

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 FEBRUARY 2020

Present:

Councillors Bullivant (Chairman), D Cox (Vice-Chairman), Jenks, H Cox, Daws, Evans, Foden, Goodman-Bradbury, Hocking, Keeling, Mullone, Nuttall, Nutley, Orme, Patch, J Petherick, L Petherick, Parker-Khan, Purser, Peart, Rollason and Tume

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Connett, G Hook, MacGregor, Taylor, Wrigley, Bradford, Clarence, Haines and Jeffery

Apologies:

Councillors Austen, Cook, Eden, Gribble, Hayes, Morgan, Thorne and Parker

Officers in Attendance:

Claire Moors, Principal Technical Accountant
Trish Corns, Democratic Services Officer

13. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January, 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

15. PUBLIC QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 5.8(H)

None.

16. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 5.8(I)

The following question was asked by Councillor Patch

Following yet another fly-tipping incident in Haytor Ward (blocking the entrance to Blackpool School in Liverton yesterday morning; just a few weeks after a trailer full of vehicle tyres was abandoned in another part of Ilsington Parish) I would like to put forward the following question to be addressed by the appropriate officer for the next O&S Committee Meeting:

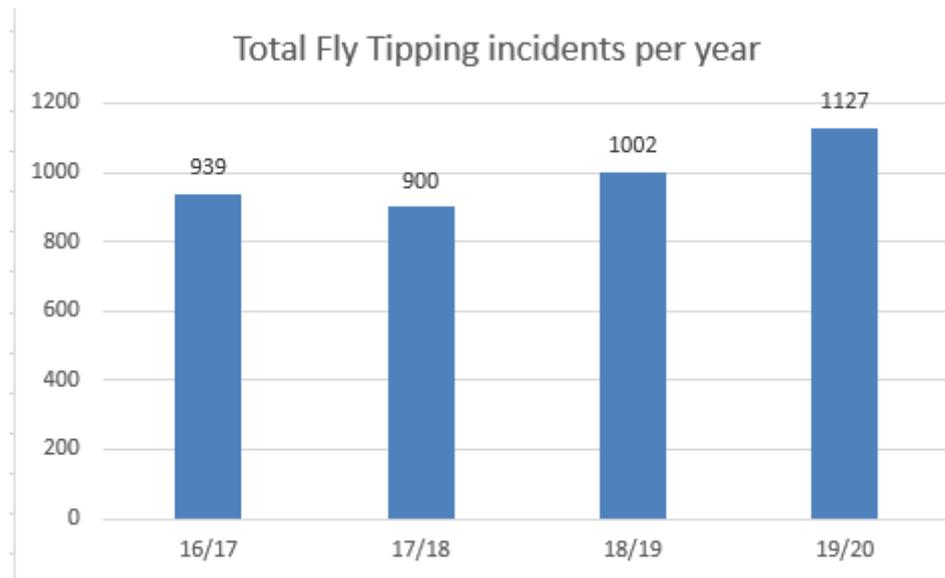
What recent year-on-year trends have been observed regarding fly-tipping incidents in Teignbridge? Specifically, for each of the last 4 years, what are the numbers of: i) fly-tipping cases reported to Teignbridge DC; ii) fly-tipping cases *actively* investigated; iii) prosecutions/fines arising from fly-tipping incidents.

Answer

With regard to the recent fly tipping incident in Liverton officers did visit to see if any evidence was left at the fly tip. None was found but following our social media post we have had some responses from the public which we are following up but it is too early to say whether these will lead to a fixed penalty notice or prosecution.

All figures for the year 2019/20 are April to December.

i) fly-tipping cases reported to Teignbridge DC



Notes

- From April 2019 the way fly tips were recorded was improved to ensure all those encountered by cleansing staff were logged. A proportion were found to have been cleared during the course of their duties without being recorded. This has had the effect of increasing the numbers since April 2019, meaning the increase shown is not strictly comparable to previous years. We will be able to more accurately monitor trends going forward.

ii) fly-tipping cases *actively* investigated

19/20 - 161
18/19 – 307
17/18 - 410
16/17 - 641

Notes

- The majority of fly tips have no evidence either within the waste or any person who witnessed the activity and is willing to attend court.

iii) prosecutions/fines arising from fly-tipping incidents.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (7.2.2020)

19/20 - £2000

18/19 - £3000

17/18 - £3200

16/17 - £2000

Councillor Patch asked a supplementary question referring to the decrease in fly-tipping cases actively investigated from 641 in 2016/17 to 161 in 2019/20 to date, and the formal process in place to undertake prosecutions, the involvement of the Police and what preventative measures were in place.

Information was not available at the meeting to answer the supplementary question. The Chairman advised that a written response would be given.

Councillor Daws referred to questions he had submitted to be put to the Committee. The meeting was advised that these questions were being dealt with in accordance with correct procedures.

At this juncture the Chairman adjourned the meeting for a short recess.

17. REPORT OF THE RURAL AID REVIEW GROUP

The Chairman of the Review Group Councillor Purser, presented the report on the findings of the Review Group, and suggested potential savings elsewhere in the overall budget that could possibly be used to fund a Rural Aid grant as set out in the agenda report.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Purser: referred to the criteria detailed in the agenda report, and advised that 30 of the District's Parish Councils had precepts of less than £20,000. These Parish Councils may be eligible to apply for a rural aid grant depending on cash reserves, as detailed in the criteria detailed in the agenda report; and agreed to the introduction of annual reports on rural aid grants approved over the previous year, to be presented to the Committee at the end of the financial year.

The Portfolio older for Corporate Resources, referred positively to the Review Group's work to produce criteria for the fund to continue at a reduced amount from £40,000 £26,000. He advised that the requested fund of £26,000 was not allocated in the budget, and means of funding would be considered at the Executive meeting on Monday.

RECOMMENDED

The Committee recommends to Executive:

That the Rural Aid Grant continue and be included in the budget proposals 2020/21 to 2020/23 as follows:

- The grant be £26,000.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (7.2.2020)

- Parishes in Teignbridge with a precept of £20,000 or less, with no more than 75% of the respective parish precept cash reserves be eligible to apply.
- The maximum grant awarded be £2,000 per annum.
- The grant be awarded primarily for tangible items only, such as new equipment, or building repair and refurbishment.
- Applications be considered on their individual merit, taking into account Rural Aid grants awarded to Parish Councils in recent years.

18. FINAL FINANCIAL PLAN PROPOSALS 2020/21 TO 2022/23

Councillor D Cox declared an Appendix 2 interest by virtue of his position as Chairman of the CVS Trustees.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services presented the report on the final financial plan proposals 2020/21 to 2020/23 for recommendation to Council on 24 February, 2020. The proposals included recommended revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21 and planned in outline for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The Portfolio Holder referred to pertinent factors which particularly impacted the budget:

- Local government finance settlement for 2020/21 would be a settlement for one year only.
- The Government was planning to introduce 75% business rates retention in 2021/22.
- The Government's intention to cease New Homes Bonus.
- The senior management structure has been finalised and approved and the resultant savings will ultimately amount to in excess of £150,000 per annum.
- The council tax support scheme is proposed to be amended to an income banded scheme due to the existing scheme not being compatible with the roll out of Universal Credit.
- The average Teignbridge council tax of £170.17 per household is below the current average of Devon districts of £176.86.
- A flat nominal charge for Sunday parking of £1 between the time of 10am - 4pm has been included within the fees and charges for the majority of the car parks across the District.
- The successful opt in green waste subscription would be maintained at its existing level and no increase is proposed. The fee continues to be below the national average and the average charge within Devon.
- Revenue support grant reduced from £4.5 million to zero in 2019/20. Uncertainty existed for 2021/22 when a proposed reset of the baseline was likely to occur, reducing gains established from growth and altering business rates retention to 75%.
- The general reserves were maintained at around 12.3% of the budget which was equivalent to just under £2.0 million. However there was much uncertainty over the move to 75% and potentially an eventual 100% business rates retention scheme with the higher risks that the Council would face.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (7.2.2020)

- The budget proposals show how the Council could start to prepare for the grant reductions and anticipated funding regime by continuing to make savings and generate income.
- The proposals included a £5 increase in council tax next year and subsequent years and substantial capital investment over the next three years.

It was proposed and seconded that the Fees and Charges be included in the Initial Financial Plan Proposals for 2021/22 and future years to enable the Committee to review them as part of the budget process. This proposal was carried.

Concern was raised in regard to the introduction of a flat rate nominal charge for parking on Sunday in the Council's car parks, particularly as the flat rate was more than the 30 minute charge in some areas. In addition, the charge may discourage Sunday shoppers to Newton Abbot. The Portfolio Holder referred to the challenge the Council was facing in balancing the budget. The proposal was a nominal charge. The Council had invested significantly in Newton Abbot town centre to attract visitors and increase footfall.

It was proposed and seconded that the Executive be requested to delete Sunday Parking Charges from the final budget proposals. This was lost by 7 votes for, 10 against and 2 abstentions.

It was noted that the terms of reference for the Car Park Review Group did not include reviewing car parks fees and charges. It was proposed and seconded that this be included in the Review Group's terms of reference. This was carried by 10 votes for and 9 against. This would enable the fees and charges to be reviewed annually as part of the budget process, and to assess the effect of the introduction of the nominal Sunday parking charge.

In response to a question as to why the Council was investing in a new railway station at Marsh Barton for South West Exeter, and provision for education in SW Exeter and the wider Teignbridge area, the portfolio Holder advised that the was being funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy for the SW Exeter planning application, the land of which was in the Teignbridge boundary.

In response to a question for the Committee in regard to the membership of the Commercial Property Investment Board at appendix 8 to the agenda report, the Leader advised that further consideration would be given to this at the Executive.

Members asked the following questions throughout discussion. Information was not available at the meeting to answer the questions, and it was agreed that written answers would be provided to Members before the Executive.

Note: Following the meeting the answers were provided and are set out below.

RECOMMENDED

1. That the Executive be advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that the Final Financial Plan proposals 2020/21 to 2022/23 be considered together with any subsequent consultation comments for approval

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (7.2.2020)

by Council as the final budget for 2020/21 and the outline plan for subsequent years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

2. That Council approve the Commercial Strategy in appendix 8 and delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to approve the purchase of assets meeting the prescribed criteria in section 6 of the Strategy subject to prior consultation with the Commercial Property Investment Board.

The proposed budget includes:

- An increase in council tax of £5 or 2.94% to £175.17.
- Funding for a climate change officer and enhanced planning enforcement.
- The continuing reduction in new homes bonus.
- Other central funding reductions – in particular provisional assumptions for business rates for future years and reset of the baseline.
- Reserves at 12.3% of the net revenue budget or just under £2.0 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.
- Town centre investment in infrastructure and employment.
- Use of long term borrowing where appropriate.
- Assumptions of a 2% pay deal with higher increases for those on lower grades.
- Reducing rural aid to £26,000 and reducing councillors' community fund to £1,000 each.
- £1 million payment to reduce the pension deficit and ongoing contributions.

RESOLVED

1. That details of Fees and Charges be included in the Initial Financial Plan proposals for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the annual budget consultation process.
2. That car parking fees and charges be included in the terms of reference for the Car Park Review Group, to enable the fees and charges to be reviewed annually as part of the budget process.

Note:

The following questions were raised during debate. The answers have been provided since the meeting and are detailed below

1. *Paragraph 3.9 - How many employees do we have on the statutory National Living Wage?*

Our starting grade is higher than the statutory National Living Wage so this doesn't specifically effect any employees but it has a knock on effect to our lower

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (7.2.2020)

grades. A flat rate increase for the majority of grades of 2% in each year and higher increases on lower pay points (affecting 218 employees which is approx. 30% of the workforce) of up to 9.2% in 2018/19 and a further 5.9% in 2019/20. A revised pay spine was also introduced in the deal with effect from 1 April 2019.

2. Paragraph 4.3 - Why did the car parking income in 4.3 change from £161K to £185K?

This is because additional income was included to account for the Sherbourne Rd development.

3. Paragraph 4.15 - What is the difference in New Homes Bonus between affordable and non-affordable housing?

NHB is paid on all of those homes including affordable at the national council tax rate and subject to further formula adjustments. There is then an additional sum paid for affordable homes of £350 per unit x 80%.

4. Pg. 52 - Why did the Customer Service number of FTE's increase from 12.5 to 22?

This was because the Customer Service team merged with part of Revenues and Benefits. Customer Service FTE's increased and the Revenue and Benefits number of FTE's reduced. See also No. 7.

5. Pg. 52 - Why does the Democratic Services have an employee's budget of £0.5m when there are only 3.5 FTE's.

This is because the amount includes Members Allowances but the Members themselves are not included within the FTE figure.

6. Pg. 54 - Why has the service cost for Development Management increased from £378K to £656?

This is mainly due to the decrease in income. Planning application income can vary considerably year on year, especially when large applications are received. For example 14/15 £928k and 16/17 £621k. Income variation has been reported in this year but as a temporary increase as it does not necessarily mean we will receive additional income next year.

7. Pg. 68 Why did the Revenues and Benefits number of FTE's decrease from 49 to 39?

This was because the Customer Service team merged with part of Revenues and Benefits. Customer Service FTE's increased and the Revenue and Benefits number of FTE's reduced. See also No. 4.

8. *Budget Forecast – Why do we use £0.6m from Revenue to put into Capital.*

The current capital programme is estimated at £32.6m and is funded by the different income types detailed on the budget forecast sheet. Borrowing only occurs where there is a business case to do so because the project provides returns to service the loan.

£0.6m is required from revenue in order to ensure the current programme is fully funded.

9. *Has Audit looked at the Commercial Strategy?*

Audit and Legal were consulted as part of the process in drafting the Commercial Strategy. It was also presented to CMT and SLT.

19. CALL-INS

None.

20. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the Executive Forward Plan.

21. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee Work Programme circulated with the agenda was received and noted.

The Chairman raised the issue of rising sea levels and the effect on the District's coast and inland towns located near rivers, and what response plans were in place. It was agreed that this issue be added to the Committee work programme and a report presented for Committee consideration.

22. PORTFOLIO HOLDER PRESENTATION - THE LEADER COUNCILLOR G HOOK (STRATEGIC DIRECTION)

Councillor G Hook, the Leader of and spokesperson for the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Direction summarised his service areas of responsibility, challenges and achievements and how the Committee could assist. The areas of responsibility encompassed communications, Democratic and Electoral Services, Human Resources, and Strategic Direction, the overall responsibility for T10, the strategic objectives delivery and work with other strategic/regional bodies.

Democratic Services supported the democratic decision process by organising meetings, agendas and minutes, and providing Member Support.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee (7.2.2020)

Electoral Services was responsible for compiling the electoral register, organising and conducting elections, polls and referenda at local and national levels.

The T10 strategic objectives were approved by Council, and the Committee assisted in identifying priorities within the objectives and reviewing the council's progress towards them.

The human resources function included strategic workforce planning, performance management, and change management. Objectives included supporting delivery of key programmes such as agile working.

Communications had several roles including proactively communicating the Council's vision to stakeholders and residents, analysing trends on how customers consume information to ensure the Council tailors its communication methods accordingly, and coordinating media response to any major incidents.

The Leader advised that he represented the Council at various local and national partnership meetings. Common themes at the meeting included: the challenge of Teignbridge and other Local Councils to provide services with an ever decreasing budget; climate change and local government reform.

The meeting started at 10am and finished at 12.30pm.

CLLR P BULLIVANT
Chairman