

Executive Committee

18th February 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Rebecca Blake, Michael Braley, Carole Gandy, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer, Luke Stephens and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors Rebecca Blake, Michael Braley, Carole Gandy, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer, Luke Stephens and Debbie Taylor

Officers:

E Baker, R Bamford, A Darroch, K Dicks, C Flanagan, S Hanley, S Morgan and J Pickering

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

157. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

158. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

159. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

160. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 12th February 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

161. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013/14 - 2015/16 AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2013/14

Officers introduced a report which proposed a budget to be considered by the Council and a proposed level at which the coming year's Council Tax was to be set. The Council was once again reminded that the information in respect of formula funding from central Government had been received very late this year and adjustments had had to be made up until a short time before this meeting to take account of various factors of which the Council had been notified in recent days.

The overall level of funding from central Government was considerably lower than several years previously and the cumulative decrease in funding was expected to total 43% by 2015/16. Savings continued to be achieved through shared services and transformation and bids for revenue had been kept to a bare minimum this year; these were to be paid for from balances. In order to address the shortfall arising from the ending of Council Tax Benefit the Council had reviewed the levels of discount applied to certain prescribed levels of Council Tax Discounts and these were set out in full within amended recommendations tabled before the Committee.

The Leader thanked Finance Officers and Officers of the Council more generally for their response to the difficult circumstances in which they were working. The Committee was informed that the response to a letter of appeal to the Government over the level of formula funding had been a further small reduction in funding.

Members discussed the various means through which the Council had sought to save money in recent years, including the creation of a single management team, the closure of the REDI Centre and the passing of the Countryside Centre to outside management. It was noted that these changes had enabled the Council to retain a reasonable financial position. However, further incremental cuts were seen as inevitably leading to future threats to frontline services and staffing. The items over which there was most discussion were the provision of free swimming for under 16s and over 60s and pre-9.30am concessionary bus travel. It was suggested that it was imprudent to be pursuing such policies in times of financial hardship, however it was pointed out that these had been funded from savings to the budget agreed for the 2012/13 financial year and had placed no additional stress on the Council's finances.

RECOMMENDED that

to enable Members to approve the budget for 2013/14, 2014/15 & 2015/16:

- 1) the Council determines the level of Council Tax discount to be applied to the prescribed classes of dwellings as defined by the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) for
 - a) Class A [“second homes with planning restriction”] be set at 0% - no discount
 - b) Class B [“second homes without planning restriction”] be set at 0% - no discount
 - c) Class C [vacant dwellings] be set at:
 - a. Where the dwelling appears in the Valuation List for the first time and it has been continuously unoccupied and substantially unfurnished since the effective date of entry into the list:
 - i. for the first 3 months from the date of entry into the list 100%
 - ii. for periods of more than 3 months and for less than 6 months 50%
 - iii. for periods of 6 months or more 0% - no discount
 - b. Where the dwelling has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of less than 6 months 50%
 - c. where the dwelling has been continuously unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 6 months or more 0% - no discount
 - d) Class D [uninhabitable dwellings] be set at 100%

For the purposes of Class C when considering whether a dwelling falls within the class any period of occupation, not exceeding 6 weeks, during which it was not unoccupied and substantially unfurnished shall be disregarded.

- 2) the powers to reduce the Council Tax payable on a case by case basis , as provided by Section 13A 1(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources and the Revenue Services Manager;
- 3) authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to amend the Scheme of Delegation to Officers to implement 2) above;
- 4) the recommendations set out in Appendix 1 ‘Part C’ of the report be approved;

- 5) a bid for Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment of £14K be approved and funded from general fund balances detailed in paragraph 3.30;
- 6) a bid for Green Deal up to £10K be approved and funded from general fund balances detailed in paragraph 3.32;
- 7) the use of balances totalling £24,000 be approved; and
- 8) the Pay Policy Statement at Appendix B to the report be approved.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.40 pm

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Chair