

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1

TUESDAY, 10 JANUARY 2023

Present:

Councillors H Cox (Chair), Jenks (Vice-Chair), D Cox, Hocking, Parker, Rollason and Thorne

Members Attendance:

Councillors Clarence, Connett, Dewhirst, J Hook, Keeling, Taylor and Wrigley

Apologies:

Councillors Foden, MacGregor, Mullone, Orme and Khan

Officers in Attendance:

Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer & Head of Corporate Services
Amanda Pujol, Head of Community Services and Improvement
Trish Corns, Democratic Services Officer
Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

1. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor H Cox, seconded by Councillor Rollason and

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None.

4. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None.

5. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Executive forward plan listing items to be considered by the Executive over the ne3xt few months was noted.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee's work programme as circulated with the agenda was noted.

7. INITIAL FINANCIAL PLAN PROPOSALS 2023/24 TO 2025/26

The Chair referred to the agenda report on the initial financial plan proposals 2023/24 to 2025/26 considered by the Executive on 3 January 2023.

The Executive Member for corporate resources presented the proposals including draft revenue and capital budgets for the three years 2023/24 to 2025/26. The budget was balanced using earmarked reserves. The main issues taken into account were:

- The level of council tax and the proposal to increase it by £5.54 or 2.99%.
- Providing a one-off cost of living payment of £5.54 to households liable to pay council tax on their main home on 1 April 2023 in 2023/24
- Reducing central funding and the need to make ongoing efficiencies using invest to save where possible.
- Maintaining 100% council tax support.
- The ongoing impact of post pandemic activity and economic conditions on income streams and changing Government funding.
- Continuing to react to the climate change emergency by maintaining ongoing budgets for a climate change officer and associated spending, temporary staffing resources in revenue and provision in the capital programme, including ongoing provisions for corporate decarbonisation schemes as set out at paragraph 5.5. of the appended Executive report.
- A £2 million provision for employment sites funded by borrowing.
- Provision for an Emergency Planning officer.
- Temporary funds for a Scrutiny Officer to assist Members with the Scrutiny function and working groups; appointment of a Digital transformation manager and other temporary resources for facilitating the Modern 25 work.
- Support for housing including the Teignbridge 100 (as set out at paragraph 5.3 of the appended Executive report) whilst backing business and bringing people and organisations together for local neighbourhood planning.
- Infrastructure delivery plan investment funded by community infrastructure levy (CIL) and external sources where available; continuation of grant-funded South West Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme as per paragraph 5.6 of the appended Executive report
- Town centre investment in infrastructure and employment as per paragraph 5.7 of the appended Executive report
- Re-establishing revenue contributions to capital initially at £300,000 per annum
- Continuation of enhanced Planning funding
- Councillors community fund set at £1,000 each
- Provision of £20,000 for year 2 of the 'Tidy Teignbridge' initiatives to improve cleanliness for town and parish councils

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- Paying £500,000 off our pension deficit liability to reduce on going contributions.
- The level of reserves necessary for the council as per paragraph 4.22 of the appended Executive report.
- Estimated revenue budget gap of £3.6 million in 2025/26 and ongoing gaps (before use of remaining earmarked reserves) and action required to address this including establishing working groups to inform Overview & Scrutiny on work to reduce the gap, as per paragraph 4.26 of the appended Executive report.

In response to questions the Committee noted:

- The reserves would be increased from £2.1m to £2.3m
- Council car parks would continue to be free after 6pm and Sunday at £1 for the day
- The new post of an emergency planning officer would provide a dedicated person to deal with emergency situations such as a power outage for several days as a result of a snowstorm and would address the risk of not having a dedicated officer in place.
- Appendix 7 of the Executive report was the budget and financial plan for the next 5 years. OS 1 and 2 Committees should form task and finish groups to refer to this document and scrutinise services to suggest action to reduce the expected budget gap of £3.6m in 2025/26. This work could commence prior to the May elections and would need to feed into future budget proposals each year up to and including 2025/26.
- The one-off cost of living payment of £5.54 to households liable to pay council tax would protect the Council tax base rate for future years.
- Inflation is in double figures so an increase in Council Tax of 2.99% is well below inflation.
- Town and parish councils are approaching the council to take on services.

It was proposed by Councillor H Cox, seconded by Councillor Parker and unanimously

RECOMMENDED

That Council resolves to approve the council tax base of 50,215 for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 2 of the attached Executive 3 January 2023 report.

8. EXECUTIVE MEMBER BIENNIAL UPDATE, THE LEADER, COUNCILLOR CONNETT, STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Councillor Connett, the Leader and Executive Member for strategic direction updated the Committee on progress of services within the portfolio. The update included the following:

- The budget spent investing in the local community and economy has increased from 10% in past years to 31.3% in 2021/22.
- Inflation rates increased up to 10% and over in Oct 2021 on food and household services.
- Mortgage rates have also increased during the past year.

- The Council is working hard to approve applications for financial assistance with the cost of living crises to those most in need.
- Official census and labour market statistics, and 2019 indices of deprivation showed that the areas of highest universal claimants, and most deprived areas in Teignbridge were in areas of Newton Abbot and Teignmouth.
- 2020 Annual Fuel poverty statistics released in 2022 showed areas of Kingsteignton, Ashburton and Teignmouth as having the highest number of households fuel poor.
- Food insecurity risk indices for neighbourhoods 2021 evidenced areas in Newton Abbot, Teignmouth and Dawlish being highest.
- Devon Home Choice monthly applications for housing has increased from 1000 in June 2022 to 1200 in November 2022, with increased demand for 1 bed units which would help free up 0 family homes.
- All of the above statistics help to understand the district and should be scrutinised as to what these figures mean for the Council.
- The number of new homes being built by developers was below targets. However, 124 affordable homes were built in 2022 and 529 in total.
- Leisure centre memberships had generally increased from April 2021.
- The Council was investing in the future with £7.4m investment in cutting energy costs and carbon waste.
- Modern 2025 would continue to cut the costs of transactions with increased digital transactions and staff being upskilled.
- The council would need to focus on its business, its market, direction of services, and understanding its customers.

9. EXECUTIVE MEMBER BIENNIAL UPDATE, COUNCILLOR J HOOK, CLIMATE CHANGE, COASTAL AND FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Councillor J Hook, the Executive Member for climate change, coastal and flood risk management updated the Committee on progress of services within the portfolio. The update included the following:

- Carbon Action plan 1 was agreed by Full council in July and officers are working on a number of the projects.
- Carbon Action Plan 2 will cover the district footprint and will be ready for consultation and engagement in late January. Officers are working closely with Action Climate Teignbridge who are supporting the development of the plan.
- Decarbonisation work on the council's buildings was continuing and nearing completion. The Lido at Teignmouth was ready for operation this year. Forde House, Newton Abbot and Broadmeadow Leisure Centres were due to be complete later in 2023.
- A successful bid for funding would provide electric vehicle charging points at further council car parks around the district.
- Procurement had resulted in a good deal on energy tariffs for council buildings. Leisure centre pool temperatures have also been reduced to reduce energy bills.
- In regard to ecology and biodiversity 2100 samplings and 65 trees are to be planted during January / February 2023. The Council was continuing to work with a number of friends groups, ecology groups and nature recovery groups to enhance and improve areas for bio-diversity.

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- Flood and coastal risk management - the Environment Agency instigated the Dawlish Warren Beach Management Scheme in 2017 and is currently undertaking a post-scheme review and consultation feedback.
- The erosion at Dawlish Warren is happening faster than expected and the Environment Agency was looking at additional flood defence schemes.
- Network Rail South West rail resilience was continuing at Dawlish, and the scheme between Teignmouth and Holcombe 2020 proposals resulted in amendments following consultation.
- South West Water's Water Fit project was injecting some £1.4billion to improve water quality.

COUNCILLOR H COX
Chairman