

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MONDAY, 15 JANUARY 2018**

#### Present:

Councillor Haines (Chairman)

Councillor Ford (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Clarence, Colclough, Connett, Cox, Dewhirst, Eden, Golder, Gribble, Hocking, G Hook, J Hook (was Brodie), Jeffery, Keeling, Kerswell, Mayne, Morgan, Nutley, Orme, Parker, Peart, Smith and Thorne

#### Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors

#### Apologies:

Councillors Dennis, Hayes, Matthews, Prowse and Winsor

#### Officers in Attendance:

Martin Flitcroft, Finance Manager

### **270. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2017 were approved and signed as a correct record subject to the addition of Cllr Nutley as being shown in attendance.

### **271. CONNECTING DEVON & SOMERSET - BROADBAND - PRESENTATION**

The Stakeholder Engagement Officer for Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband gave a presentation to members on the aims of the project and the latest position with progress.

The programme aimed to improve business performance, support communities and public service transformation and aimed to support areas not covered by wholesale infrastructure.

Take up on Phase 1 (£94m of investment) of the project was around 43% in line with the national average. Phase 2 (£69M of investment) was scheduled to have increased percentage coverage to 93% by the end of 2019 and take up was high in rural areas.

A voucher scheme was available to assist properties not covered by the formal phases of roll out.

More information was available at [www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk](http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk)

## **272. HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION - PRESENTATION**

The Housing Needs Lead Officer for Teignbridge gave a presentation on the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into effect on the 3 April.

The new Act introduced a number of new measures

- More emphasis on homelessness prevention with new legal duties on local authorities to provide meaningful support to everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness, regardless of whether they are in priority need or 'intentionally homeless', as long as they are eligible for assistance.
- a new suite of assessments and a new pathway which will require the service to adapt its processes and procedures as well as adopt new templates of work.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 doubles the number of days from 28 to 56. Anyone accepted by the Council as being threatened with homelessness will be owed the new prevention duty and the Council would need to take 'reasonable steps' to help them avoid becoming homeless.
- local authorities must ensure advice and information around homelessness and preventing homelessness is available free of charge to everyone in their district.
- The new act will require a more robust approach to advisory services with the need to provide information and advice on:
- The Homelessness Reduction Act also stipulates that the support offered to eligible applicants is to be more robust than currently required. Once a local authority is satisfied that someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance a defined assessment should be carried out.
- An applicant's assessment and plan must be kept under review and updated as necessary, until the local authority has determined that no further duty is owed.

Under the new Act, the Council will have a duty to help all eligible homeless applicants to secure accommodation for a period of at least 6 months, regardless of whether they are in priority need or 'intentionally homeless'.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 gives applicants the right to request a review of any decision made by the local authority (in addition to those laid down in current legislation)

A new 'public Authority Duty to Refer' will be introduced in October 2018 and under this duty, "specified public authorities" e.g. other statutory services such as prisons, social services departments etc., will be required to refer details of people who they consider being homeless or threatened with homelessness to their local authority (if the person agrees to the notification being made). The Council will then need to make contact with this individual for assessment.

the DCLG predicts that homelessness prevention caseloads will increase by approximately 25%.

The DCLG has also estimated a projected increase of 50% for review requests in line with the new duties and a rise in service administration costs of 2% per year.

### **Implementation Plan**

We have devised a bespoke Implementation plan in collaboration with Exeter City Council in order to prepare the ground for the new Act.

Teignbridge will benefit from an increase in central government grant funding through two new grants called New Burdens funding, and The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.

These provide a funding increase of 42% over the next two years which will enable the enhancement of staffing resources and the development of private rented sector offers to meet the new duties.

## **273. SHARED EQUITY SCHEME**

The Committee considered a report on options to develop a shared equity scheme to assist prospective first time buyers. An opportunity existed to pilot a scheme in Chudleigh using offsite contributions for Section 106 monies. Having considered the report the Committee expressed the view that further information was needed about a potential scheme in Chudleigh to see if it would form the basis of a longer term solution.

## **274. INITIAL FINANCIAL PLAN PROPOSALS 2018/19 TO 2020/21 - TO CONSIDER THE EXECUTIVE'S INITIAL BUDGET PROPOSALS**

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources introduced the Initial Financial Plan Proposals 2018/19 onwards which will be out to consultation over the next six weeks and also to recommend a council tax base for 2018/19. The proposed Council tax levels would mean that the Council would be in the middle of Devon district councils for council tax.

The Acting Chief Finance Officer introduced budget proposals for the Revenue and Capital Budgets 2018/19 to 2020/21 and provided an update on the likely outturn position for 2017/18.

A £5 council tax rise was proposed for 2018/19 which equated to 3.12% to take the Council's council tax to £165.17 for Band D dwelling. This was against reducing central government funding and continued work by the Council to find savings in existing budgets.

The Budget proposals supported housing, business and infrastructure delivery together with town centre investment while retaining an appropriate level of reserves.

The Council has been successful with a bid, along with other Devon authorities to be a 100% pilot for 2018/19 only and this would provide additional funding to assist with Newton Abbot Town Centre redevelopment plans.

The Council was in its third year of its BEST2020 process to reduce costs and the second year of delivery of the Council's Ten Year Strategy.

Paragraph 3.7 identified the current council tax and council tax base for Teignbridge and paragraph 3.9 identified the government funding and cost changes likely to impact on the Council in the future and how this had been taken into account in the draft budget proposals. This included national living wage increase, employers pay offer, over a two year deal.

The report outlined a small increase in the level of reserves to £1.9m for 2018/19 dropping to £1.8m in later years which represented around 11.3% of the annual budget. The recommended council tax base of 48,577 is proposed for 2018/19 taking account of growth and collection rates.

The budget proposals were out for public and business consultation for final consideration by the Council on the 22 February 2018.

In discussion non-executive members made the following comments

- Above inflation increase in car parking fees at 3.6%. The Acting Finance Officer advised that the increases included an element of increased Business Rates paid.
- Was there a need for improvements to the Forde House Office heating system?
- Why there was a 5% increase in the staff pay budget while a 2% offer had been made by the employers nationally. The Acting Finance Officer advised that the offer also included a higher 9.2% increase for lower paid staff.
- If the correct balance had been struck in charges for club versus casual use of the Council's leisure facilities.
- Costs of conversion works at the Forde House offices exceeding original budget. The Acting Finance Officer advised that the additional costs had been met by the new tenant.

## **275. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN**

The Executive Forward Plan was noted.

## **276. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted its work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

Cllr Mike Haines  
Chairman