

## **BUDGET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Committee of Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne and as a Virtual Meeting on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 10:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Jen Wilson in the Chair

Councillors Rose Bowler (Vice-Chair), Derek Adams, Allan Bailey, Jane Bryson, Dexter Bullock, Tracey Cannon, Anne Clarke, Tricia Clough, Paul Cooper, David Dixon, Maxine Dixon, Ray Heffer, Natalie Hoy, Andrew Joesbury, Chris Kane, Tom Kirkham, Tom Munro, Evonne Parkin, Graham Parkin, Dan Salt, Janet Tait and Rita Turner.

Also in attendance at the meeting was Councillor Clive Moesby (Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources).

Officers:- Theresa Fletcher (Head of Finance & Resources and Section 151 Officer), Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer), Amy Bryan (Senior Governance Officer), Tom Scott (Governance Officer) and Hannah Douthwaite (Governance Apprentice).

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources and the Head of Finance & Resources and Section 151 Officer left the meeting at the beginning of Minute No. BUD017-20/21.

### **BUD010-20/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Jim Clifton, David Downes and James Watson.

### **BUD011-20/21 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

### **BUD012-20/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **BUD013-20/21 MINUTES**

Moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer.

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of a Budget Scrutiny Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020 be approved as a correct record.

### **BUD014-20/21 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 2 (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2020)**

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The Section 151 Officer presented a report to update Budget Scrutiny Committee on the financial position of the Council following the second quarter's budget monitoring exercise for the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Capital Programme and Treasury Management activity.

The Section 151 Officer stated that many of the figures in this report had now been superseded by the Revised Budgets 2020/21 information later in the agenda, so advised Members to note this Budget Monitoring report and save their questions for the Revised Budget 2020/21 item.

It was moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Jen Wilson to postpone any questions about the Budget Monitoring report until the Revised Budget 2020/21 agenda item.

It was moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury to note the monitoring position of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Capital Programme and Treasury Management as detailed in the Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring report.

**RESOLVED** that the Budget Scrutiny Committee:

(i) Postpones any questions about the Budget Monitoring report until the Revised Budget 2020/21 agenda item.

(ii) Notes the monitoring position of the General Fund at the end of the second quarter as detailed on Appendix 1 (A net favourable variance of £0.413m against the profiled budget) and the key issues highlighted within this report.

(iii) Notes the position on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Capital Programme and Treasury Management at the end of the second quarter (Appendices 3, 4 and 5).

(Section 151 Officer)

### **BUD015-20/21 SETTING OF COUNCIL TAX 2021/22**

The Section 151 Officer delivered a presentation to Members setting out options for setting Council Tax for 2021/22. This included information on:

- 1) The Council's current financial position
- 2) Timescales
- 3) Council Tax history
- 4) Future options

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources spoke on the presentation and stated his belief that to continue with the £5 increase as chosen in recent years would allow the Council to keep providing its services.

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It was moved to note the presentation by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Tom Munro.

**RESOLVED** that the Budget Scrutiny Committee notes the Council Tax options 2021/22 presentation.

### **BUD016-20/21 REVISED BUDGETS 2020/21**

The Section 151 Officer delivered a presentation to Members with figures for Revised Budgets 2020/21. This included:

- 1) General Fund
- 2) From Original to Current – Q1 and Q2 (savings differences)
- 3) From Current to Revised Budgets
- 4) COVID-19 Financial Impact
- 5) Housing Revenue Account
- 6) Capital Programme
- 7) Reserves and Balances

The Section 151 Officer summarised the most important parts of the Revised Budgets, which was that:

- 1) The Coronavirus pandemic is having a detrimental effect on the Council's 2020/21 general fund budget.
- 2) For 2020/21 the revised budget estimate for the housing revenue account is a surplus, this will be transferred to the HRA Development Reserve.
- 3) Any underspend on general fund will be transferred to the NNDR Growth Protection Reserve.
- 4) The level of reserves is considered to be adequate to fund planned expenditure and potential issues/risks that we face.
- 5) The capital programme for 2020/21 is fully financed and does not include any borrowing where MRP is payable.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources spoke on the presentation and stated that the Council would have to be careful and prudent in the face of reduced income. He also noted that part of the Government's COVID-19 grant to the Council would go out to Parish Councils because they had been hit hard by the pandemic.

Councillor Janet Tait asked what was in place for businesses struggling because of the pandemic. The Section 151 Officer informed her that a scheme was in place called

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Local Restrictions Support Grant to help businesses, and details on how to apply were on the Council website. She added that two other discretionary schemes to support businesses would be set up soon.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources stated that in addition to these grant schemes, there was also a scheme to give COVID-19 self-isolators £500 as encouragement to not go into the workplace. Council officers had also been as supportive as possible in collecting rents from businesses with their lockdown difficulties in mind.

Councillor Tricia Clough referred to mention in the Budget Monitoring Quarter 2 report earlier in the agenda of a meeting taking place in October or November 2020 about spending of Section 106 money before the deadline to spend it, and asked if this meeting had now occurred. The Section 151 Officer assured her that this meeting had happened recently and the officers present were reminded of their individual deadlines to spend Section 106 funds.

Councillor David Dixon referred to the mention in the presentation of grants to Parish Councils and asked if any caveats would be attached to these. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources responded that the Parish Councils had been told that the funding was to keep the Parish Councils running, and they could spend it on all Parish Council duties.

Councillor Maxine Dixon referred to the mention of £500 to business workers self-isolating and asked for more detail on this. The Section 151 Officer explained that it was a scheme being run for individual people (rather than businesses) by the NHS Test and Trace system, so applications to receive the grant should be directed to the NHS.

Councillor Tom Munro referred to Councillor Tricia Clough's concern about Section 106 funds being spent before the four year deadline, and he assured her that Planning Committee received a report at its previous meeting stating that all Section 106 money would be spent before the deadline. He added that speaking as a Parish Councillor, he was pleased to see the grants to Parish Councils because Parish Council finances relied heavily on services forced to close down in the pandemic like village halls.

Councillor Tom Munro referred to the mention in the presentation of significant savings found by not filling staff vacancies, and sought assurances that this had not meant a reduction in the level of service. The Section 151 Officer assured him that the saving was made up of maternity cover and posts that were earmarked to be filled but now were not. The Portfolio Folder for Finance and Resources added that this would not mean any reduction to services, and not filling vacant posts was something often carried out to balance budgets.

Councillor Tom Munro referred to the reductions in HRA spending because of only urgent repair work being carried out in the pandemic, and asked if provisions were in place once the pandemic was over to address all of the repair work that had not been done. The Section 151 Officer explained that HRA funds not spent on repair work during the pandemic had been put into the HRA reserves, so this would be taken out of these reserves once the pandemic was over.

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It was moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Andrew Joesbury to note the presentation on Revised Budgets 2020/21.

**RESOLVED** that the Budget Scrutiny Committee notes the Revised Budgets 2020/21 presentation.

### **BUD017-20/21 BUDGET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

*N.B. At this point the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources and the Section 151 Officer left the meeting.*

Committee considered their Work Programme for 2020/21.

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer explained that the next meeting scheduled for 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 would consider revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan, the strategies for Treasury Management/Capital/Corporate Investment, and a Treasury Management briefing from Arlingclose.

Members had no questions relating to the Work Programme.

It was moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Chris Kane to note the report for the Work Programme 202/21.

**RESOLVED** that the Budget Scrutiny Committee notes the report for the Work Programme 2020/21.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

### **BUD018-20/21 UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS**

*Customer Service & Transformation Scrutiny Committee:*

The Chair of Customer Service & Transformation Scrutiny Committee reported that since the last Budget Scrutiny Committee meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the Customer Service & Transformation Scrutiny Committee had held three public meetings and three informal meetings. She added that:

1) Members had considered two separate complaints reports – the Oct 19-Mar 20 report and the Annual Complaints report, and the Ombudsman Annual Letter. The Committee received an update on the redevelopment of the Council's Website to comply with new accessibility regulations, and completed a spotlight review looking at the Impact of COVID-19 on Customer services & Contact Centres.

2) Members had just commenced a Review of IT Services & Support and intended to look at Procurement Services later in the municipal year.

3) Post-scrutiny monitoring against two past reviews was nearing completion:

a) The final report in relation to the operational Review of Standards Committee was considered by the Committee in October 2020 with all recommendations bar one complete. Once pandemic restrictions eased, it was hoped that the Parish Council Liaison meetings would recommence for the last recommendation to be completed.

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b) The final report in relation to the Review of Delivery of Environmental Health & Licensing had two recommendations outstanding and would be considered at the December 2020 meeting.

3) Further work was taking place in relation to both of the reviews of the Committee from 2019/20 on Review of Re-letting of Council Properties and the Review of New Bolsover, due to the impact of COVID-19 on completion of works on site.

### *Healthy, Safe, Clean & Green Communities Scrutiny Committee:*

The Chair of Customer Service & Transformation Scrutiny Committee reported on this Committee on behalf the Chair of Healthy, Safe, Clean & Green Communities Scrutiny Committee. She reported that since the lockdown began, the Committee had held two public virtual meetings and two informal virtual meetings. She added that:

1) Members had considered the Q1 Ambitions Performance Report, received a report in relation to the spotlight review looking on the Impact of COVID-19 on Waste Collection Services, and completed a spotlight review looking at the Impact of COVID-19 on Leisure Services. This involved a presentation from the Leisure Operations Manager based on an initial brief from Members and a Q&A. Members had also reviewed the proposed consultation draft of the BDC Sex Establishment Policy and Procedure prior to submission to Licensing Committee.

2) Members had expanded the usual annual review of Health & Wellbeing to consider the impact of COVID-19, and will be questioning officers from HR and Health & Safety.

3) The review from 2019/20 in relation to Children in Care and Care Leavers was still progressing but had been altered by the pandemic and the need to focus on the more immediate impact of COVID-19.

### *Growth Scrutiny Committee:*

The Chair of Growth Scrutiny Committee reported that the Growth Scrutiny Committee had met four times formally and three times informally under the new arrangements of the Coronavirus Regulations. She added that:

1) Members had considered the Q1 Ambitions Performance Report, the Growth Strategy Update for Q3 and Q4 2019/20 and the Growth PIs for the same period.

2) Members had now considered the consultation draft of the Empty Property Strategy and at the next meeting in December 2020 would be looking at the consultation draft of the Housing Strategy.

3) Members had also had further discussion of the Director's response to the Reconsideration of the Decision – Sale of Land at Glapwell, and had now drawn work in relation to the call-in to a close.

4) At the last meeting of the Committee, Members considered a report from the Partnership team on the refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy and also

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assessed the achievements of the partnership to date and the work of the partnership in response to COVID-19.

5) The Committee had recently agreed a new review scope to look at the Council's relationship with Robert Woodhead Limited. The first evidence gathering session had taken place examining the Bolsover Homes contract.

6) The Committee's mini-review looking at the private rented sector and selective licensing was now not moving ahead, due to recent information gathered as part of the development of the Empty Property Strategy. There was no further impact scrutiny could have had at this time.

**RESOLVED** that the updates be noted.

The meeting concluded at 1105 hours.