
Cabinet

Report of the meeting held on 14th February 2013

Matters for Decision

58. BUDGET 2013/14 AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2014/18

The Cabinet has considered the content of the 2013/14 draft budget, the Medium Term Plan for the period 2014/18 and the level of Council Tax for 2013/14. **The details are contained in Appendix A to the report by the Head of Financial Services included as Agenda Item No. 3 on the Council agenda.**

Subsequently, the final government grant figures have been published and Members have noted that the level of Revenue Support Grant and retained Business Rates has not changed but that two new specific grants had been awarded which will marginally increase the revenue reserves by £226k. The impact is shown in Appendix C to the report by the Head of Financial Services included as Agenda Item No. 3 on the Council Agenda.

In considering the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), Members concurred with the Panel that Council Tax levels should be increased by £4.67 in order to meet unavoidable inflation and to preserve the Council's reserves and valued services as far as possible both this year and in the future.

With regard to the budget, the Cabinet noted that the overall budget was 4.8% higher than the original budget for 2012/13. Members have been advised that the increase was as a result of multiple factors with inflation being a major contributor. Reference also was made to the introduction of more efficient working practices and the need to constantly strive to find efficiencies. In that respect, Executive Councillors noted that the Panel will be examining, in detail, the future budget once the current budget process has been completed.

The Cabinet noted the Panel's views regarding the grant allocation to Town and Parish Councils towards their loss in income following the introduction of the Government's Local Council Tax Support Scheme. In noting the Panel's concerns over the abuse of the grant by some Councils, the Cabinet has reiterated that similar grants in future years could not be guaranteed.

Having noted that the business community supported the proposed Council Tax increase at the recent consultation meeting and in thanking the Panel for their input, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

- (a) that, subject to appropriate adjustments to Annex D to reflect the final settlements in relation to special and specific grants, the proposed budget, Medium Term Plan and Financial Plan appended to the report of the Head of Financial Services be approved; and**
- (b) that a Council Tax increase of £4.67 representing a level of £133.18 for a Band D property be approved for 2013/14.**

59. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2013/14

Reproduced at Appendix B of the Head of Financial Services report at Agenda Item No. 3 on the Council's agenda is the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14. The Strategy, which complies with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice, has clear objectives for the management of the Council's borrowing and investments. Executive Councillors' attention was drawn to a new element of this year's Strategy which allows the Council to provide loan finance to local organisations that can support Council services or to organisations where the Council may make a margin on the loan subject to adequate safeguards. It was stressed that discussion on the criteria for such loans would be considered at the Treasury Management Group and that each loan would require Cabinet approval.

RECOMMEND

- (a) that, subject to appropriate adjustments to the Planned Borrowing Table as a consequence of the final settlement in relation to special and specific grants, the 2013/14 Treasury Management Strategy appended at Appendix B to the report of the Head of Financial Services be approved; and**
- (b) that the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for 2013/14 as set out in Appendix B of the report of the Head of Financial Services be approved;**

60. ST NEOTS RAILWAY STATION FOOTBRIDGE

By way of a report by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy (reproduced as an Appendix to this report) the Cabinet has considered the background to a request for a capital contribution towards the costs of a new footbridge at St Neots Railway Station. The proposed footbridge is a critical element of the new infrastructure for St Neots, providing an important link for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between the St Neots Expansion area, the railway station

and the rest of the town. Members have been advised that a renegotiation of the BCIS index has resulted in a reduction in the project's S106 funding and the cost of the original project, initiated in 2005/06, has increased. In order for the project to proceed any additional funding will need to be financed by the District Council as the contributions from Network Rail and the County Council are fixed. Given that no specific schemes have been identified to proceed from the Town Centre Developments capital provision of £290,000 and as a number of efficiencies have been identified in the 2013/14 revenue budget for Planning Services, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

that the Council approves a capital contribution of £316,069 towards the St Neots Rail Footbridge project to be funded by way of a transfer of £290,000 from the capital provision for Town Centre Developments and £26,000 from the Planning Services revenue budget.

Matters for Information

61. PROCURING A GREEN DEAL PARTNER RELATIONSHIP FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No. 47 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has endorsed the establishment of a Green Deal Partnership Scheme for Cambridgeshire. In so doing, the Cabinet has considered a supporting business case aimed at improving the energy efficiency of homes and commercial buildings across the County.

It is intended that the Partnership will conduct a joint competitive procurement exercise to select one or more Green Deal Provider. The Cabinet has supported such a move and has authorised the Head of Paid Service and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Environment, to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding governing joint working and to enter into a contract with the chosen provider.

Executive Councillors have concurred with the Panel that the Provider should be selected on the basis of their ability to deliver high quality energy serving measures in a responsible way that meets the needs of customers. The Panel were of the view that safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that the scheme does not operate in a way that might damage the Council's reputation. In supporting this view, the Cabinet has requested the Head of Paid Service to clarify the terms under which the Council could withdraw from the Partnership should the implemented scheme not be meeting its objectives.

62. DELEGATED POWERS – ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

Approval has been given to a series of amendments to the powers delegated to Officers in respect of the enforcement of environmental crime such as littering, fly tipping, nuisance cars for sale and abandoned vehicles. The Council's Scheme of Delegation will be amended accordingly.

J D Ablewhite
Chairman