

THE EXECUTIVE

22 January 2015
6.00pm - 6.56 pm

Present: Councillors Herbert (Chair), O'Reilly (Vice-Chair), Blencowe, Johnson, Owers, Price and Roberts

Officers Present:

Director of Environment – Simon Payne
Director of Customer and Community Services: Liz Bisset
Director of Business Transformation: Ray Ward
Head of Finance: Caroline Ryba
Committee Manager – Glenn Burgess

Other Councillors in attendance:

Councillor Bick
Councillor Smart
Councillor Pitt
Councillor Blackhurst

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

15/1/01 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

15/2/01 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

15/3/01 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2014 were approved and signed as a correct record.

15/4/01 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

15/5/01 Budget Setting Report February 2015 (Executive)

The committee noted the officer's report.

The Executive and Officers received the following questions:

- i. Councillor Bick asked if the Executive Councillor was satisfied that the shared service savings were aggressive enough. The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded that the proposed figures were conservative estimates and it was expected that some areas, such as Legal Services, may produce higher savings. It was better to take a cautious approach rather than an overambitious one at this stage.
- ii. Councillor Smart noted that the four main themes of the transformation programme made no mention of the Council's previous aim to 'get right first time, those things that we only have one opportunity to do'. She asked if this was no longer deemed a priority. The Leader responded that the proposed budget clearly showed the Labour Groups commitment to delivering core services and progressing longer term growth strategies such as Clay Farm and community facilities in the North West. The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded that it was obvious that the Council had an ongoing commitment to get things right 'first time'.
- iii. Councillor Pitt highlighted a £1m inconsistency between the BSR and the related appendices regarding Direct Revenue Financing (DFR) and asked why this had not been picked up. The Head of Finance responded that officers were aware of the difference, which does not impact on the budget's overall calculations, and that this would be amended prior to Full Council. The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded that the narrative and financial tables within the BSR were correct, and that the only error was one item being omitted from the appendices, which stand alone and do not affect the overall budget figures.
- iv. Councillor Bick asked for clarification on the process to rectify this error. The Head of Finance responded that, as in previous years, the BSR and any budget amendments would be further discussed at the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 13 February 2015 before being formally approved at Council on 26 February 2015.
- ii. Councillor Bick asked for clarity on the proposed changes to the Capital Plan process. The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded that in the past many projects had been added with little or no business case and the new prioritisation process would address this.

Whilst the Council needed to be aware of projects upcoming for the Capital Plan, having large sums of money allocated for projects that had not been fully worked up was a luxury the Council could no longer afford. It was hoped that a more disciplined process would receive cross-party support.

- iii Councillor Bick asked if the public would see a difference as a result of the proposed savings to the Repairs and Renewals (R&R) budgets. The Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places responded that, in some areas such as play equipment, the public may see a difference. Whilst a lot of improvements had been made to play areas, with limited R&R budgets, this approach may need to be revised.
- iiii Councillor Bick asked how public consultation would be managed for Capital Projects. The Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places responded that, depending on the particular project, consultation may take place before or after it had been added to the Capital Plan. On occasion it could also take place before and after.
- iv Councillor Smart asked for clarity on the Shared Planning Service (PROG3747) and the Shared Planning and Building Control Service (PROG3748). The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport responded that these are two separate proposals – one for a Shared Planning Service and one for a shared model for Building Control. For clarity it was agreed that the word ‘planning’ would be removed from PROG3748.
- iv Councillor Bick asked for more information on the proposal to include Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) in the Shared Planning Service. The Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport responded that, whilst South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) would be the obvious partner, HDC had also expressed an interest in being involved. As the City Council already shared a CCTV Service, and the potential savings would increase with three planning partners, it was deemed worthy of further investigation. The Leader confirmed that there would be a commitment to retaining a site in each of the three areas and added that there would be some shared experiences between the three authorities regarding growth and transport. A wider pool of knowledge amongst officers would also be beneficial. The commitment remained to have a joint Local Plan in place with SCDC by 2019.
- ivi Councillor Pitt highlighted the omission of public conveniences for the Projects Under Development (PUD) list in the BSR appendices. The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded that this had already been picked up and would be corrected for Full Council.
- ivii Councillor Bick asked if the reduction in the core funding for maternity leave would put pressure on services and staff. The Executive

Councillor Finance and Resources responded that, whilst a £75k central provision would be retained, it was good practice to manage any additional costs through individual service budgets. The budget had been historically underspent and it was felt that the £75k would be sufficient. Regular reviews would be undertaken. The Executive Councillor agreed to speak with the Human Resources Department to ensure staff felt no additional pressure to come back to work early.

- iviii Councillor Blackhurst asked the rationale for introducing a self-service voice activated telephone switchboard (PROG3558 and PROG 3561). The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded that having an automated service for routine enquiries would free up highly skilled Customer Service Advisors to deal with the more complex and urgent calls. This followed good practice from other Local Authorities and callers would still be given an option to speak to an advisor if they preferred. The Leader added that the Head of Customer Services had tested the proposed system and Councillors would also have an opportunity to do so prior to implementation.

The Executive resolved **unanimously** to:

Recommend the Budget Setting Report 2015/16 to Council on 26 February 2015, subject to any amendments at the Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting on 19 January 2015, namely:

General Fund Revenue Budgets: [Section 5, page 28 of the BSR refers]

a) Recommend to Council approval of:

- Revenue Pressures shown in Appendix B(a) and Savings shown in Appendix B(b).
- Priority Policy Fund (PPF) Bids as shown in Appendix B(c).
- Bids to be funded from External or Earmarked Funds as shown in Appendix B(d).
- Non Cash Limit items as shown in Appendix B(e).

b) Recommend to Council formally confirm delegation to the Chief Financial Officer (Head of Finance) of the calculation and determination of the Council Tax taxbase (including submission of the National Non-Domestic Rates Forecast Form, NNDR1, for each financial year) as set out in Appendix A(a).

c) Recommend to Council the level of Council Tax for 2015/16 as set out in Section 4 [page 26 refers].

Note that the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel will meet on 28 January 2015 to consider the precept proposed by the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority will meet on 12 February 2015 and Cambridgeshire County Council will meet on 17 February 2015 to consider the amounts in precepts to be issued to the City Council for the year 2015/16.

Other Revenue:

d) Recommend to Council delegation to the Head of Finance authority to finalise changes relating to any corporate and/or departmental restructuring and any reallocation of support service and central costs, in accordance with the CIPFA Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities (SeRCOP).

e) Recommend to Council approval of an amendment to the remit for the “Sharing Prosperity Fund” so that the revised remit (changes are underlined) is:

Sharing Prosperity Fund Formal Remit:

To provide resources to fund fixed-term and one-off projects and proposals that support the interim and final objectives of the council's Anti-Poverty Strategy, namely:

- 1) Helping people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs
- 2) Making the move into work easier
- 3) Helping low income families with the cost of raising a child
- 4) Breaking the link between poor health and poverty
- 5) Ensuring that vulnerable older people get the services that they need and reducing the social isolation they can experience
- 6) Helping people with high housing costs and improving the condition of people's homes
- 7) Working in partnership to tackle wider barriers to employment and engagement (e.g. transport, learning and skills)

In accordance with the Council's delegation and approval processes outlined in Part 3 Section 9.3 of the Council Constitution, approval of allocations to be made from the Sharing Prosperity Fund will differ depending on the amount of funding requested and whether it is capital or revenue.

Projects costing £15,000 or less will be approved by the Head of Corporate Strategy, subject to endorsement by The Anti-Poverty Strategy Project Board.

Projects costing more than £15,000 will be considered in the first instance by The Anti-Poverty Strategy Project Board and then submitted for approval by the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources.

Projects over £75,000 will be reviewed at Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee before approval, subject to the need to make urgent decisions.

Where a project includes capital spending of more than £15,000, capital approval processes are also required.

Capital: [Section 7, page 35 of the BSR refers]

Capital Plan:

f) Recommend to Council the proposals outlined in Appendix D(a) for inclusion in the Capital Plan, or put on the Projects Under Development or Hold Lists, including any additional use of revenue resources required.

g) Recommend to Council the revised Capital Plan as set out in Appendix D(c), the Projects Under Development and Hold lists set out in Appendices D(d) and D(e) respectively and the Funding as set out in Section 7, page 41 for the General Fund.

General Fund Reserves:

(i) Note the impact of revenue and capital budget approvals and approve the resulting level of reserves to be used to support the budget proposals as set out in the table [Section 6, report page 34 and Section 8, page 46 refers].

The meeting ended at 6.56 pm

CHAIR