Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2015 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

             Cllrs. Hogarth, Ms. Lowe, Piper and Ramsay

             Cllrs. Ayres, Mrs. Ayres and Scholey were also present.

61.   Minutes

        Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 11 December
        2014, be approved and signed as a correct record.

62.   Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

63.   Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

There were none.

64.   Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet
        Advisory Committees

There were none.

65.   Draft Budget 2015/16 - Update

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources introduced a report setting out the progress
made in preparing the 2015/16 budget. The overall emphasis was on building on the
strong framework provided by the 10-year budget, whilst taking into account any new
financial burdens and changes in the economy that had an impact on budget
assumptions. The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources reported that the 10 year
budget was currently showing a surplus of £2m.

The Chief Finance Officer reported that Local Government Finance Settlement had been
received on 18 December 2014 and contained minor changes to the previous
assumptions. As expected the Revenue Support Grant for 2015/16 had been reduced
by 32%. It also confirmed that the Council Tax Referendum limit would remain at 2% and
there was no specific mention of an amount to be passed to town and parish councils for
Council Tax Support.

Taking the settlement together with the other small changes since the December Cabinet
report the 10- year surplus had increased by £130,000 from £1.910m to £2.040m.
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The Council Tax assumptions currently contained in the 10-year budget were:

- 1.95% in 2015/16
- 3% in 2016/17 onwards

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources proposed the following recommendation:

Members have given consideration to the current budget position and instructed officers to reduce the Council Tax assumption for 2016/17 to 2018/19 from 3% to 2%.

This will result in a budget gap over the 10 years of £571,000 or £57,000 per annum. Officers will make the required saving by initially looking at back office functions noting that this may have staffing implications.

Members discussed the implication of the New Homes Bonus ceasing to exist. The Chief Finance Officer reported that a 40% reduction in the New Homes Bonus had been built into the budget from 2017/18 to help compensate for any changes.

A Member asked for details of the impact of lower inflation on the budget assumptions. The Chief Executive highlighted that inflation had been reduced on a number of budget lines which meant that any impact would be relatively minimal. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to provide the information requested to Members.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the current budget position be noted and Officers be instructed to reduce the Council Tax assumption for 2016/17 to 2018/19 from 3% to 2%. This will result in a budget gap over the 10 years of £571,000 or £57,000 per annum. Officers will make the required savings by initially looking at back office functions noting that this may have staffing implications.

66.   Calculation of council tax base and other tax setting issues

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources introduced a report setting out details of the District's tax base for council tax setting purposes. As part of the budget cycle the Council was required to calculate the council tax base of the district for tax setting purposes for the coming financial year and the calculation had to be approved by Cabinet and Full Council. The tax base was determined by converting all property and occupancy data to the equivalent number of band D properties and this figure was used to calculate the band D charge.

This report showed that the tax base for 2014/15 was 47,629 and the tax base for 2015/16 would be 48,209. The number of dwellings on the Valuation List had increased from 48,811 to 49,082.

A collection rate of 99.3% had been included, the same as used in 2014/15.

A new parish for Badgers Mount had been created as from 1st April 2015 and the tax base for Shoreham had been adjusted accordingly.

Members noted that the timetable leading up to setting the council tax for 2015/16 was also included in the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

> Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

(a)   the report of the Chief Finance Officer for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2015/16 be approved;

(b)   pursuant to the report of the Chief Finance Officer and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Sevenoaks District Council as its council tax base for the whole area for the year 2015/16 shall be 48,209.05;

(c)   pursuant to the report of the Chief Finance Officer and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Sevenoaks District Council as the council tax base for 2015/16 for the calculation of local precepts shall be:

Parish	Tax Base
Ash-cum-Ridley	2,381.61
Badgers Mount	329.08
Brasted	765.50
Chevening	1,433.69
Chiddingstone	586.47
Cowden	406.93
Crockenhill	632.84
Dunton Green	901.64
Edenbridge	3,446.21
Eynsford	910.78
Farningham	610.40
Fawkham	280.52
Halstead	748.62
Hartley	2,477.44
Hever	593.81
Hextable	1,634.97
Horton Kirby & South Darenth	1,255.25

Kemsing	1,798.82
Knockholt	616.16
Leigh	809.10
Otford	1,664.07
Penshurst	823.30
Riverhead	1,218.41
Seal	1,165.48
Sevenoaks Town	9,055.46
Sevenoaks Weald	609.80
Shoreham	661.34
Sundridge	910.48
Swanley	5,255.55
Westerham	1,952.44
West Kingsdown	2,272.88

(d)   any expenses incurred by the Council in performing in part of its area a function performed elsewhere in its area by a parish or community council or the chairman of a parish meeting shall not be treated as special expenses for the purposes of section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

67.   Local Government Transparency Code 2014

The Head of Transformation and Strategy presented a report which set out the requirements of the Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2014 which came into effect on 31 October 2014. These Regulations made it a legal requirement for local authorities to publish a range of data as specified in Part 2 of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014.

It was noted that the report had been considered by the Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee on 2 December 2014.

Members noted that Part 3 of the Code set out a further 7 data sets of enhanced information which it was recommended be published but where there was no legal requirement to do so. Members agreed that the additional information should be published if it were readily available but that resources should not be invested in non-statutory requirements.

A Member queried whether this requirement would lead to a reduction in the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests that was received by the Council. In response the Chairman expressed some concern that this new requirement could in fact lead to an increase in the number of FOI Requests that were received as members of the public sought more in depth information as a result of the data sets that were published.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

    Resolved: That

(a) The requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 be noted; and

(b) The further data as recommended by the Code be published if it were readily available.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.25 PM

    CHAIRMAN