

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 9th February, 2015

Present:- Councillors John Bull (Chair), Colin Barrett, Paul Myers, Charles Gerrish, Barry Macrae and Nigel Roberts

Also in attendance: Councillors Paul Crossley and Eleanor Jackson

NOTES from BUDGET ITEM

BUDGET & COUNCIL TAX 2015/16 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

Tim Richens, Divisional Director Business Support, introduced the report. Panel members considered the comments from the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels made in the November meetings on the medium term plans. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Crossley (in place of Councillor David Bellotti, Cabinet Member for Community Resources) introduced the budget.

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Macrae asked some questions about the PDS comments, Andrew Pate – Strategic Director for Resources, explained that no recommendations had come forward from these meetings to suggest a change in the budget and that the Cabinet member had taken these comments into account when setting the budget. He added that there are no outstanding issues arising from these comments. Councillor Macrae stated that he did not feel the comments useful in his consideration of the budget. There was some discussion around the rise in cost of entry to the Roman Baths, Councillor Gerrish suggested that this did not sit well with the surplus in Heritage Services.

Councillor Jackson (Chair of Housing and Major Projects PDS Panel) reported that her Panel had not made any formal recommendations but asked that the Panel's comments on the waterways and parking in the context of regeneration be noted. Regarding the budget papers presented by the Council Leader, Councillor Macrae asked about 'deprivation of liberty safeguards'. Jane Shayler (Divisional Director Adult Care, Health and Housing Strategy and Commissioning) explained that this meant keeping an individual in a place of safety against their will. She explained that a recent judgement had affected how the legislation is applied and the Council now has responsibility to undertake 'best interest assessments'. She reported that costs have doubled as a result of the judgement and assured the Panel that arrangements are in place. Councillor Macrae asked about the costs resulting from the Care Act and Welfare Support Team – he asked if officers were not aware of these things coming up half way through the year and expressed concerns that attempts to be prudent are overridden by these examples. Councillor Bull pointed to Appendix 2 which sets out how the shortfall is being made up. Tim Richens talked through Appendix 2. Councillor Crossley explained that the Care Act came into place in 2014 when budgets had been set and staff had done very well to cope.

Councillor Gerrish asked a number of factual questions on the budget papers which were addressed by officers. He raised the following points which Louise Fradd (Strategic Director – Place) said that she would follow up and report back on:

- Why is money being spent on a highways scheme in Sally in the Woods when similar work was carried out their recently (Appendix 1, Annex 3 – Highways Maintenance Programme);
- Ashton Way Car Park (page 74) - why are we paying for resurfacing work when contractors could also contribute.

Councillor John Bull stated that he welcomed the inclusion of an equivalent living wage in the budget. He also asked about the progress of the Governor's enhanced version (page 37) of the plan for Paulton Junior School. Tim Richens stated that he would find out and get back to Councillor Bull.

Councillor Macrae asked about the nature of the 'Equalities Work' in Kingsmead Square (page 74). David Trethewey (Divisional Director Strategy and Performance) explained that this would be work to make facilities more accessible or disabled parking spaces and was carried out by the Property Services so he could not give full details. Paul Crossley explained that 'Equalities Work' covers a variety of works and he would seek to get more details on this. He explained that this information used to be presented as a global figure and that there is more transparency in the figures now. Councillor Macrae indicated that this was a positive move. Councillor Colin Barrett was advised to speak to a property officer regarding the proposed work in Weston (page 74)

Councillor Macrae referred to pages 67/68 'Highways Maintenance Programme' and stated that he felt the work carried out in the City compared to Midsomer Norton was not balanced. The Chairman advised him that the schemes are decided on criteria in the Highways Department and that he is free to propose amendments to the budget. Councillor Gerrish stated that Highways decisions are clearer now.

Councillor Gerrish referred to page 92 'Further Potential Community Asset Transfers' and asked that the 'Paddock' in Keynsham be added. It was agreed that he would speak to the Strategic Director before this could be added to the list.

Councillor Macrae asked if cycle schemes and 20mph limits are the Cabinet's priority. Councillor Crossley answered that his administration is convinced that slower traffic promotes safety.

The Chairman thanked all those present for their contributions and informed the Panel that he would take their comments to the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday 11th February.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the comments from the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels from their consideration of the medium term plans at the November meetings;
(Councillor Macrae stated that he did not feel the PDS comments paper was useful in his consideration of the budget)
2. Note comments from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Crossley (in place of Councillor David Bellotti, Cabinet Member for Community Resources);
3. Highlight the following issues for the Cabinet to give further consideration to:
 - Ask the Cabinet to look at working up a scheme to improve the safety of the junction of the A367 and Bath Road at Peasedown St John using 106 monies
(Voting: 5 members for, 0 against and 1 abstention)