

## **BUDGET SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP (BSWG) REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE- 12 JANUARY 2014**

- BSWG notes the Cabinet interim budget proposals and the hard work that had gone into its production.
- The BSWG is of the view that the proposal to use more of the New Homes Bonus funding stream is pragmatic and that this still maintains a cautious view this side of the election. It believes that there is scope to take more risk in increasing its use further, particularly in view of the potential future housing numbers. It suggests updating the NHB projections to reflect more updated information of planning delivery numbers including future potential housing numbers delivered through the JCS.
- The BSWG supports the view from the Section 151 Officer that CBC should remain in the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool based on the ongoing monitoring of the pool. It is generally supportive of remaining in the pool as long as the council is better off as a result. It also endorses the view that the pooling authorities should create a reserve to mitigate against any downside risk of being in the pool e.g. large appeals or a downturn in business rate yield.
- The BSWG compliments the council on achieving a council tax freeze over the past 4 years and continuing to freeze council tax for 2015/16. It acknowledges that this is a difficult task in a period of reducing resources and considers that this approach is recognised and appreciated by local residents.
- The BSWG acknowledges that front line services have been maintained despite the reduction in funding and the delivery of a council tax freezes and that this has been achieved by taking a fundamentally different approach to service delivery by adopting a commissioning approach and through the creation of shared services.
- Notes the approach to considering how to use the receipt from the sale of North Place car park and thanked the Section 151 Officer for adopting the methodology suggested by the BSWG in presenting the options by identifying an "Impact statement" of not taking the project forward. It was keen to see this developed further by including the identification of the revenue implications of the proposals. It also endorsed the decision to put back the timetable for Council to consider the Asset Management Plan to allow more time to consider the options including those put forward by the Cheltenham Trust.

Cllr Chris Nelson, Chair of Budget Scrutiny Working Group