

23/3/Exec Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23/4/Exec Public Questions

There were no public questions.

23/5/Exec Budget Setting Report (General Fund) 2023/24 to 2027/28

The Head of Finance introduced the General Fund Budget Setting Report (BSR) 2023/24. It was noted that a public consultation on the draft BSR had been carried out following approval of the draft BSR at the 8 December 2022 Executive meeting. A summary of the public consultation responses was included as Appendix B to the BSR covering report.

Following scrutiny of the draft budget at the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, the BSR had been updated for the Executive meeting to reflect:

- the provisional and final financial settlements which provided an additional £2 million funding;
- business rate collection surplus; although these numbers are still provisional and subject to further work;
- changes to budget proposals;
 - o S5110 Bus Subsidises saving had been removed
 - o URP5012 Increase in Member allowances
 - o S5118 Closing some Public Conveniences – Quayside toilets had been removed from the budget saving proposal.
 - o B5144 Contribution to Energy Costs Earmarked Reserve added
- a change from a use of reserves of £2.9 million to a contribution to reserves of £2.5 million and accompanying narrative;
- inclusion of Head of Finance’s section 25 report.

The Executive Councillor for Finance Resources and Transformation outlined the context for changes made to the BSR following the public consultation.

The Executive spoke to areas of change within the BSR and also explained why particular savings within the BSR had been retained. Opposition Councillors were then invited to ask questions.

Councillor Bick expressed concern with the budgetary process followed at the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee regarding amendments to the BSR.

In response to Opposition Councillors questions, the Executive made the following comments:

- i. Noted that a number of factors were feeding into the transformation programme, this included the Senior Management review, the development of the Operational Hub and the decision regarding the Guildhall.
- ii. Noted that feedback from the public consultation emphasised the priority attached to maintaining essential public services. Discussions would need to take place with staff about how core services could be improved through the transformation process.
- iii. A summary of the outturn forecast for the general fund was included within section 4 of the BSR (page 40 of the agenda).
- iv. With reference to budget proposal URP 5012 – Increase in Member Allowances – advised that this was a technical response to give effect to a decision which had been made at Full Council to increase member allowances in accordance with the rate of the national living wage. It was felt appropriate to do this to open up representative democracy to all.
- v. With reference to budget proposal S5117 – Vacant Posts removal – advised that this budget proposal was part of a cross council process which looked at posts which had been vacant for a long period of time.
- vi. With reference to budget proposal S5143 Environmental Services – reduction in staffing - advised that the new staffing arrangements with 6 Environmental Enforcement Officers working in pairs worked well. Noted that the Council's response to fly tipping involved not only Enforcement Officers but also officers from the Streets and Open Spaces Team and the Waste Team. It was anticipated that a new ICT system would assist people to report instances of fly tipping.
- vii. With reference to budget proposal S5139 – Streets and Open Spaces Recruitment Freeze – advised that the council had struggled to recruit into certain roles (rapid response, LG driver and general operative) in the Streets and Open Spaces Team. The Council had undertaken an open day at the Depot, which had resulted in the successful employment of two new employees. As part of the transformation process, felt it was sensible to review the need for certain roles where the council had struggled to recruit people into them. Noted that market occupancy rates were back to pre-pandemic levels on a Friday and Saturday, but occupancy rates mid-week were still challenging. Noted some market traders had retired following the pandemic. To try and increase market

- stall occupancy rates, the Council had been advertising market stalls on the radio and were also trying to support new young market traders.
- viii. Budget proposal S5118 – closing some public conveniences – advised that the costs to clean and maintain public conveniences were increasing and the council needed to ensure that toilets were available in a good, clean and safe condition. Options had been explored to increase the price of coin operated toilets to 50p or to introduce card payment options but these options would introduce costs which would negate savings made on the cleaning / maintenance of toilets.
 - ix. Budget proposal S5102 – cancel big weekend city event –there was a perception that there were a lot of opportunities for sponsorship of events but unfortunately following the covid pandemic, commercial sponsorship was not available in the same way as it was previously. Consideration was being given to including the Mela in an expanded ‘music in the park’ event. The council was looking to enhance events which took place in local communities.
 - x. Budget proposal S5113 – it was hoped that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority would fund the bus subsidies in the future.

The Executive resolved unanimously to recommend Council to:

- i. Approve
 - Revenue Pressures and Bids shown in Appendix C(b) and Savings shown in Appendix C(c) in the BSR.
 - Non-Cash Limit items as shown in Appendix C(d) in the BSR.
 - Bids to be funded from External Funding sources as shown in Appendix C(e) in the BSR.
- ii. 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) which is set out in Appendix A(a) in the BSR.
- iii. Approve the level of Council Tax for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A (b) (*to follow for Council*) and Section 2, page 2.
- iv. Delegate to the Head of Finance authority to finalise changes relating to any further 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).
- v. Approve proposals outlined in Appendix D(a) in the BSR for inclusion in the Capital Plan.

- vi. Subject to (v) above, approve the revised Capital Plan for the General Fund as set out in Appendix D(c) in the BSR and the Funding as set out in Section 5, page 17.
- vii. Note the impact of revenue budget approvals and the resulting contribution to reserves [Section 6, page 21].
- viii. Create an Energy Cost Earmarked Reserve as set out in Section 6, page 21.
- ix. Note the resulting level of reserves [Section 6, page 21].
- x. Note the Chief Finance Officer's Section 25 Report included in Section 8 of the BSR.
- xi. Note the schedule of proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 in Appendix F of the BSR

The meeting ended at 7.43 pm

CHAIR