

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Scrutiny Committee



Listening Learning Leading

HELD ON TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 6.30 PM

MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON, OX14 4SB

Present:

Richard Pullen (Chairman)

John Walsh, Steve Connel, Anthony Dearlove, Ian Snowdon, David Turner and Ian White

Apologies:

Elaine Hornsby and Caroline Newton tendered apologies.

Officers:

Susan Harbour, Simon Hewings, William Jacobs and Mark Stone.

Also Present

Richard Spragett, Capita

35 Declarations of interest

None.

36 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The chairman reminded the committee to retain the budget papers for full council, but to ensure that they were stored confidentially.

37 Public participation

None.

38 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The committee considered the work schedule. It was agreed to delay the meeting on 8 March to the 27 March in order to consider the paper on the Berinsfield redevelopment.

39 Revenue Budget 2018-19 and Capital Programme report 15 Feb 2018

Jane Murphy, the Cabinet member for finance; William Jacobs, Section 151 Officer and head of finance; Simon Hewings, strategic finance manager and Richard Spraggett, chief accountant (Capita) were in attendance at the meeting to present the paper to the committee and to respond to questions.

The budget would be going to Cabinet for consideration on Monday 12 February, and on to Full Council for approval on Thursday 15 February. Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the paper and the recommendations before them.

The Cabinet member for finance gave her thanks to the budget working group for their hard work and input, including the constructive input from the opposition. The leader of the opposition also gave positive feedback from the working group and his thanks for the opportunity for involvement at the development stage of the budget.

The medium term financial plan shows the council continuing to use money from reserves in order to balance the budget over this period and this was a cause of concern to some members of the committee. The head of finance explained that the council was required to produce a balanced budget for the next year, which it had done, and the purpose of the medium term financial plan was to offer a projection of what would happen over the period of the plan if the council did not take steps to address the current issues.

In the last few years, government changes to council funding streams, such as the abolition of the revenue support grant and the introduction of the New Homes Bonus and business rates retention scheme, had made local authority funding more difficult to predict as rates of house building and business rate growth were not on a steady trajectory. In addition, the government is able to change the schemes and therefore the amount of local authority funding.

The budget working group would be looking at an action plan to address the projected shortfalls in funding, but the committee were reminded that the government had previously encouraged councils to use reserves rather than increase council tax. Now that the cap on council tax increases had been raised to allow councils to raise additional funds through this route.

Members of the committee expressed enthusiasm that the council could be creative and entrepreneurial with its reserves in order to generate additional funding streams.

The committee asked a number of questions of clarification of the officers which were responded to.

The Cabinet member agreed to circulate copies of correspondence with Cabinet members about the Foxhall Manor Park pumping station.

The committee went into confidential session and excluded members of the public and partner organisations.

The Scrutiny Committee fully supported the following recommendations and did not add further to them:

1. That cabinet agrees to maintain car park fees and charges at current levels.
2. That cabinet recommends to council that it:
 - a. sets the revenue budget for 2018/19 as set out in appendix A.1 to this report;
 - b. approves the capital programme for 2018/19 to 2022/23 as set out in appendix D.1 to this report, together with the capital growth bids set out in appendix D.2 of this report;
 - c. sets the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix E to this report;
 - d. approves the medium term financial plan to 2022/23 as set out in appendix F.1 to this report;
 - e. allocates £1,000,000 to fund the Communities Capital and Revenue Grant Scheme.
3. That cabinet agrees that the cabinet member for finance, in conjunction with the head of finance, may make minor adjustments to this report and the prudential indicators should they prove necessary prior to its submission to council on 15 February 2018.

40 Exclusion of the public

The public were excluded by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, Paragraph 3

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

41 Revenue Budget 2018-19 and Capital Programme report 15 Feb 2018

The committee discussed the confidential aspects of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme.

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm

Chairman

Date