

POLICY COMMITTEE

19th July 2016

Present – The Chairman (Foster) and Councillors Barratt, Dawson, Heseltine, Ireton, Jaquin, Lis, Madeley, Morrell, Mulligan, Myers, Place, Welch and Whitaker (substitute for Brockbank).

Officers – Chief Executive, Director of Services, Corporate Head of Business Support, Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer), Strategic Manager – Financial Services (S.151 Officer), Strategic Manager – Planning and Regeneration, Revenues and Benefits Manager, Housing and Environmental Health Manager and Committee Administrator.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brockbank and Myers.

Start: 6:32pm

Finish: 7.25pm

The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 7th June 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Minutes for Report

POL.766

OUTTURN REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2015/16

The Strategic Manager – Financial Services submitted a report advising Members of the final revenue budget position of the Council, subject to audit, of income and expenditure to the end of March 2016.

It was reported that the impact of the economy on the Council's income streams and their volatility was a risk to the Council and would need to be managed closely going forward. The General Fund Revenue Balance stood at £995k at 31 March 2016. This would assist in mitigating against the risk of unplanned movements from budgeted net expenditure levels, as well as the impact of changes in local government funding. The Council had managed its budget within 2015/16 with an underspend of £649k and generated savings for its budget targets in 2016/17 and beyond.

Resolved – (1) That, the outturn revenue budget monitoring position as at 31 March 2016 is noted.

(2) That, the additional slippage of £20,370 is noted.

(3) That, the transfers to earmarked reserves are noted.

POL.767

TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN – 2015/16

The Strategic Manager – Financial Services submitted a report informing Members of the treasury activity undertaken during 2015/16 in the context of current and forecast economic climates.

The Council's debt and investment position was organised to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to control risk within all treasury management activities. The Council's investments had been managed in accordance with the Council's Investment Policy. As at 31st March 2016 the Council had a total debt of £5,988m with investments of £11,707m. The Council's investments had also been boosted by a discount of £14,000 on the annual pension fund contribution as a result of making payments in advance. The total investment income received from all sources was £105,050.

Resolved – (1) That, the actual treasury management indicators for 2015/16 are noted.

(2) That, the treasury management annual report for 2015/16 is noted.

POL.768

COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION FOR EMPTY AND UNOCCUPIED PROPERTIES 2017/18 AND BEYOND

The Corporate Head – Business Support submitted a report concerning a review of options on the current council tax exemption for empty and unfurnished properties. The current scheme had been in place for four years and it was prudent to undertake a review.

The review recommended three options:

- continue with the current policy of a maximum of 3 months;
- reduce the maximum 3 months to a maximum of 1 month which could be applied to one liable party; or
- reduce the 3 months to a maximum of 1 month in total but to a maximum of 14 days for a liable party. Consecutive exemptions for different liable parties are permitted but limited to a maximum of 14 days each.

However, Members felt that they did not have enough information to make a decision and, it was

Resolved – That, the matter is deferred to a future meeting.

(Councillor Whitaker declared a pecuniary interest in the above item.)

POL.769

GRASSINGTON BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

The Chairman informed Members that the Grassington Business Improvement District (BID) required a complete financial breakdown and suggested that a further report containing the required information was brought to the next meeting of this Committee.

Resolved – That, the deferral is noted.

POL.770

ACQUISITION

The Director of Services gave a verbal update on a potential acquisition where an initial expression of interest had been submitted but unfortunately was not successful.

During the discussion, Members stated they would wish to see all future potential acquisitions brought before the Policy Committee for decision.

Resolved – That, the update is noted.

Minutes for Decision

POL.771

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2017/18

The Corporate Head - Business Support submitted a report reviewing the options regarding the current council tax reduction scheme which had been introduced on the condition that it cost at least 10% less than council tax benefit expenditure. Whilst the scheme was well within the 10% it was proposed to make certain changes which would only impact on working age families who made a new claim after 1st April 2017 and those who were absent from their property for over 4 weeks.

RECOMMENDED – That, consultation on the amendment of Craven's council tax reduction scheme (CTR) as set out in 4.1 of the report now submitted, to include the main changes applied to Housing Benefit (HB) by the Department for Work and Pensions (as approved by Parliament) is authorised.

POL.772

WASTE COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS

The Director of Services submitted a report informing Members of the alternative waste collection options available to mitigate the loss in re-cyclate income and sought approval to introduce a co-mingling collection of glass, cans, plastics, paper and cardboard with effect from April 2017 subject to a satisfactory TEEP assessment.

The collapse in the commodities market for dry re-cyclables had resulted in the Council receiving significantly less in income which had been used to offset some of the costs of operating the services. Indeed, the Council was having to pay to send re-cyclables for process with an adverse budget swing of approximately £400,000 per annum, making the continuation of the existing waste collection arrangements unsustainable.

The Director of Services' report set out several options together with potential savings which had been formulated with White Young Green, specialists in waste management.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, subject to a satisfactory TEEP assessment, the introduction of a co-mingled collection of glass, cans, plastics, paper and cardboard is approved in principle with effect from April 2017.

(2) That, a supplementary revenue estimate of up to £15,000 to fund the undertaking of a TEEP assessment and comprehensive communication programme informing residents of the changes to waste collection arrangements is approved.

(3) That, a further report is brought to Policy Committee in December 2016, informing Members of the outcomes from the TEEP assessment.

POL.773

NEGOTIATING AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONTRIBUTIONS

The Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration submitted a report seeking approval of a revised approach to negotiating affordable housing contributions, in connection with planning applications for residential development.

Since the Policy Committee in May 2012 approved an interim approach to negotiating affordable housing requirements, there had been significant changes in national planning policy which necessitated the Council to determine whether affordable housing commuted sums should be sought for developments of 6-10 dwellings (or less than 6 dwellings with a combined floor space of more than 1000sqm) in designated rural areas before such sums can be secured from developers.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the lower threshold for affordable housing contributions in designated rural areas and, in those areas, seek cash contributions from developments of 6-10 dwellings is implemented.

(2) That, there is a requirement that affordable housing contributions are paid in respect of developments of less than 6 dwellings with a combined gross floor space of more than 1000sqm.

(3) That, the approach and guidance set out in the document titled 'Negotiating Affordable Housing Contributions (draft July 2016)', a copy of which is contained in the appendix to the report now submitted, so that it

Craven District Council

may be published on the Council's website and brought into use for development control purposes, is approved.

Chairman