

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 7 JANUARY 2025

Present:

Councillors Atkins, Bullivant, Dawson, Hall, James, Nuttall, Parker, Radford (Vice-Chair), Rogers, Rollason, Ryan, Sanders (Chair) and Thorne

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Nutley, Parrott and G Taylor

Apologies:

Councillors Foden and Hayes

Officers in Attendance:

Kay Fice, Scrutiny Officer

Martin Flitcroft, Director of Corporate Services

Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

64. APOLOGIES

65. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor C. Parker, seconded by Councillor James and

RESOLVED The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

66. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

67. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None

68. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None

69. 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

70. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN

The Overview & Scrutiny Forward Plan (Work Programme) was attached and the meeting asked to note that it was in the process of being updated.

In response to a question about what we were doing about the Housing Crisis in Teignbridge, the Chair referred to a presentation given at the previous days Executive meeting where a representative from Exeter University gave an informative presentation on the housing data for Teignbridge and the whole of Devon which members may find helpful and assurances were given that this would be pursued in future.

Members were reminded that if they had any items they would like to be considered in future they could complete a Proposal form or email the Democratic Services Team

71. EXECUTIVE MEMBER BIENNIAL UPDATE

As Cllr Keeling had given his apologies for this meeting, it had been agreed to defer the update on Corporate & Strategic Areas until he was available.

Cllr Parrott was present at the meeting to present the Budget report and would report on Corporate Resources at a future meeting

72. INITIAL FINANCIAL PLAN PROPOSALS 2025/26

The Committee considered the draft revenue and capital budget proposals for the three years 2025/26 to 2027/28 presented by Cllr Parrott. He thanked officers for their hard work recognising that there were a number of difficulties, challenges and uncertainties – not least the recent announcement about Devolution but stressed that we must act in the best interest of residents. To address the uncertainties in many areas, it would be necessary to identify further efficiencies.

The main issues taken into account in the Budget are:

- The level of council tax and the proposal to increase it by £5.87 (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 in revenue and provision in the capital programme, including ongoing provisions for corporate decarbonisation schemes as per 5.5.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (7.1.2025)

- 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 4.25.
- 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 (see 5.4); continuation of grant-funded South West Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme as per 5.6.
- Town centre investment in infrastructure and employment as per 5.7
- Revenue contributions to capital being increased from £500,000 to £1,500,000 per annum
- Increasing the 'invest to save' reserve to £500,000
- Councillors community fund set at £1,000 each *with a £150 minimum award*
- *Paying a further £1,000,000 off our pension deficit liability in 2024/25 to reduce on going contributions and reduce the budget gap year on year from the 'in year' surplus reported to Executive in November 2024 – in the light of the uncertainties, this proposal will be withdrawn in the final budget proposals*
- Providing additional 5% funding to voluntary group grants
- The level of general reserves necessary for the council as per 4.22 – recommended at £2.5 million for 2025/26.
- Estimated revenue budget gap of £3.6 million in 2026/27 and £3.5 million in 2027/28 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 (see 4.26).

It was noted that the council tax base 2025/26 approved by Audit Scrutiny Committee on 18 December 2024 (as shown at appendix 2) is £51,562

A number of questions and comments were raised:

- Concern raised that the budget was profligate but that was rebuffed, mentioning the work of Modern 25 and the MTFP Task & Finish Group that was underway and assurances given that the budget was sound given the uncertainties and unknowns
- The MTFP Group had recommended that Fees & Charges would be increased by 10% but it appeared that they were nearer to 5% due to service specific reasons. Members were invited to look at the Fees & Charges list on the website and feed back any specific queries to managers
- Helping residents with housing issues was a shared concern and the Council is doing all it can to help
- Risk & Contingency Planning was raised and assurances received that the final budget proposal will include a S25 Risk Assessment but that some hard decisions will need to be made. A view was expressed that it would be helpful to see this in place throughout the whole process.
- Budget forecasting was in place with profiled budgets for monthly and Quarterly monitoring utilising features in the IT system.

- The unexpected pressure of National Insurance would be included in the response from the Chief Financial Officer on the settlement, particularly as it is unclear how the Government will allocate it
- It was noted that Car parking charges - where Sunday charges apply - will increase by 66% from £1.20 to £2 (all day) and that it was designed to help close the budget gap but it was recognised that there was a capital budget to help with maintenance costs.
- Although the details of devolution were unknown it could present a risk to the Council of losing staff
- It had been noted that resourcing Task & Finish Groups had been a challenge

It was agreed that Overview and Scrutiny members would provide comments on the budget proposals to Executive Committee

73. SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

A question was raised regarding a 'Judicial Review' relating to Bradley Lane. This wording was not correct as the Council had actually received a pre-action protocol letter and there is no Judicial Review in progress. The Monitoring Officer has responded to the letter and has received no further response.

74. OUTSIDE ORGANISATION UPDATES FROM THE COUNCIL'S APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES

As Cllr Clarence was unable to be present, these items would be deferred to a future meeting

75. FEEDBACK ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The recently formed Task & Finish Groups (Leisure, Housing and Planning) and the ongoing MTFP group will be scheduling meetings to progress these areas.

The NOM referred by Full Council will be considered when dates of Counsel are available as his advice will be necessary to move it forward.

Chair