

DORSET COUNCIL - RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 JANUARY 2020

Present: Cllrs Piers Brown (Chairman), Mike Parkes (Vice-Chairman), Andy Canning, Beryl Ezzard, Barry Goringe, Brian Heatley, Sherry Jespersen and David Shortell

Also present: Councillor Tony Alford (Cabinet Member for Customer, Community and Regulator Services), Councillor Tony Ferrari (Finance, Commercial and Assets) and Councillor Peter Wharf (Deputy Leader and Corporate Development and Change).

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Helen Whitby (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Jim McManus (Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial)

28. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Howard Legg and Julie Robinson.

29. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

30. Public Participation

There were no statements and questions from Town and Parish Councils and no public statements and questions at the meeting:

31. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

32. Pre-decision Scrutiny of the 2020/2021 Budget

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Corporate Development on pre-decision scrutiny of the 2020/21 budget.

The Executive Director explained how the budget had been formulated and highlighted Section 7 of the report which set out council tax considerations including the proposed approach to unoccupied houses, treasury management and capital. A prudent and realistic approach had been taken in balancing the budget, which did not rely on services, and which would help create a long-term sustainable organisation.

Members then scrutinised the budget in detail. The following points were made and clarified in discussion:-

- with regard to paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5 and the proposals for council tax rises of 2% from 2021 onwards, it was proposed and agreed that the Cabinet be asked to consider whether this was necessary as members had not had an opportunity to discuss them;
- the significant changes in council tax bands from 2020/21 and in subsequent years;
- the potential for a large overspend in total, future pressures on children's and adults' services budgets and possible areas of underspend which might offset these;
- the difference a 4% increase in council tax would make;
- that climate change implications were not included in the budget this related to policy and the budget avoided all areas of policy;
- how reserves would or could be used to address budget risk or offset overspends;
- officers' assurance relating to the budget projections for children's and adult services and the assumptions these were based upon;
- the Council was learning from other local authorities who were containing the growth in demand for services;
- decreases in care packages over the next couple of years;
- the difficulty in trying to fix costs and the rise in demand for services;
- the need to continue to address demand;
- the need for Key Performance Indicators so that outcomes for service users could be measured;
- the chairmen of Executive Advisory Panels would be reminded that they could bid for funding to take forward ideas to save money or make reputational improvements which could include climate change proposals;
- waste savings arising from operating depots with fewer managers;
- the need for broadband coverage to be improved and efforts being made to secure this;
- the need to reduce agency staff usage and steps being taken to ensure that the Council becomes an "Employer of Choice";
- the need to expedite asset sales to reduce costs to the Council and that some of these had been included in the place-based budget for 2020/21;
- the Council's appetite for risk if it was to become more commercial;
- whether members were happy that the proposed budget would deliver the Council's priorities and that risks had been mitigated; and
- a policy was being drawn up in relation to the transfer of assets to towns and parish councils.

Members then agreed the following:-

Recommended

1. That the Cabinet be asked to reconsider paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5 of the report to see whether these were necessary as members had not had an opportunity to discuss them.

2. That the Cabinet be recommended to adopt the proposed budget for 2020/21 subject to the above.

33. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 4.00 - 5.15 pm

Chairman

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