

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MINUTES

TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2025

Present:

Councillors Bullivant, Cox, Dawson, Foden, Hall, Hayes, James, Major, Nuttall, Radford (Vice-Chair), Rogers, Rollason, Ryan, Sanders (Chair), Smith, Swain and J Taylor

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Atkins, Hook, MacGregor, Palethorpe, P Parker, Parrott, G Taylor and Williams

Apologies:

Councillors C Parker, Steemson and Thorne

Officers in Attendance:

Graham Davey, Housing Enabling and Development Manager
Kay Fice, Scrutiny Officer
Martin Flitcroft, Director of Corporate Services
Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer
Jon Lloyd Owen, Head of Housing
Helen Williams, Research Officer
Jack Williams, Performance Data Analyst

75. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Cllrs C Parker, Steemson and Thorne

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome the new members to the Group: Cllrs Smith, J Taylor and Swain. Cllr Atkins is no longer on the Group.

Information from the CfGS (Centre for Governance & Scrutiny) is available on the Councillors sharepoint site and the Chair is looking into offering training opportunities, particularly for new members

76. MINUTES

The wording in the first bullet point under the heading A number of questions and comments were raised was discussed and replaced with the following words

- Concerns were raised regarding the budget. The S151 Officer indicated concerns re the budget gaps but stated that plans were in place to address this through the work of Modern 25 and the MTFP Task & Finish Group

It was proposed by Councillor Radford, seconded by Councillor James and

RESOLVED The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair with the above amendment

77. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

78. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

The question and answer to the Question raised by a member of the public is attached to the Agenda for the meeting

The supplementary question 'what is a woman?' would receive a response in writing in accordance with our procedures and constitution

79. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

The questions raised by Cllr J Taylor are attached to the Agenda of the meeting.

There were no supplementary questions

80. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

There were no questions asked or comments raised by members of the Committee or the Executive members who were present on the Executive Forward Plan

81. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN

It was noted that the link to the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Plan may not be working correctly and this would be addressed.

The Committee was assured that some areas such as South West Water/Environment Agency and Rural Broadband issues were still on the list to be followed up. It was suggested that Devolution proposals could be scrutinised by O&S.

The Chair took the opportunity to explain that there would normally be items on this Agenda to cover 'Updates from the Councils appointed representatives' and that these would be scheduled for future meetings and be no longer than 10 minutes to allow a time for questions.

All Executive members have been advised that their Bi-annual reports would recommence from the April O&S meeting and also be limited to 10 minutes plus questions. If any items would benefit from more time or a wider audience, they should consider asking for a members briefing to be arranged. It was noted that the members briefings by Portfolio Holders were very helpful.

82. Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25

Questions/comments on the report included:

- Page 27 Vital, Viable Council. Jack Williams explained that the report was based on exceptions so if everything was on track it would not be specifically mentioned. More details were requested of the types of complaints e.g. Officers, Councillors or Process
- Delivery of housing: Quarterly inspections used to take place and the view expressed that they should recommence
- Section 7 Moving up a gear. Briefing requested on the ward specific cycle project. It was recognised that CIL and S106 financial reporting would be helpful at Ward level and this would be progressed
- Roof over our heads – updated information would be included in the Members Newsletter if possible. Officers advised that the data was updated annually rather than throughout the year as it is received from Building Control and Contractors. Regarding affordable housing it is estimated that 180 houses will be delivered by Housing Associations (target 128 so the over achievement should be celebrated). Subject to the adoption of the new Local Plan, there is confidence that numbers will improve relating to affordable homes in rural areas and Adaptive homes. Regarding affordable housing officers get information direct from the Housing Associations as they are required to meet targets from Homes England
- Do we refer to the Land Registry quarterly data? Not for completions as that comes through Building Control
- 5% of self-build - do we have numbers available? Some is available online but not sure how up to date that is.
- There is evidence that collaborative work is achieving results e.g. Dartmoor National Park
- Are we confident that we can achieve the targets set by Government? 720 in the Local Plan (if approved) which is achievable
- Regarding 'affordable' are we referring to 'buy' or 'rent'? The greatest need is for one bedroom properties. Affordable rent is a legislative term and is 80% of the market rent. The new Local Plan refers to Social rent which is nearer to 50 or 60% of the market rent. Shared ownership is also an option. The Council are actively encouraging the delivery of 1 and 4 bedroom properties. One bedroom properties are being encouraged with their own front doors which has the added benefit of avoiding shared areas with the associated service charges
- There may be setbacks arising from the recent refusal of 2 significant planning applications. What action will be taken to review the reasons behind the refusals and accountability of issues that should have been resolved before they came to committee? Refer to the Interim Head of Development Management for a written response on the planning process. The impact is difficult to quantify and will be considered in the delivery action plan. The planning Task & Finish Group will consider these issues when it reconvenes

- What are we, as a Council, doing to help with housing? Everything we possibly can, including flats above shops in the Town Centre, although separate entrances are required. If any member knows of any premises that could be suitable, please let officers know so that opportunities can be investigated. The Chair explained that the informal pre-scrutiny meeting in December covered Housing in some detail
- It was noted that there had been some excellent work in bringing empty properties back into use including previously utilising various schemes to give loans/grants to businesses/owners who then leased the properties back to the Council at affordable rent levels
- The high cost and threat of eviction in private rental properties is affecting many residents. This was covered at the December meeting but it was suggested that we need to find ways of communicating to residents that Teignbridge do care about the situation

The meeting adjourned at 11:08 am

83. FINAL FINANCIAL PLAN PROPOSALS 2025/26 TO 2027/28

The meeting restarted at 11:25am

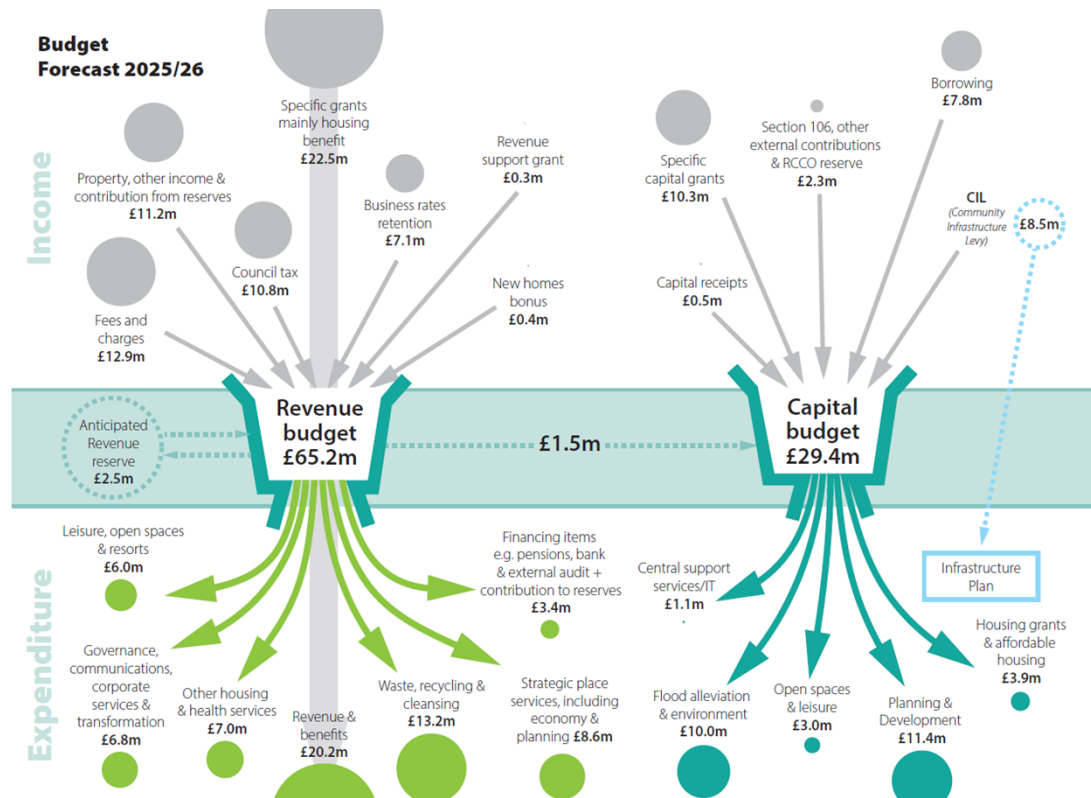
Cllr Parrott, Executive member for Finance & Corporate and Martin Flitcroft presented the final financial plan budget proposals for 2025/26 to 2027/28, noting that the closing date for consultation feedback was yesterday and these would be reported to Executive on 11 February and Full Council on 25 February

The main changes since the draft budget was considered include:

- 1) The removal of £1m contribution to the Local Government pension fund following information received from the Pension Fund manager due to the uncertainties of devolution. This will remain in the funding Reserve figure
- 2) The addition of an additional Appendix regarding departmental budgets

Martin Flitcroft explained the budget for 2025/26 in pictorial form split between Revenue and Capital and Income and expenditure.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (4.2.2025)



The floor opened up for questions/comments which included:

- Paragraph 3.9 referred to additional National Insurance costs of 2% which were only partly funded by the Government. The estimated costs are £538,000 with partial funding of £140,000 leaving a net sum of approximately £400,000 as a problem for the Council which will be funded from Reserves
- Attention was drawn to line 14 of Appendix 4 (use of Reserves) and reference made to the work of the MTFP working Group who must focus on key areas including Fees & Charges and carry out a comprehensive review of the Capital Programme and dovetail with the work of Modern 25
- There was a proposal that any spending on projects that affects post devolution spending should cease but this was not supported and the majority of views expressed felt that the Council should continue with projects to support residents of the District
- Prudential borrowing limits the amount we can borrow but we are currently only borrowing internally. Should borrowing be required Councils borrow from the PWLB (Public Works Loans Board), not at commercial rates. Prudential indicators that are currently being developed will form part of the final budget report
- Towns and Parishes Precepts will be part of the final budget papers (Appendix 15)
- Appendix 6 Increase in Fees & charges will have reflected changes recommended by the MTFP Task & Finish Group where possible and is a mixture of fee increases and increased usage

- A question was raised about the Council's position on holding vacancies and it was confirmed that the full establishment is included in the budget and a separate target for vacancy management. Service managers would review any vacancies in line with service requirements and should any slippage occur this would be reflected during budget monitoring against the credit target (time required to recruit etc)
- Any proceeds of sale arising from the Assets Review would more than likely be capital income and not revenue
- The impact of Devolution will have to be considered in due course

It was RESOLVED to approve the budget as set out in the Agenda

84. FEEDBACK ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Task & Finish Groups are on hold at the moment so the chairs of the groups for Planning, Leisure and MTFP are working on their agendas in readiness

CLLR SUZANNE SANDERS
Chair