

SCRUTINY OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S BUDGET PROPOSALS

Minutes of a meeting held at the Council Offices, Narborough

WEDNESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2019

Present:-

Cllr. Geoff Welsh (Chairman)
Cllr. Bill Wright (Vice-Chairman) and Cllr. Mark Jackson (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr. Shabbir Aslam	Cllr. Antony Moseley	Cllr. Christine Merrill
Cllr. Marian Broomhead	Cllr. Les Phillimore	Cllr. Phil Moitt
Cllr. Cheryl Cashmore	Cllr. Deanne Woods	Cllr. Alan Tanner
Cllr. Sharon Coe	Cllr. Adrian Clifford	Cllr. Bev Welsh
Cllr. Sam Maxwell	Cllr. Alex DeWinter	

Officers present:-

Jane Toman	- Chief Executive
John Richardson	- Strategic Director
Sarah Pennelli	- Strategic Director - Section 151 Officer
Paul Coates	- Neighbourhood Services & Assets Group Manager
Teresa Neal	- Leisure & Regulatory Services Group Manager
Quin Quinney	- Housing & Community Services Group Manager
Nick Brown	- Strategic Finance Manager
Linda McBean	- Senior Scrutiny Officer
Suraj Samant	- Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer

Apologies:-

Cllr. Stuart Coar, Cllr. Lindsey Dracup, Cllr. Graham Huss, Cllr. Guy Jackson,
Cllr. David Jennings, Cllr. Louise Richardson, Cllr. David Clements, Cllr. Roy Denney,
Cllr. David Findlay and Cllr. Barry Garner

1. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019, as circulated, were approved and signed as a correct record.

2. 2019/20 DRAFT PORTFOLIO BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Chairman welcomed members and officers to the meeting and invited Portfolio Holders to present their reports.

- Establishment
 - A pay rise for staff of 2% and spinal point changes have contributed to a 3% rise in establishment costs
 - A better measure of our performance is not cost-based but against the Blaby Plan priorities, per capita cost does not provide a true comparison
- Is everything possible being done to maximise income opportunities?
 - As part of the Commercial Strategy, we are looking to increase and maximise opportunities for income – the Depot Site being one example
 - There is no aim to reduce services, where we can increase income to underpin what we do
- What are the Portfolio Holders thoughts about how the additional monies from the 75% Business Rate Retention Pilot are to be spent?
 - 75% Business Rate Retention Pilot brings £400,000 into the Council to be used, as a one off, on Blaby Plan identified priorities e.g. infrastructure, cycle paths, heritage, homelessness etc.
- Is infrastructure money focused at where growth has been greatest?
 - £400,000 is available for one year only and will not go a long way to resolve the infrastructure challenges that there are in the District
- Transfer and disposal to Parishes – the hand over is very slow, what is the reason for this? How will development of a strategy in 2019/20 for managing acquisitions and disposal of Council assets assist?
 - Legal issues regarding the covenants, which is very difficult and time consuming process
 - Large number of assets to dispose of and not a small task
 - There is reduced capacity in the Assets Team given recent projects – Office Refurbishment, Memorial Garden, Relocation of the Pavilion team
- Why has there been an increased cost for the cleaning contract?
 - A lot of work taking place to procure a cleaning contract which should be by Quarter 2
 - The cleaning contract covers many different sites including the Council Offices, the Depot and the Leisure Centres
- The lease occupancy of the Council building – what income does this raise?
 - £428,500 is raised from lease contracts - £376,000 from units in Enderby, £125,000 raised from NHS, £9,000 from the Citizens

Advice Bureau

- Provide more detail on the integration and efficiencies gained? The Pilot was started in 2015 with £135,000 invested from the General Reserve Fund (Spend to Save).
 - £18,000 of savings have been made to date this financial year
 - Approximately £2,000 of savings have been made by reducing back office calls and providing more training to the Customer Services Team is planned
 - Day to day workload reduced for the Revenues and Benefits Team
 - Will continue to work to integrate the roles and continue with reviews and finish what is being done

- What is the delay in delivery and benefits of bringing together the Revenues and Benefits department?
 - A business case has been proposed with suggested service improvements which will include changes to headcount in the next budget is due to be considered in February 2019

- What is the position on the Lightbulb funding sustainability? It was suggested that a presentation to Members on Lightbulb would be beneficial – at a later stage and outside the budget process.
 - A report will go to Council in February 2019 on Lightbulb funding and sustainability proposals
 - A presentation will be given to Members which will give a comparison between the old system and the new system under Lightbulb

- Weekly food collections and not charging for garden waste – what would be the impact on the Council budget if this is progressed by Government?
 - Consultation in 2019 - A worst case scenario would mean poor financial and operational outcomes
 - The cost of collecting food waste would be in excess of £1 million a year
 - Garden Waste Service generates approximately £700k in annual income

- Are we sure we are maximising S106 monies to spend on parks and open spaces?
 - Where schemes to Parks and Open Spaces are eligible for S106 funding the Council's Countryside Officer submits bids to the Planning Obligations Monitoring Group responsible for tracking the contribution from each developer to ensure funds are spent before any clawback date
 - S106 monies maximisation to spend on parks and open spaces across the District; for instance bins and benches in Countesthorpe
 - Formal consultation and joint conversations to ensure best use of S106 contributions

- Is everything possible being done to maximise income from amenity mowing and horticultural services?
 - We are maximising income from horticultural services such as in the work for Parishes
- Why has the establishment increased by 3 additional staff? What work will 3 additional staff do?
 - To achieve and maintain a high standard of service we need 6 operatives
- MOT testing – have we expanded this opportunity as far as we could?
 - The background work for the provision of MOT testing has taken place, there has been a delay as it was difficult to fill some of the vacant posts – expected this to be in place by Autumn 2019
- What about testing people’s cars not just taxi testing?
 - We do not expect to carry out MOT testing for public vehicles at this time
- What actions are we taking to utilise the extra funding from DEFRA? What impact can the Council really make?
 - From the Grant Funding received, we have employed two posts - a Physical Activity Development Officer and a part-time Air Quality Officer
 - These additional posts will help to support the Air Quality Strategy and try to change attitudes to air quality
 - The Health & Leisure Team have additional funding from DEFRA to support Active Travel work with schools and businesses
- Car Parks – what is the cost against expenditure, for maintenance, delivery of and running the car parks?
 - The annual cost of car park provision in 2005/06 was in excess of £350,000. Since that time there has been changes in the way car parks are maintained, managed and regulated.
 - Car parking charges have reduced the cost to approximately £8,000 per year.
- When will the service be cost neutral? Will any future plans for car park improvement risk the delivery of a cost neutral service?
 - We can plan for known maintenance work – e.g. resurfacing work, CCTV cameras however unplanned maintenance will affect the budget position with the delay in the transfer of the gifted car parks to Parishes.
- Building Control - how are the contracts monitored with other local authorities? More information is sought on maintaining income levels.
 - Contracts are monitored through monthly meetings; quarterly performance reports are discussed for each locality
 - The Building Control Partnership is fully staffed with a new

- manager to focus on income generation
 - The Group Manager has monthly meetings with the lead officer for Harborough and Oadby & Wigston
 - A monthly 'dashboard' report has been developed for each area to compare the cost of running the service and the income generated
- 'Beat the Streets' project – what is this?
 - The 'Beat the Streets' project focuses on supporting communities in becoming more active
 - The programme is part funded through Sport England contributing £75,685, DEFRA contributing £42,952 and Blaby District Council contributing £7,504
 - The primary aim is to work with primary schools, parents and businesses to get people walking or cycling rather than driving
- Tourism – insufficient information provided, what's happening, how is this progressing?
 - A budget of £10,000 has been established to support Tourism for the financial year 2019/20. The main use of this will be the delivery of a strong marketing brand which the District Council and our partners will utilise.
 - An update on Tourism progress will be brought back to Scrutiny and an update will be provided to Full Council in July.
- Large Scale Strategic Projects – What is the timescales and is there sufficient capacity to deliver?
 - Timescales for large scale projects differ. Some projects are currently underway - e.g. Everards Meadows whereas others will be allocated through the new Local Plan.
 - Large Scale Strategic projects are managed by the Strategic Growth Team which has been in place for approximately eighteen months. The team comprises of a Strategic Growth Manager and three Major Schemes Officers. The team currently has sufficient capacity and is continually reviewed.
- Garden Village - Design Day 17 January – what is the purpose of Design Day?
 - The Design Day brings together multiple stakeholders and is designed to be collaborative and understand each others aspirations
- S.106 – How proactive is the S.106 Officer in working with Parishes?
 - The S.106 Officer has a very good relationship with Parishes and is available and happy to provide support in accessing and spending funds.
- Are Parishes involved early enough in the process e.g. at the developer stage?
 - Parish Councils are formally consulted on new planning

applications during determination stage and the question is directly asked by the Case Officer in relation to what S.106 requests there are.

- A further discussion is held as to whether the requests meet the tests of compliance set out in the legislation. The Council has a duty to formally ensure that all S.106 funds are allocated in conjunction with S.106 agreements.
- Blaby Lottery – what percentage/amount of lottery funding contributes towards Grant Funding?
 - The Blaby Lottery has raised approximately £30,000 for causes across the District - a proportion of which has gone into the Blaby Community Grant Fund (10p from each ticket)
 - If people opt for the Community Grant pot as their chosen good cause then 60p from each ticket is awarded.
- Since setting up the lottery, does the Council still contribute towards Grant Funding?
 - Yes, the Authority contributes £54,500 capital and £10,000 revenue.
- Residents' understanding of what the Blaby Lottery is, was questioned with a view that more clarity is needed, could this be provided?
 - We have developed a marketing plan for the Blaby Lottery which includes taking part in events and having stands at Fosse Park to tell people about the lottery and encourage people to sign up.
 - There is a marketing plan and at the end of February, we plan to undertake marketing activities to promote a year since our first draw.
 - We are reviewing the Community Grant to make it easier and will be running a community grant roadshow.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 7.30 P.M.