

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting - 29 January 2019

Present: M Bradford (Chairman)
P Bastiman and D Dhillon*
(*arrived at 6.05 and 6.07pm)

Also Present: L Sullivan and J Read

Apologies for absence: M Bezzant, T Egleton, P Kelly, M Lewis and D Saunders

85. FRIMLEY PARK TRUST UPDATE - NEIL DARDIS

This presentation was deferred to the February meeting as the agenda was reduced due to the adverse weather conditions expected.

86. PRESENTATION ON THE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY - IAN BARHAM (LEP)

The presentation was deferred to the February meeting as the agenda was reduced due to the adverse weather conditions expected.

87. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 8 October and 8 November 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman of the Committee as a correct record.

88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

89. CAR PARKING STRATEGY

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report which provided detailed information regarding a car park strategy for the South Bucks District. The Strategy included information on supply and demand, car park maintenance, parking charges and parking for specialist groups. There was no mandatory requirement for local authorities to produce a strategy although it was good practice to have one in place. SBDC published a car parking annual report which had detailed information on parking provision.

In 2017 Members had been consulted on a draft Strategy but this Strategy had been delayed due to discussions around the option of a joint strategy with Chiltern District Council. Following approval to proceed, agreement was being sought from Cabinet to introduce the car park strategy.

Following a question, Members noted that the car park strategy did not set out specific charges and that a report on charges would be discussed at the Environment PAG in March and then submitted to the Cabinet for approval. This was because the Council had to follow a legal process for amending the Off Street Parking Places Order which included a statutory consultation. There would also be a report on introducing charging facilities for electric vehicles. The review of parking charges would also include information on free parking for example where half an hour free parking was given to Parish Councils.

A Member asked that the Strategy should recognise that some commuters were residents of the District. It was agreed that the Strategy should be amended to reflect that customers could be viewed as a number of groups such as residents, business and commuters and should not be treated as a single group.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that Cabinet be informed that the Committee had no comments to make, except for the amendment in relation to the categorisation of customers.

90. **PLANNING SHARED SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

This item was deferred to the meeting in February as the agenda was reduced due to the adverse weather conditions expected.

91. **COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to comment on the draft Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure prior to the new procedure being adopted. The Head of Customer Services reported that one of the projects to be delivered as part of the Customer Experience Programme was to review the way that the Council dealt with Compliments, Comments and Complaints across the Councils. The draft Procedure included best practice as recommended from the Local Government Ombudsman and also the provision to monitor complaints centrally to learn from feedback and what action should be taken as a result of this feedback. There would be a workflow created in the new digital platform using the case management system.

Members noted that the next step of the procedure would be to complete the design of the process for reporting, dealing with, monitoring and reporting on complaints as part of the phase one work of the Customer Experience Programme which would be going live in June 2019. However, this new procedure would take effect in service areas from 1 April 2019. A procedure was also being drafted on vexatious complaints. If Members had any further comments on the procedure they should email them to the Head of Customer Services.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

92. **REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2019/20**

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report providing information which affected the Council's revenue budget for 2019/20 and the setting of Council Tax for 2019/20.

The Director of Resources went through the report in detail as follows:-

- The announcement of the decision to create a unitary authority in Buckinghamshire from 2020/21 did not affect the requirement on the Council to set a legal and prudent budget for 2019/20 that addressed the Council's aims and objectives. However, it would be necessary at a corporate level to make provisions within reserves for the transition costs to the new unitary authority.
- The 19/20 Government funding figures were better than expected at the time of setting the 2018/19 budget as the Government had decided to cancel the 'negative RSG' of £414k planned for 2019/20.
- Since the December Cabinet there had been two amendments to the draft budget relating to the reduction in the Housing Benefit Administration grant of £20k and the additional car parking income of £30k. Car parking charges were still to be discussed at the Environment Policy Advisory Group in March.
- The overall effect of these changes would mean a budget requirement of £7,642k which would result in a council tax increase of £5 (3.2%) which was the maximum permitted for the Council by Government. This would be up to £163 for a Band D property.
- The revised fees and charges were noted.
- The proposed 2019/20 budget did not require any use of the General Reserves to fund general expenditure which was an improvement on the position reported to Cabinet in December. However, consideration needed to be given to earmarking some of the reserves to fund the implementation costs of the new unitary authority. The original proposal for South Bucks District's share was £1.552 m.
- Earmarked reserves would be utilised for the Local Development Document reserve, Economic Development reserve and the National Infrastructure reserve.
- A number of projects were being progressed to implement further savings as a result of the reduction in Government funding such as the Planning Shared Service implementation and the Customer Experience Strategy.
- Section E of the report set out the advice from the Director of Resources identifying the main financial risks to the Council such as a shortfall on income targets, cost of major planning inquiries and enforcement action, cost of temporary accommodation and letting income from Capswood offices.

During questions Members noted that a Council Tax increase of £5 was the maximum amount allowed by Government or a 2.99% increase, whichever was the higher. For

SBDC £5 was the highest but for CDC the increase of 2.99% was better. This was consistent with the strategy used in previous years to maximise the Council Tax. Members agreed that a referendum to increase the council tax was not cost effective.

A Member asked about the budget for the Shadow Authority for the transitional costs. The Director of Resources commented that the total budget estimated at this stage of £22.2million would be managed by the Implementation Team and the Shadow Executive. Officers would be seconded and or appointed into this team to manage the transition process and if any officers from this Council were seconded then there could be some further costs to backfill their posts which would be borne by the transition budget. There would be a huge amount of work involved in the transitional process particularly on governance, finance and council tax and also other issues such as having one banking contract and enabling different IT solutions to communicate. One major cost would be redundancies.

In response to a question, the Director of Resources reported that there should be no financial issues with the new Unitary District Council in terms of its set up and early operation but that there could be financial challenges in the longer term. Work would need to be undertaken by the five Section 151 Officers to aggregate the Medium Term Financial Strategies of all five Councils.

A Member asked about the different systems being used by each Authority and the Director of Resources reported that this would probably be addressed in 2020 once the new Authority had been formed. The accounts of all five Councils have to be closed by the end of May 2020. An interim 151 Officer would be appointed for the Shadow Authority. A further question was asked about the position of the budget for this Council and Members noted that South Bucks District had a healthy and well established budget for transition into the new Unitary District Authority if there were no forthcoming financial challenges.

RESOLVED that following discussion on the 2019/20 revenue budget report that Cabinet be informed that the Committee had no comments.

93. CAPITAL STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report which presented the Capital Strategy and the proposed Capital Programme for 2019/20 to 2023/24. The Director of Resources highlighted the following issues:-

- A budget of £1.5million had been allocated in 2021/22 for waste vehicles, as the current waste contract was due to end in October 2021.
- To address capacity issues construction of a Multi Storey Car Park in Gerrards Cross has been agreed and there was a budget of £13,051k over the course of the next two years.
- A budget of £61k in 2019/20 and £10k pa thereafter had been allocated for car park enhancements.

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- The Taplow Moorings along the river edge need improvement and health and safety works in order to stop the river undercutting the current bank. This was a legal obligation on the Council as the riparian owner and a consultant would need to be engaged and the initial estimate of the works was £100k.
- Reference was made to the extension to Parkland Woodland Burial Site and Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens which should help bring in increased income to the Council and help meet demand.
- In addition to the main capital programme SBDC would be looking to undertake investments in Consilio with SBDC acting as lender.

A Member asked a question in relation to Consilio and asked whether their investment strategy would be consistent with the new strategy for the new Unitary District Council. The Director of Resources reported that once the new Shadow Executive/Authority was up and running that they would have a view on any further investments by Consilio and he hoped that they would see this as a useful vehicle and agile way to make sound commercial investments. Members asked for an update on Consilio at their next Overview and Scrutiny Committee providing information on controls with the example of any investment made.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that Cabinet be informed that the Committee had no comments to make.

94. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2019/20**

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report which invited comments on the Treasury Management Strategy and related policies that should be adopted by the Council for 2019/20, to assist Cabinet in its deliberations on the Strategy to recommend to Council. The Director of Resources reported that the Council was required to formally review its treasury management policies each year as part of determining what level of returns would be achieved from investment. The expected return for 2019/20 from the proposed strategy was £100,000. Borrowing would be required in order to deliver the Council's Capital Strategy and its related Capital Programme. This would be from the Public Works Loan Board. Although borrowing would not be undertaken in advance of need, there would be some short term timing differences where funds would be borrowed and not yet required for payment of suppliers as part of projects in the approved Capital Programme.

Members noted that as with any budget based on forecasts of future interest rates there was a risk of variance due to factors outside the Council's control. This risk would need to be taken into account in determining the level of reserves held by the Authority.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that Cabinet be informed that the Committee had no comments to make.

95. **PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2018/19**

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report which outlined the annual performance of Council services against pre-agreed performance indicators and service objectives for quarter 2 of 2018-19. Members noted that the percentage of food hygiene inspections of category A-D food businesses achieved against the inspection due by quarter was under target as a member of staff had left at the end of February and another member of staff had to be deployed away from food inspections to undertake nuisance work. An agency contractor had also left. In addition the average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation for all households was above target of 22 at 28 weeks because of one lengthy stay where the applicant had been subject to several reviews and legal appeal claims.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

96. **BUCKS HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SELECT COMMITTEE**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting(s) of the Buckinghamshire County Council Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee meetings held on 2 October and 20 November 2018.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Buckinghamshire County Council Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee be noted.

97. **BUCKS CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE**

Members received the Minutes of the meeting(s) of the Buckinghamshire County Council Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee meetings held on 2 October and 27 November 2018.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Buckinghamshire County Council Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee be noted.

98. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

There were no questions.

99. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. Members noted that the agenda for February would be revised due to the items being deferred from this meeting.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be agreed.

The meeting terminated at 6.50 pm