

Cabinet

Tuesday, 17th December, 2013
6.00 - 6.30 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Steve Jordan (Leader of the Council), John Rawson (Cabinet Member Finance), Rowena Hay (Cabinet Member Sport and Culture), Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Built Environment), Jon Walklett (Cabinet Member Corporate Services) and Roger Whyborn (Cabinet Member Sustainability)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Jeffries.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

There were no questions or petitions.

4. GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL - INTERIM BUDGET PROPOSALS 2014/15 FOR CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and explained that the Council had experienced a cut in Revenue Support Grant from £8.8 million in 2009-10 to £5.1 million in 2012-13 and it was expecting a larger cut this year. This represented a huge challenge particularly with the £1.4 million budget gap. He announced that the proposal was to freeze council tax for the fourth year running and this was funded by efficiency savings elsewhere.

The Cabinet Member Finance referred to the restructures which had and were taking place in leisure and culture, ICT, revenues and benefits and customer services which would assist in achieving further savings for the council. Approximately £900 000 would be invested in property maintenance, comprising £750 000 from the revenue budget and £200 000 from New Homes Bonus. £250 000 would be invested next year in ICT, play equipment and CCTV in the town. These were remarkable achievements considering the difficult economic circumstances. He emphasised however that it should be made clear to central Government that further cuts in funding to local government could not be sustained for much longer if councils were to continue to provide essential services.

In terms of process the Cabinet Member explained that there would now be a detailed consultation which would be published on the council's website and a leaflet would be available from reception. The consultation period would end on 24 January 2014 with the final budget proposals to be approved by Council on February 14 2014.

Finally the Cabinet Member Finance paid tribute to the hard work of all officers and in particular the Director of Resources, the Head of Finance and SLT in using their creativity in solving particular problems.

Member reiterated the fact that central government should realise that its policy of continually cutting local government funding was no longer sustainable and it was increasingly difficult to plan for the future.

Reference was made to investment in the town for the future in terms of paving on the Promenade and improving the standard of the council's car parks. A member also referred to the fact that many local businesses would not realise that a large proportion of business rates paid in the town went straight to central government.

The Leader reiterated his thanks to the finance team. This was a positive budget although it was particularly difficult to determine the level of council tax. In any event any council tax rise was constrained to 0-2% unless an authority called a referendum. The change in government policy on topslicing the new homes bonus had made the council tax freeze affordable although he noted that a long term freeze would be unsustainable.

RESOLVED THAT

- 1. The interim budget proposals be approved for consultation including a proposed council tax for the services provided by Cheltenham Borough Council of £187.12 for the year 2014/15 (a 0% increase based on a Band D property).**
- 2. The growth proposals be approved, including one off initiatives at Appendix 3.**
- 3. The proposed capital programme at Appendix 6 be approved, as outlined in Section 7.**
- 4. Authority be delegated to the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to determine and approve any additional material that may be needed to support the presentation of the interim budget proposals for consultation.**
- 5. Consultation responses be sought by 24th January 2014.**
- 6. It be approved that the Council will remain in the Gloucestershire business rates pool for 2014/15 (para 3.7)**
- 7. It be approved that no change be made to the Local Council Tax support scheme in 2014/15 (para 3.10).**

5. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE AND CAPITAL REVISED BUDGET 2013/14 AND INTERIM BUDGET PROPOSALS 2014/15 FOR CONSULTATION

In the absence of the Cabinet Member Housing and Safety the Cabinet Member Finance paid tribute to his hard work on the housing portfolio and to the good work of Cheltenham Borough Homes.

He reported that rents were set to rise by 4 % and explained that this was set according to a government formula to ensure rents were slightly above inflation. CBH was outperforming its budget predictions and was proposing a £7.7 million

extensive programme of improvements. Investment was also being made in disabled adaptations and work, which was beyond the remit of CBH, was ongoing on improving the lives of tenants in terms of benefits and money advice, employment services and working with the vulnerable and the elderly.

The Finance Director of CBH added that this was a positive budget with investment proposed in improving existing stock, PV windows and investment in new build. With a £4 million reserve, £2.5 million would be earmarked for future new build.

The Leader of the Council congratulated CBH on its positive role in managing the council's housing stock.

RESOLVED THAT

- 1. The revised HRA budget for 2013/14 be noted.**
- 2. The interim HRA budget proposals for 2014/15 be approved for consultation including a proposed average rent increase of 4.03% (applied in accordance with national rent restructuring guidelines) and increases in other rents and charges as detailed at Appendix 5.**
- 3. The proposed HRA capital programme for 2014/15 be approved as shown at Appendix 3.**
- 4. The creation of an earmarked revenue reserve be approved to finance future new build in the HRA. The value of funds to be transferred to this reserve to be considered by Cabinet as part of the review of HRA outturn for each accounting year.**
- 5. Authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Finance, in consultation with the Director of Resources, to approve the acquisition of private interests within sites identified for future development subject to the availability of funds as described in paragraph 5.5.**
- 6. Authority be delegated to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to determine and approve any additional material that may be needed to support the presentation of the interim budget proposals for consultation.**
- 7. Consultation responses be sought by 30th January 2014.**

6. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Sustainability informed the meeting that the charges for green waste collection had been increased by an inflationary amount, the details of which could be found in the February budget. The charges for allotments would increase on 1 January 2015, subject to consultation, to £33 for a small allotment, £54 for a medium sized allotment and £77 for a large allotment. These were below inflation increases and still represented excellent value. He explained that savings had been made within the allotments budget and allotment wardens had taken on a greater role.

The Cabinet Member Sport and Culture informed the meeting that Donna Renney, Chief Executive of Cheltenham Festivals was standing down. She wished to put on record her thanks for her hard work in progressing the Festivals and wished her well in the future.

Chairman