

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2**

**TUESDAY, 9 JANUARY 2024**

Present:

Councillors Sanders (Chair), Buscombe (Vice-Chair), Bullivant, Hall, Hayes, C Parker, P Parker, Purser and Rollason

Members Attendance:

Councillors Keeling, Nutley, Steemson and Thorne

Apologies:

Councillors Henderson, Parrott, Peart and Swain

Officers in Attendance:

Trish Corns, Democratic Services Officer

Kay Fice, Scrutiny Officer

Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer & Head of Corporate Services

Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

### **1. MINUTES**

It was proposed by Councillor Buscombe, seconded by Councillor C Parker and

RESOLVED The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Bullivant declared an interest in regard to Minute 5 and 6 below relating to the budget by virtue of being the vice chair of Devon Pensions.

### **3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None

### **4. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS**

None.

### **5. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN**

The Executive Forward Plan listing items to be considered over the next few months was noted, and consideration was given to whether any items were to be requested to come forward to the Committee prior to being considered by the Executive. There were no requests for items to come forward to the Committee.

## **6. WORK PROGRAMME**

The committee's work programme as circulated with the agenda showing issues to be considered by the Committee over the next few months was noted.

## **7. EXECUTIVE MEMBER BIENNIAL UPDATES**

Councillor Keeling provided the biennial update on his portfolio of corporate service. The review of the Council's strategic plan setting out the priorities and objectives which had recently commenced, and the ongoing intensive training programme for Councillors since the elections in May 2023 were highlighted.

Scrutiny of performance was currently achieved by the Committee monitoring performance against the strategic plan's priorities and objectives through the quarterly reports.

Cllr Keeling advised that responses to questions relating to how much had been spent since 2020 creating jobs, and investing in town centres would be available in the Members newsletter when confirmed.

The update can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.teignbridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=393&MId=3263&Ver=4>

The biennial update from the Executive Member for Planning was deferred until the next meeting.

## **8. INITIAL FINANCIAL PLAN PROPOSALS 2024/25 TO 2026/27**

The Chair referred to the agenda report on the initial financial plan proposals 2024/25 to 2026/27 considered by the Executive on 4 January 2024.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for corporate resources presented the proposals including draft revenue and capital budgets for the three years 2024/25 to 2026/27. The budget was balanced using earmarked reserves. The main issues considered were:

- The level of council tax and the proposal to increase it by £5.70 (2.99%).
- 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 per report paragraph 5.5.

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- A £2 million provision for employment sites funded by borrowing.
- Continuing funding for a Scrutiny Officer to assist Members with the Scrutiny function and working groups and other temporary resources for facilitating the Modern 25 work.
- Authority for Executive to exceed the approved overall revenue budget by up to £200,000 per report paragraph 4.25.
- Introduction of a blue badge car parking permit at £215 per annum as detailed in 4.3 including the appointment of a Technical Support Officer to administer the scheme.
- Support for housing including the Teignbridge 100 (see 5.3) 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 (report paragraph 5.4); continuation of grant-funded South West Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme as per report paragraph 5.6.
- Town centre investment in infrastructure and employment as per report paragraph 5.7
- Revenue contributions to capital being maintained at £500,000 per annum
- Councillors community fund set at £1,000 each
- Paying £1,000,000 off our pension deficit liability to reduce on going contributions and reduce the budget gap year on year
- The level of reserves necessary for the council as per report paragraph 4.22 – recommended at £2.4 million.
- Estimated revenue budget gap of £4.5 million in 2026/27 and ongoing gaps (before use of remaining earmarked reserves) and action required to address this from established working groups informing Overview & Scrutiny on work to reduce the gap (report paragraph 4.26).

The medium-term financial plan (MTFP) task and finish group were looking at the Council's financial strategy and plan to make savings over the next few years.

It was unanimously,

**RECOMMENDED** The Committee recommends that Council resolves to approve the council tax base of 50,939 for 2024/25 as set out in appendix 2 at agenda page 51.

### **9. FEEDBACK ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS**

Councillor Thorne, the Chair of the MTFP task and finish group referred to the agenda report and sought Committee support for the recommendations of the group as detailed.

It was noted that there would be exceptions to recommendation 3 such as unexpected costs, for example emergency works to maintain services to the public and costs incurred by issues such as the national pay deal.

It was unanimously

**RECOMMENDED** The Committee supports the recommendations of the task and finish group as set out in the report below as follows, bearing in mind that there will be exceptions to recommendation 3 as above:

The Executive is recommended to:

1. In principle to support the maximum Council Tax increase.
2. Reserves:
  - I. Funding Reserves should be used to support the revenue budget only as a last resort when all other avenues have been explored.
  - II. To reduce the financial gap in future years, a proportion of funding resources should be directed to reduce the pension fund deficit.
  - III. In principle aim to increase the level of General Reserves from £2.3m to £2.4m
  - IV. In terms of the funding reserve (being used to 'balance the books') it was agreed that the absolute minimum level of this in future years should be £3m but the Council should aim for £5m which will enable the capital programme and other schemes to go ahead.
3. The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Task & Finish Group, in recognising the financial challenges the council faces, recommends that O&S Committee and Executive and Council rejects any proposal coming forward that has a net cost to the council. All proposals must be balanced or exceeded by identified savings without using those listed in the M25 programme or further use of earmarked (funding) reserves.

CLLR S SANDERS  
Chair