

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee – 6 December 2022 – Minute 31

The Head of Finance presented the report which set out updates to the 2023/24 budget process within the existing financial strategy. SDC was not immune from the financial challenges affecting the country therefore this budget process was expected to be particularly challenging.

No changes had been made to future assumptions at the stage which would be reviewed during the budget process, as usual. However, due to the April 2022 pay award being higher than previously assumed and an annual savings target of £100,000 already included, an annual budget gap of £735,000 was currently reported.

The report presented growth and savings/additional income proposals that had been identified which needed to be considered. It requested further suggestions from Members before finalising the budget for 2023/24. Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it was proposed that the Council once again sets a balanced 10-year budget and continues to aim to be financially self-sufficient.

The Committee considered the growth and savings/additional income proposals identified in Appendices E & F to the report and the Supplementary Agenda. Further consideration was given to possible savings by reviewing current methods used for the collection of refuse and recycling, such as reducing the number of black sacks provided for free by the Council. They further discussed the generation of profits from EV chargers, and heard that work was already underway in this respect.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved that:

- (a) it be recommended to Cabinet that the growth proposals (SCIA's 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, and 20) and savings/additional income proposals (SCIA's 15, 16, 17, and 18) identified in Appendices E & F to the report and the Supplementary Agenda applicable to this Advisory Committee, be considered; and that
- (b) No further income or growth proposals were identified.

Cabinet – 9 February 2023 – Minute 94

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report which set out the proposed budget for 2023/24. He advised that this was the final stage of the budget process which had seen significant member involvement. If approved, the net expenditure budget for 2023/24 would be £18.5m with the Council's Tax increasing by 2.98% resulting in Band D Council Tax being £236.70, an increase of £6.84. He was pleased to announce that the report would once again leave the council with a fully funded self-sufficient budget over the next 10 years.

The Council Tax and Recovery Manager set out the proposed changes to Council Tax premium charges which proposed to shorten the premium on long term empty dwellings from the current 2 years empty to 1 year from 1 April 2024; and 100% premium on all second homes from 1 April 2024, should the Regeneration & Levelling Up Bill receive Royal Assent. The Bill stated that to apply the changes, approval to do so must be given at least 12 months before the implementation date to ensure the required 12 month leading period.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading advised Members that it had once been again a challenging budget process with a number of changes made at each stage, and were listed in Appendix E. The position had improved since the report to Cabinet in January as the annual budget gap had reduced from £126,000 to £104,000 due to this council's share of the Collection Fund surplus. This gap would be funded from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve.

The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was announced earlier this week and there were no significant changes from the provisional settlement affecting this council. He advised that appendices P to S were not included within the Cabinet papers but would be included in the Council version of the report after the other preceptors have set their Council Tax.

The report included his opinion, as the Statutory Finance Officer, on the robustness of the budget estimates and adequacy of reserves. The flexibility of the 10-year budget approach assisted in these uncertain times but it should be recognised that when there was greater certainty it was highly likely that additional savings and income would be required in the next budget process. Members discussed the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- (a) the Summary of Council Expenditure and Council Tax for 2023/24 set out in Appendix F, be approved;

- (b) the 10-year budget 2023/24 to 2032/33 which was the guiding framework for the detailed approval of future years' budgets set out in Appendix C(i) to the report, including the budget changes set out in Appendix E to the report, and that where possible any variations during and between years be met from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve, be agreed;
- (c) the Capital Programme 2023/26 and funding method set out in Appendix J(i) and Capital Strategy 2023/24 set out in Appendix J(iii), be approved;
- (d) the changes to reserves and provisions set out in Appendix K, be approved;
- (e) the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23, be rolled forward to 2023/24, with effect from 1 April 2023 (Appendix M), be approved;
- (f) the Council Tax premium on long term empty dwellings, be shortened from the current 2 years (empty) to 1 year from 1 April 2024 (Appendix N), be agreed in principle for implementation following Royal Assent to the relevant Act of Parliament;
- (g) the 100% Council Tax premium on all second homes from 1 April 2024 (Appendix N), be agreed in principle for implementation following Royal Assent to the relevant Act of Parliament; and
- (h) SCIA 18 be reviewed by Officers with the intention of the retention of the Out of Hours service during the peak months of the year.