

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE:
SPECIAL – BUDGET

11th January 2018

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Harrison (Chairman), Councillor Mrs Plenderleith (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Mrs Brown (substituting for Councillor Smith), Mrs Coyle, Ford, Hewlett, Watson and Wheeler

Labour Group

Councillors Rhind, Richards, Southerd and Wilkins

FM/107 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs Coe and Smith (Conservative Group)

FM/108 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Committee was informed that no declarations of interest had been received.

FM/109 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the public had been received.

FM/110 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

FM/111 **IMPLICATIONS OF THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2017**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to Committee.

Councillor Richards requested that congratulations be relayed to the officer concerned relating to the successful outcomes reported in December.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That, following approval by the Housing and Community Services Committee on 5th October 2017, Members noted the content of this report and the proposed amendments to the delivery of the Council's front line statutory homeless service.

1.2 Members granted approval for the Strategic Director to agree the use of the Flexible Support Grant, the DCLG grant allocation and homeless prevention budget to deliver the Act and its associated enhanced prevention services and review functions.

1.3 That within the £25k received (since the October Housing and Community Services Committee in December 2017) from the DCLG New Burdens funding, £15k is ring-fenced to provide rent deposits and/or rent in advance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in order to secure accommodation in the private rented sector. The payments will be repayable back to the Council over the initial 12 months of the tenancy. This scheme will provide Officers with an additional prevention tool to assist homeless households.

FM/112 **LONE WORKER DEVICE**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to Committee.

Members raised queries as to the extent of coverage, the proposed number and whether the scheme could be extended to include Members. The Chief Executive undertook to investigate the insurance and legal implications relating to use by Members.

The Committee voted in favour of amending the resolution to include Members.

RESOLVED:

Members approved the purchase of an IT solution, Solo-Protect, to enhance the health and safety management arrangements for employees and Members of the Council who are assessed at risk due to the requirement to lone work or undertake work activities where there is an increased risk to their health and safety – working out of hours, for example.

FM/113 **SERVICE BASE BUDGETS 2018/2019**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to Committee, highlighting the net reduction in Base Budget spending equal to £368k, with the only increase relating to bad debt provision. Reference was also made to concurrent functions, industrial estate repairs, factory premises, the potential for loss of income and the 2018 roll out of Universal Credit, along with the 2018/19 fees and charges.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the proposed revenue income and expenditure for 2018/19 as detailed in Appendix 1 for the Committee's Services were considered and included in the consolidated proposals for the General Fund.

1.2 Members considered and approved the proposed fees and charges for 2018/2019, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

1.3 Members approved a 2% increase in contributions to Parish Councils in 2018/19 for Concurrent Functions.

1.4 Members approved an increased one-off repairs and maintenance sum of £75,000, included in the Base Budget for expenditure on the Boardman Industrial units car park.

FM/114 **BUDGET REPORT 2018/19, INCORPORATING THE CONSOLIDATED BUDGET PROPOSALS AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN TO 2023**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to Committee, stating that there had been no change in the principles applied, drawing attention to the improving position, the good level of General Reserves, the projected budget deficit from 2019/20, the New Homes Bonus allocations, the projected increases in the costs base, provision for growth costs and the Business Rates 100% Retention Pilot scheme. Risks relating to Planning and Licensing income, recycling, growth and funding for community and leisure services were also referenced.

The Director outlined issues relating to the Collection Fund, the 2018/19 Council Tax Base, Council Tax surplus and Business Rates deficit. Reference was made to the change in referendum limits for 2018/19, allowing for Council Tax increases of up to 3%. The Medium Term Financial Plan to 2023 was presented, with all known changes factored in, albeit still an estimate, an indication of direction of travel. It was noted that the expenditure base remains unsustainable in the longer-term, the resources required for growth and service delivery, but that the General Reserve will remain above the agreed minimum level, proposed to rise from £1m to £1.5m. The impact of the 100% Business Rates retention pilot outcomes were still subject to assessment. Whilst a balanced approach was still being adopted, budgetary savings were still required.

The Chairman commented on the healthy financial position, whilst noting the risks ahead and the remedial action required due to unknown factors such as the distribution of retained Business Rates, the pay award negotiations and changes to the National Living Wage.

Councillor Wheeler referred to future uncertainties, the forecast deficit to be tackled and the pressure to maintain the Council Tax increase at 1.95%, but proposed that £250k from the General Reserve be allocated to another round of the Community Partnership Scheme in 2018/19, a proposal agreed by Committee.

RESOLVED:

1.1 Members considered the estimates of revenue income and expenditure for 2018/19 for the General Fund and approved a level of income and expenditure.

- 1.2 Members approved a 2% increase in grants to voluntary bodies and payments to Parish Councils under concurrent functions.**
- 1.3 That the Council Tax Base for 2018/19 of 32,467 (equivalent Band D) properties, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.**
- 1.4 That a Council Tax Surplus of £500,000 be declared on the Collection Fund for 2017/18 and the Council's proportion of £55,000 be transferred to the General Fund in 2018/19.**
- 1.5 Members approved an increase of 1.95% in the rate of Council Tax for 2018/19, to be referred to Council on 26th February 2018.**
- 1.6 Members approved the updated 5-year financial projection on the General Fund to 2023, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, including associated assumptions and risks as detailed in the report.**
- 1.7 That the General Fund Statutory Balance be increased from £1m to £1.5m.**
- 1.8 That a strategy and action plan be drawn up to generate budget savings on the General Fund ahead of 2019/20.**
- 1.9 That £250,000 of the General Reserve Balance be allocated to a further round of the Community Partnership Grant Scheme.**
- 1.10 That the decisions made in recommendations 1.1 to 1.9 above be used as the basis for consultation with local residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups, etc. and are subject to review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

FM/115 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11

The Committee was informed that no questions had been received.

HEALTH PARTNERSHIP MANAGER / PARK LIFE OFFICER

Members approved the recommendations in the report.

PAY AND GRADING REVIEW: TRANSFERRED POSTS

Members approved the recommendations in the report.

The meeting terminated at 6.50pm.

COUNCILLOR J HARRISON

CHAIRMAN