

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet

Minutes

Meeting date: 23 February 2024

Meeting time: 12.30 pm - 12.40 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Rowena Hay, Peter Jeffries, Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Iain Dobie, Martin Horwood, Alisha Lewis and Max Wilkinson

Also in attendance:

Claire Hughes (Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer), Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive), Paul Jones (Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer)) and Gemma Bell (Director of Finance and Assets and Deputy S151 Officer)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Atherstone. Councillor Jeffries took the Chair.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 February 2024 will be approved at the next meeting.

4 Public and Member Questions and Petitions

There were none.

5 Final General Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals 2024-25 and Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report, October-December 2023

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets apologised for the extraordinary meeting, due to the last-minute funding support for local authorities announced by the government. He said officers had taken a bit more time to get the budget right. The paperwork had been circulated, and he said he would present a full report at Council, but was happy to take any questions.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing asked about the difficulties in preparing the budget within the timetable given to us by government as a result of their late declaration. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets confirmed that it is always a challenge, particularly with the one-year settlements of the last few years, and declarations are always made too late in the process. It would make officers' jobs a lot easier if these came earlier, and multi-year settlements would also be very helpful.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities said that, working with the Local Government Association on different matters, she sees council after council unable to meet their obligations, and looking at what officers and Cabinet colleagues have achieved in Cheltenham, she had to say what a good job they have done with the budget – not only investing in council housing, but also in families, children, communities and a host of organisations and facilities around the country which other councils are closing down. She thanked them all for the commitment, consideration and hard work.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets thanked her for her comments.

RESOLVED THAT: Council is recommended to:

- 1. approve the revised budget for 2023/24 which is reported as part of the budget monitoring process for 31 December 2023 in Section 6;**
- 2. consider the budget assessment by the Section 151 Officer at Appendix 2 in agreeing the following recommendations:**
- 3. approve the final budget proposals including a proposed council tax for the services provided by Cheltenham Borough Council of £237.68 for the year 2024/25 based on a Band D property (an increase of 2.99%), as detailed in paragraphs 9.1 to 9.6;**
- 4. approve the savings / additional income totalling £2,741,000 and the budget strategy at Appendix 4;**
- 5. approve the revenue growth items totalling £158,000 at Appendix 5;**

6. approve the capital programme at Appendix 6;
7. approve the use of reserves and general balances and note the projected level of reserves, as detailed at Appendix 7;
8. approve the programmed maintenance programme at Appendix 8;
9. approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) detailed in Appendix 9;
10. approve the flexible use of capital receipts strategy as detailed in Appendix 10;
11. note that the Council will remain in the Gloucestershire business rates pool for 2024/25;
12. approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25, including the continued payment of a living wage supplement at Appendix 11;
13. note the responses to the questions raised during the budget consultation in Appendix 12;
14. approve the proposed fees and charges schedule for 2024/25 at Appendix 13, subject to appropriate consultation where required;
15. approve a level of supplementary estimate of £100,000 for 2024/25 as outlined in Section 18.

6 Housing Revenue Account Revised Forecast 2023-24 and Budget 2024-25

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets invited any questions on the item. There were none.

RESOLVED THAT: Council is recommended to:

1. approve the final HRA budget proposals (shown at Appendix 2);
2. approve a rent increase of 7.7% for social rent homes, affordable rent homes and shared ownership homes and changes to other rents and charges as detailed within the report;
3. approve the HRA capital programme as shown at Appendix 3 and the detailed capital programme at Appendix 4;
4. approve the HRA's Asset Management Plan (AMP) to 2028 at Appendix 5;
5. note the revised HRA forecast for 2023/24.

7 Briefing from Cabinet Members

There were no Cabinet Member briefings on this occasion, and no Cabinet Member decisions had been taken since the last meeting on 13 February.