

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8th February,
2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors Joanne Beecham, Aled Evans, Peter Fleming, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir and Mike Rouse

Also Present:

Councillor Ann Isherwood

Officers:

Matthew Bough, Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley and James Howse

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

68. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Gemma Monaco and Craig Warhurst.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

70. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader announced that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 3rd February 2022, Members had pre-scrutinised the Sustainable Warmth Funding report at Minute Item No. 72 on the Executive Committee's agenda. At the end of the debate, the Committee endorsed the recommendations in the report. An extract from the minutes of that meeting had been published for the Executive Committee's consideration in a supplementary pack for the meeting. Members were urged to refer to the minute extract from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the debate on that item.

The Executive Committee was also informed that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had met the previous evening to pre-scrutinise the draft 2022/23 Budget and Medium Term Financial

Chair

Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25, at Minute Item No. 73 on the agenda. The group did not make any recommendations on the subject so there were no recommendations from the group for the Executive Committee's consideration at the meeting.

71. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 11th January 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

72. SUSTAINABLE WARMTH FUNDING

The Housing Development and Enabling Manager presented a report on the subject of Sustainable Warmth Funding.

In opening the presentation of the report, Officers explained that the document contained a few typographical errors. An incorrect meeting date had been recorded. The report also stated that the deadline to accept the allocation would be 28th February 2021 when in fact the deadline would be 28th February 2022. Clarification was also provided that the maximum Home Upgrade Grants (HUGs) that could be claimed varied in accordance with the level of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating, from £10,000 up to £25,000.

The Council had received a Sustainable Warmth Funding allocation of £357,500. The funding could be used to invest in homes with EPC ratings D to G, with poor energy efficiency. The funding consisted of HUGs, for properties not connected to the mains gas and Local Authority Delivery (LAD) grants, for properties that were connected to the mains gas. In order for households to be eligible to benefit from this grant funding, they needed to have a household income below £30,000 or to be social housing tenants.

The Council was aiming to recruit a new member of staff to project manage the distribution of the funding as the authority lacked capacity to do this within existing resources.

The Midlands Energy Hub was co-ordinating the Sustainable Warmth Funding scheme in the Midlands. Act On Energy had been recruited by the Hub to promote the scheme and ensure that the correct funding was provided to the most appropriate households.

Following the presentation of the report, the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change proposed the recommendations and in doing so welcomed the funding and explained that it would help to assist vulnerable households struggling with fuel poverty. Members were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-

scrutinised the report at a meeting held on Thursday 3rd February 2022 and the Committee was thanked for supporting the proposals detailed in the report.

During consideration of this item, it was noted that the wording of the second recommendation should be amended to state “following consultation” rather than “in consultation”. Officers confirmed that this amendment would be reflected in the version of the report that would be published in the agenda for the Council meeting on Monday 21st February 2022.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Capital and Revenue Budgets (Housing and General Fund) be increased to receive Redditch Borough Council’s Sustainable Warmth scheme allocation of £357,500; and**
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community and Housing Services and Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services following consultation with Portfolio Holders for Housing and Climate Change to administer the funding received in line with the grant conditions.**

73. DRAFT 2022/23 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - REPORT AND UPDATE

The Executive Director of Resources presented the draft 2022/23 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25 for Members’ consideration. The content of the report focused on many areas that had been discussed at recent meetings of the Executive Committee and had been scrutinised in detail at a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group held on Monday 7th February 2022.

The budget was being developed in a challenging financial context for the Council. This was also occurring at a time of unprecedented levels of uncertainty regarding local government finances moving forward. A new structure had been adopted for the report, designed to improve clarity and transparency, in line with the agreed Member engagement policy for the budget setting process.

The report detailed the anticipated levels of Council balances over the following three years. The anticipated level of balances in 2022/23 and 2023/24 had improved slightly, compared to forecasts made in February 2021. However, there remained a need for significant work to be undertaken as without action, balances would

fall below the minimum level of £1.5 million considered necessary for the authority to remain sustainable.

There were a number of key factors that had been taken into account when determining the draft content of the budget. Officers had considered the impact that Covid had had on income to date and had attempted to anticipate the likely impact on demand for services moving forward. In addition, there were other pressures, such as inflation, which would potentially impact on costs of service delivery as well as on staffing costs, through increases to wages. Information had also been included in the report about proposed areas of savings that could be achieved as well as the potential to increase income in certain areas.

Following the presentation of the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling welcomed the figures detailed in the report. He commended the Budget Scrutiny Working Group for their hard work in scrutinising the budget and commented that this helped to ensure that there was transparency and a detailed understanding of the budget amongst many Members. Concerns were raised that no members of the public were present to observe the Executive Committee's discussions about the budget, however, there would be further opportunities to observe when the final budget was considered later in the month.

Members were asked to note that action would need to start in respect of preparing the 2023/24 budget as soon as the 2022/23 budget had been approved by Council. Given the financial challenges for the Council, it was likely that difficult decisions would need to be made. In order to do this, Members needed to review the value added by Council expenditure in relation to both service delivery and other areas that impacted on the community, such as the implications for residents' health and wellbeing. Any ideas that either Officers or Members brought forward in respect of the budget would need to be underpinned by detailed business cases.

In concluding the debate in respect of this matter, the Leader commented that the Executive Committee was considering the content of the draft 2022/23 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25. The final report would be considered at the following meeting of the Executive Committee directly before Council, on Monday 21st February 2022. In this context, Members agreed that, subject to any amendments in the final report, they would be minded to approve the recommendations detailed in the report.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted and it be noted that, subject to any amendments detailed in the final 2022/23 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25, the proposals detailed in the report be endorsed.

74. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Leader confirmed that no recommendations had been made at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 6th January 2022.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 6th January 2022 be noted.

75. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

There were no referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Executive Advisory Panels for consideration on this occasion.

76. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The following updates were provided in respect of the work of the Executive Advisory Panels and other groups:

- a) Climate Change Cross Party Working Group – Chair, Councillor Anthony Lovell

Councillor Lovell explained that a meeting of the Climate Change Cross Party Working Group had taken place in January 2022. During the meeting, Members had discussed the new heating system at Redditch Town Hall and the potential for solar panels to be installed at the Enfield Industrial Estate. Members had also been advised that electric charging points for vehicles would be going out to tender shortly.

At the following meeting of the group, Members were due to consider the Council's vehicle fleet and the options available in terms of decarbonisation.

- b) Constitutional Review Working Party – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party was scheduled to take place on Thursday 3rd March 2022.

- c) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Nyear Nazir

Councillor Nazir confirmed that there was no update from the Corporate Parenting Board on this occasion.

- d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

The Executive Committee was advised that a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group was due to take place on Tuesday 15th February 2022.

- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer confirmed that there were no meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel due to take place.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 6.54 pm