

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 29th November,
2012

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Simon Chalk (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joe Baker (substituting for Councillor Witherspoon), Andrew Brazier, David Bush, John Fisher, Andrew Fry and Gay Hopkins

Also Present:

Councillors Roger Bennett, Michael Braley, Carole Gandy, Adam Griffin, Bill Hartnett, Roger Hill, Yvonne Smith, Debbie Taylor and Pat Witherspoon (arrived at the meeting late).

Officers:

J Pickering

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and M Craggs

109. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology was received on behalf of Councillor Pat Witherspoon and Councillor Joe Baker was confirmed as her substitute. Apologies were also received from Councillors Juliet Brunner and Pattie Hill.

110. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

111. OUTLINE BUDGET - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation on the Council's outline financial situation from 2013/14 to 2015/16.

Members were advised that a one per cent staff pay award from 1st April 2013 was anticipated. Furthermore, it was expected that a number of staff would receive incremental pay instalments. Alongside these payments the Council was due to accrue additional

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fuel costs whilst it was anticipated that there would be increased public demand for Council services, especially within Sport and Leisure, during the year.

The Committee received information on anticipated Council savings during the three year period, including through staff vacancy savings. However, Members were informed that these had been relatively minimal to date due to the struggling jobs market.

On the date of the meeting the government had yet to announce the final government grant figure for the local authority, however Members were advised that this could potentially involve a forty per cent cut in funding received over the next three year period. The Committee was informed that senior managers had been tasked with identifying any savings within their department in the meantime. All staff had also been asked to eliminate any waste that was not helping the customer in order to help realise new savings and efficiencies.

The Council was to receive a reduction in Council Tax benefit funding from Government. It was thought this would approximately amount to a ten per cent reduction during 2012/13. It was also anticipated that the Council Tax Freeze Grant from Government would disappear by 2015/16, leaving the Council approximately £600,000 short from Council Tax receipts from that year.

Members were referred to the anticipated costs involved through welfare reform and the move to a universal credit scheme. The Committee was also informed of the potential financial implications of the introduction of the *Community Right to Challenge* and the *Community Right to Bid* in accordance with the Localism Act.

Finally, Members were informed that no budget bids would be accepted in early 2013 without clear funding plans.

The Committee returned a few comments and questions, including on Council savings through utilities and solar panel installations. Members also asked whether they could receive training on providing debt advice to affected residents.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Committee receive a presentation on the Medium Term Financial Plan at its forthcoming meeting on 8th January 2013; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

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The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.40 pm