
Cabinet

Report of the meeting held on 18th April 2013

Matters for Information

68. MONITORING OF THE REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Cabinet's attention has been drawn to variations to the approved Capital Programme and spending variations in the Revenue Budget for the current year. Members have noted that savings in the current year will be transferred to the Special Reserve to fund one-off costs necessary to achieve the Medium Term Plan savings target.

69. BUDGET

The Cabinet has been acquainted with several suggestions made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) as possible budgetary savings (Item No. 56 of their Report refers).

As part of their deliberations, the Cabinet had regard to representations made at the meeting by Councillor T V Rogers, Chairman of the Economic Well-Being Panel. Councillor Rogers explained that as a result of informal discussions with Panel members and representatives from the Liberal Democrat Group and the UK Independence Party on the Council's Budget and Medium Term Plan, nine priority areas have been identified. In discussing the areas before them, Executive Councillors have thanked Members for their input and reiterated that the Council constantly reviewed all services to identify savings.

With regard to a suggestion that advertising space be sold on the Council's car parks, vehicles and website, Executive Councillors felt that this, greater enforcement of Council's car parks and alternative funding of the shopmobility portakabin were managerial issues and should be dealt with as such.

Reference was made to the options open to the Council for pursuing Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE). Whilst recognising that better enforcement, particularly with respect to on street parking would be beneficial, Executive Councillors were mindful that further work is required regarding the financial impact on the authority before any formal discussions can be undertaken.

In considering the use of consultants the Cabinet felt that there were occasions when this was necessary, primarily to provide expertise not

available “in-house” such as undertaking supporting research for local plan purposes and upholding the Council’s position in respect of planning and other appeals. Having referred also to the use of agency staff by the Operations team, the Cabinet has requested the Employment Panel to give further consideration to both these issues.

With regard to prioritising training, Executive Councillors discussed the cost and attendance at member training. Members were reminded that training was mandatory for Members who sit on regulatory and other Committees and Panels of a quasi-judicial nature. Having mentioned the timing of training sessions and perceived difficulty in encouraging all Members to attend, the Cabinet has referred this matter to the Member Development Working Group for further discussion.

Other areas that the Cabinet has discussed included shared services, the Council’s electoral arrangements and improved procurement. At the Cabinet’s request, these issues will be considered further at an informal meeting of Executive Councillors, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being) and the Managing Director.

70. BORROWING

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of a study by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No 55 of their Report refers) into the Councils approach to borrowing.

In discussing the Panel’s suggestion that a ceiling be placed on the Council’s cost of borrowing, the Cabinet has supported a limit for borrowing costs of 15% of net revenue spending. If this level is to be exceeded this would need to be endorsed by the Council.

With regard to the Panel’s recommendation that a narrower definition of capital expenditure should be used for funding from borrowing and the remainder should be funded from revenue, Executive Councillors agreed with the Panel that in the current financial situation this cannot realistically be achieved at this time. However, they have agreed to reconsider this issue when a balanced budget has been achieved.

J D Ablewhite
Chairman