was felt that the levels were appropriate and that benchmarking had been undertaken.

The Chairman also questioned the capital bid suggestions made by parish councils and councillors and recommended that those bids that had not been successful that the proposers be informed why. The Panel were informed that the Lead Member could explain why items had not been included. The Chairman also recommended that there needed to be justification why so many accepted bids were in urban areas, especially town centres.

Cllr L Evans questioned the scheme for the installation of a roundabout at the junction in the Sunnings area at the junction of the A329 London Road and Silwood Road. She was informed that the scheme had been amended because the costs of the original scheme had rocketed. The amended scheme would still meet the original objectives. If the scheme was approved as part of the capital programme then there would be a list of consultees.

The chairman allowed questions by the public in attendance and in response to questions regarding car parking charges and the health of town centres the Panel were informed that appropriate benchmarking had been undertaken. Maidenhead charges had been compared to Reading, Bracknell, Slough and Wokingham. It was recommended that Lead Members meet with town centre representatives to discuss parking arrangements during regeneration works.

Cllr Jones questioned the borrowing levels for the future and if income streams would cover the proposals. The Panel were informed that the income levels generated from the Councils assets and regeneration work was set at a conservative level and final income levels should

be above those estimated; nothing was certain but the income was estimated at the lower end. There were capital risks if we did not invest in our infrastructure prior to the Borough local plan and regeneration work.

Resolved unanimously that: the Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. During their deliberations the following comments / requests were made:

- It was requested that the savings proposals be colour coded to show those that have already been implemented that those that have not yet started.
- It was questioned why Windsor coach car parking charges had not been increased yet car parking charges had. It was recommended that this be reviewed.
- It was recommended that with regards to the Capital programme that Lead Members contact Councillors and Parish Councils explaining why their bids had not been included within the programme.
- It was questioned why there had been no increase in charges under the remit of the Gambling Act 2005.
- It was questioned why sexual venue, betting Shops, Race Course licensing and sex shop licensing charges had only been increased by 3.9%. It was felt that as successful businesses the charges could have been increase especially as some fees and charges had been increased to residents by 50%.
- The Panel asked why the most successful capital bids were only in town centres and Dedworth. Members wanted to know what the methodology in choosing these capital bids over out of town Capital bids was.
- Charges on stafferton way car park were questioned. The Panel wanted them reviewed as it was full to capacity and was used by many residents out of Borough.

The meeting, which began at 6pm, finished at 7.25pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....