

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 FEBRUARY 2019

Present:

Councillors Haines (Chairman), Prowse (Vice-Chairman), Clarence, Colclough, Connett, Dennis, Dewhurst, Gribble, Hockin, Hocking, G Hook, J Hook (was Brodie), Jeffery, Kerswell, Nutley, Orme, Parker, Peart, Smith and Thorne

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Barker, Bullivant, Christophers, Clemens, Golder, Goodey,

Apologies:

Councillors Cox, Eden, Evans, Jones, Matthews, Mayne, Morgan, Winsor and Wrigley

Officers in Attendance:

Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer
Kay O'Flaherty, BID Team Leader
Trish Corns, Democratic Services Officer

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

19. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions under Council Procedure Rule 5.8(h).

20. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

There were no Councillor questions under Council Procedure Rule 5.8(i).

21. FINAL FINANCIAL PLAN PROPOSALS 2019/20 TO 2021/22

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and the Chief Finance Officer presented the final financial plan proposals for 2019/20 to 2021/22 as set out in the report for recommendation to the Executive on 7 February, and Council on 28 February 2019. The proposals recommended revenue and capital budgets for 2019/20 and planned in outline for 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Portfolio Holder made particular reference to:

- The Government had indicated 100% rates retention, but with the transfer in of some funding obligations. 75% rates retention was now being proposed to be introduced in 2020/21. Revenue support grant was to end after 2018/19.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (4.2.2019)

- New homes bonus has not been altered in the provisional settlement however the Council continued to suffer the reductions identified by earlier year settlement changes.
- The Council has benefitted from previous savings plans and restructuring efficiencies were still producing cost reductions. The budget also benefitted from the Strata partnership and the significant ongoing returns from Market Walk. The Council was in the fourth year of Business Efficiency Service Transition 2020 review following business challenge in earlier years.
- Uncertainty continued around future demand, inflation and the outcome of the European Union negotiations.
- The forecasted income 2019/20 from Council Tax was £8.5million. The cost of one service waste, recycling and cleansing would be £8.7 million. Therefore the financial shortfall to run this service and all other services provided by the Council was required through other income, grants and fees and charges.

In response to questions raised by Members, particularly in relation to appendix 7, the Committee was advised: previous and actual fees and charges figures would be presented together for ease of reference in future budget papers; fees for the car parking spaces for DWP at Forde House was included as part of the rental agreement; the figures around FTE staff and differences between years reflected budgeting for a full staff complement, staff posts funded by external funding were not included, there were some movement of staff between departments with change in government legislation and department restructuring; some of the figures in appendix 5 detail one off expenditure; the increase in the cost of burials could reflect perhaps that the Council had not in the past recharged the full cost; external grants covered the cost of all coastal monitoring; a breakdown of the budget for cycle paths would be provided; a draft policy on electric and low emission vehicles would be presented to the Committee for consideration at its next meeting; the Marsh Barton railway station project, part of the South West Exeter infrastructure, was progressing with funding also allocated by Devon County Council and Exeter City Council, and the potential for other contributing partners; further information would be provided in relation to planning Section 106 funds for open space provision in Kingsteignton; and Section 106 funds were available for play area equipment at Dawlish Warren, however the potential partnership funding from Great Western Railway was no longer available.

Resolved

- a) The proposed budget that the Executive will recommend to Council for approval set out as in appendix 4 for revenue, and appendix 7 for capital as circulated with the agenda be noted.
- b) That further information be provided to the Executive on the following:
 - The reasons for the burial fee increase from £510 to £733 as included in the cemetery fees at appendix 6 of the report circulated with the agenda.
 - A breakdown on the allocation for KG8 cycle paths at appendix 7.
 - Availability and amount of Bid 300 planning Section106 agreement provision for Kingsteignton open space.
 - A list of savings in relation to appendix 5.

- c) That the budget proposals be considered together with any subsequent consultation comments for approval by Council as the final budget for 2019/20 and the outline plan for the subsequent years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

In particular the proposed budget includes:

- An increase in council tax of £5 or 3.03% to £170.17.
- The continuing reduction in new homes bonus.
- Other central funding reductions especially revenue support grant.
- Reserves at 12% of the net revenue budget or just over £1.9 million.
- Continuing support for housing whilst backing business and bringing people and organisations together for local neighbourhood planning.
- Infrastructure delivery plan investment funded by community infrastructure levy and external sources where available.
- The two year pay agreement including increases linked to the national living wage for 2018/19 and 2019/20 and increases of 2% for all other staff with changes to the central spine from 1 April 2019.
- Provisional assumptions for business rates income for future years with proposed reset of the baseline.
- Rural aid continuing at £40,000.

22. DIGITAL STRATEGY - DIGITALFIRST@TEIGNBRIDGE

The Business Improvement and Development Team Leader referred to the digital strategy, was replacing the previous Access to Services strategy, and detailed how the council would provide digital access to its services. The new strategy covered three key areas: customer access, creating a digitally empowered workforce and a robust technical supporting framework. It aimed to deliver the same services more efficiently, at less cost, in the way that the majority of customers preferred to transact, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Council recognised that not all customers were able to access digital services. Alternative ways that customers could obtain support were being promoted. By moving those who could to digital self-service channels the Council could direct its remaining resources to help vulnerable customers or those with more complex queries. Members were encouraged to be advocates for the digital strategy and promote the digital approach to customers.

Teignbridge was an ambassador of joined up, end-to-end digital service delivery in the South West, and was also achieving some recognition at a national level. DigitalFirst@Teignbridge has been brought together following research into best practice, consultation with colleagues and wider digital champions across the district. The timescale for delivery was 3-5 years, after which time the strategy would be reviewed to ensure it would be fit for purpose.

In response to Member questions, the BID Team Leader advised limited internet access in the rural areas was acknowledged. Staff at local libraries were able to support customers to PCs within the libraries. Formal agreements were in place with the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Council for Voluntary Services, for their

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (4.2.2019)

staff and volunteers to visit the rural areas to support those who need assistance with online systems, to combat issues of rural isolation.

Resolved

That the report be noted and the Strategy supported.

23. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the Executive Forward Plan circulated with the agenda.

24. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme circulated with the agenda. It was noted that the programme would be updated with additional items for the 4 March meeting as follows: Community Infrastructure Levy –understanding the metrics; and South East Devon Habitat Regulations Committee.

CLLR MIKE HAINES
Chairman