

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 JANUARY 2020

Present: Cllrs Daryl Turner (Chairman), Cherry Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Robin Cook, Jean Dunseith, Simon Gibson, Val Potheary, Andrew Starr, Roland Tarr and David Taylor

Apologies: Cllrs Ryan Hope

Also present: Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Tony Ferrari and Cllr David Walsh

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

Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Matthew Piles (Corporate Director - Economic Growth and Infrastructure), Karyn Punchard (Corporate Director of Place Services), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

22. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

23. Public Participation

There were no representations from town or parish councils or from members of the public.

24. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

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

The committee was invited to consider the budget proposals for 2020/21 prior to consideration at Cabinet on 28 January and Full Council on 18 February 2020. The report set out the proposals for Dorset Council's 2020/21 revenue and capital budgets, summarised the medium-term financial plan, which covered the following four years to 2024/25 and included the capital strategy and treasury management strategy. The committee had the opportunity to consider the implications of the proposals on behalf of residents of Dorset and to provide constructive challenge to decision makers before a final decision was made. It was noted that the comments made by the committee would be reported to Cabinet on 28 January 2020 and taken into consideration as part of the budget setting process.

The Executive Director of Place Services provided an introduction to the report and noted that he was confident that plans were in place in order to deliver proposed efficiency savings.

The committee considered the issues arising from the report and during discussion, the following points were raised:

- A discussion was held with regard to work on asset management and disposal and a point raised about the opportunities for revenue raising and capital realisation. A review of the council's asset portfolio was to be undertaken with a separate piece of work to identify assets to be disposed with a savings target of £15m. A potential list of assets for disposal would be produced and consultation undertaken with officers and councillors. A request was made for a timetable to be produced for this work with an end date
- Work was being undertaken in respect of the harmonisation of charges and the example of car parking charges was discussed. Consultation would be undertaken with councillors and local councils in order to gain local knowledge and a report would be considered by Cabinet. The need to consider local circumstances was highlighted and councillors would play an important role in this discussion
- Planning fees were being considered through review of the planning transformation budget
- A discussion was held with regard to transformation initiatives and a point raised on funding for recommendations coming out of Executive Advisory Panels (EAPs). Recommendations arising from the work of EAPs would be considered by the relevant scrutiny committee and Cabinet and it would be for Cabinet to consider cost implications if relevant
- The use of technology within services was raised and an example provided in relation to refuse collection vehicles
- A point was raised with regard to income generation and how it fitted in with this year's budget
- Reference was made to work being undertaken in the highways area and a recent report that had been received which highlighted the good work being undertaken and identified areas where improvements could be made. A specific reference was made to the permit system used for charging organisations where roads had to be closed for works
- The Chairman noted that there were assumptions made throughout the budget and therefore risk associated, however there was a need to set a balanced budget. There was some concern around overspend projections and it was noted that the figures may need to be adjusted in light of the Quarter 3 budget monitor
- A discussion was held in respect of the level of council tax precept increase proposed and having the right narrative in place to explain the increase to the public was recognised, in order to explain the pressures on the council and the additional funding that had been proposed for Adult and Children's Services

- A concern was expressed with regard to the level of council tax increase and the impact that this would have on residents.

Following discussion the committee resolved

Decision

That the Place Scrutiny Committee endorse the Budget proposals for 2020/21 for consideration by Cabinet and Full Council.

The Chairman thanked the portfolio holders and officers for their work in preparing the budget and for their attendance at the meeting.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets noted that discussions were taking place with Dorset MP's with regard to requesting a multi-year finance settlement from the Government.

26. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 3.05 - 3.58 pm

Chairman

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