

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 8 February 2016
5.00 - 6.15 pm

Present: Councillors Robertson (Chair), Sinnott (Vice-Chair), Baigent, Benstead, Bick, Hipkin, Holt, Sarris, M. Smart, C. Smart,

Leader of the Council: Councillor Lewis Herbert

Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources: Councillor George Owers

Other Councillors present:

Councillor Austin

Councillor O'Connell

Councillor Gillespie

Officers:

Chief Executive: Antoinette Jackson

Director of Customer and Community Services: Liz Bisset

Director of Environment: Simon Payne

Director of Business Transformation: Ray Ward

Head of Finance: Caroline Ryba

Committee Manager: Sarah Steed

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

16/106/SR Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Cantrill and Councillor C Smart attended as alternate.

16/107/SR Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

16/108/SR Public Questions

There were no public questions.

16/109/SR Record of Urgent Decisions taken by the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources**4a Record of Urgent Decision: Acquisition of Cambridge Road Retail Park, Haverhill Suffolk**

The decision was noted.

16/110/SR Amendments to the Budget Setting Report February 2016**5a Executive Amendment****Matter for decision**

The report detailed amendments to the Budget-Setting Report 2016/17 that was recommended to Council by the Executive at its meeting on the 21 January 2016.

Unless otherwise stated, any reference in the recommendations to sections, pages and appendices relate to Version 1 of the Budget Setting Report (BSR) 2016/17.

New or updated information

- **Section 25 Report (Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves):**

This report is made under the Local Government Act 2003, which requires that the Chief Financial Officer report to the authority, when making the statutory calculations required to determine its Council Tax or precept, on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations, and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves [Section 10, page 61 refers].

Information awaited:

- **Final Local Government Finance Settlement:**

As yet, the proposals in the provisional 2016/17 settlement have not been confirmed. Further changes may be necessary once the relevant report has been laid before the House of Commons.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources

The Executive Councillor approved the amendments:

(a) Section 25 Report

To insert the EXECUTIVE section 25 report into the BSR

And authorised the section 151 Officer to make necessary changes to the Budget Setting Report 2016/17, to be considered by Council at the meeting on the 25 February 2016, to reflect the impact of changes for the above.

Note that further changes are expected for Council, which will be notified and then incorporated into the BSR in respect of:

- Council Tax Base 2016/17 and Council Tax Setting 2016/17 [Appendices A(a) and A(b), pages 62 and 63 refer], following notifications from precepting authorities.
- Any other minor typographical amendments.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report

Any alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee resolved by 6 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendations as set out in the Officer's report.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

16/111/SR Liberal Democrat Amendment

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group introduced the item.

Members of the Committee questioned the Liberal Democrat Councillors about the Liberal Democrat amendments. The Liberal Democrat answers are set out below.

City Centre & Public Places

B0001 Tree Planting programme [5 years]

- i. The £35,000 proposal would extend and enlarge the tree planting scheme which was already in place. The scheme would provide for a tree to be given to every year 4 primary school pupil in Cambridge.
- ii. The cost of the trees was estimated at £12 per tree and £12 for logistics/delivery costs.

- iii. It was estimated that there were likely to be 1000 school children at a cost of approximately £25 per child this would utilise £25,000 of the funding proposed.
- iv. Any remaining funding could be used by the Council to plant further trees and to replace trees that had reached the end of their life.

Delete S3836 Parks and Open Space – Event Income

- i. It was believed that the Council had not achieved the correct formula to enable an increased number of events to take place on the Council's public open space.
- ii. It was not being stated that events should be stopped but the Council should investigate the correct approach before any additional events were agreed.

Strategy and Transformation

B0002 Referrals to the Chronically Excluded Adult Programme [4 years]

- i. This proposal sought to address street life anti-social behaviour, some of these individuals may be homeless but some may not.
- ii. Punishment had limited effectiveness for these individuals and was not particularly sustainable where they suffered addictions or mental health problems. It was hoped that this work could build upon the work already done by the County Council and would add to the skills of the City Council so that a resourceful solution could be found rather than a punitive one.

Communities

B0004 Support to refugees [2 years]

- i. The City Council played a substantial lead role in this area, however it was considered that further expertise was required especially for refugees who did not fall within the Government Refugee programme.
- ii. It was anticipated that the role could work with the Citizens Advice Bureau and Ethnic Community Forum.
- iii. The reason that the post was proposed for a 2 year period was because this was a pilot scheme and it would need to be reviewed to see whether the post was fit for purpose. It was considered appropriate that this could be tested after 2 years.
- iv. The remuneration for the post was discussed with senior officers and provision was proposed to enable comparable payment with posts of similar responsibility in the Council's own Community Development Team. It was anticipated that £20,000 would be earmarked for the post and £5,000 towards travel and training of volunteers. If this 0.5 FTE

funding brought forward complementary funding or time commitment from other voluntary sector sources, it would be welcome.

- v. Officers had risen to the challenge to deliver the Government's Refugee Programme which was in addition to their day jobs. However the Council did not have the resources without the proposed post to co-ordinate voluntary assistance.

Planning Policy & Transport

B0005 Incentivised acquisition of electrically powered Private Hire Vehicles.

- i. This proposal was proposed to apply to purely electric vehicles.
- ii. The assumption that renewals for licences would be at 25% for purely electrical vehicles was a starting point that would need to be reviewed.
- iii. Not all private hire business was long range. One of the leading Private Hire companies in Cambridge was looking to pioneer the use of electric vehicles. Rapid charging points were starting to emerge around the Country. This proposal was linked to the proposed capital programme C0001.

B0006 Affordable Housing viability analyst

- i. Given the desire to try and maximise affordable housing provision in planning applications it was considered that a specialist in house officer was required who could advise the Council.

II0001 Raise parking charges in City Council car parks to increase revenue by 2%

- i. It was a mistake not to increase car parking charges as the Council needed to encourage individuals to use alternative forms of transport to get into the City.
- ii. When charges were frozen for services there was usually a time in the future when the charges had to be greatly increased to make up for the period of time when the charges were frozen. Therefore it was better to slightly increase the charges now than to have a freeze and to have to greatly increase them in the future.
- iii. In terms of what increase to charges were proposed it could possibly be applied to 1-3 hour parking charges at an increase of £0.10 per hour. It was anticipated that Officers would have a programme that would assist in working the detailed proposals out and any proposals would need to be consulted on. Any consultation responses would then be considered in terms of times or car parks where an increase could be applied.

X0001 Additional Planning Enforcement Officer [5 years]

- i. The number of planning applications had increased therefore enforcement work needed to keep up.

C0001 Electric Vehicle Rapid Charging points

- i. The Head of Finance advised from a procedural point of view that the proposal did not have a business case and, would require the approval of the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport for the project's inclusion in the council's capital process. This process would include the preparation of an outline business case (Part A) followed by the preparation of a full business case (Part B) which would be reviewed by the Capital Programme Board. Then the project would be included on either the Project Under Development list or Capital Plan as appropriate.

Finance & Resources

NCL0001 Street Lighting Earmarked Reserve [5 years]

- i. The offer to the County Council for LED lighting was proposed to be funded from the above target general fund reserve.
- ii. The proposal regarding LED lighting arose because the County Council needed to save money and this was thought to provide a sustainable proposal.
- iii. When the street lighting contract was originally negotiated there was no discussion about any street lights being turned off.
- iv. The city had 5833 street lights and the current cost to upgrade each was £300-400. But if they were upgraded at the time Balfour Beatty undertook their 5 year rolling maintenance checks, then the cost could be expected to be significantly reduced, such that £1.5m could be regarded as a reasonable estimate of total cost.
- v. If the City Council offered funding to the County Council for the LED project, then the County's own investment outlay would be commensurately reduced against its return.
- vi. It was anticipated that any assistance to the County Council would be interest free. The County Council's financial return had not been quantified as that exercise would not be carried out unless an offer was actually made.
- vii. The County Council remained the steward of off-street lighting however they would need some assistance to enable the conversion to LED lighting to take place.

The meeting ended at 6.15 pm

CHAIR