

## RESOURCES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP (SBDC)

Meeting - 7 December 2017

Present: B Gibbs (Chairman)  
P Hogan and R Bagge

Apologies for absence: S Chhokar, D Dhillon and J Jordan

### 20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

### 21. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) held on 26 September 2017 were received.

### 22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 23. PORTFOLIO BUDGET 2018/19

The report set out the context for the budget and highlighted the priority aims and objectives for the forthcoming year. There were some significant projects planned including customer experience strategy, the property company and the challenge of providing temporary accommodation. The revision to the cost share arrangement was noted, based on the population of both districts, was now CDC 58%/SBDC 42% to be used for all joint services. This resulted in some savings although overall the change was negligible. This change was made to simplify the administrative process.

The cost increase assumptions in the budget were set out in section 3 and included a 1% increase in salaries, although from April 2018 any cost of living award would be locally determined by the Joint Staff Committee on 18 January 2018.

For this portfolio, the main financial risks for next years are voids or reduction in property lease income. A review and proposed actions to mitigate the risks would be part of the final report to the Cabinet on the budget in February.

It was agreed that the budget had been properly constructed and reflected the Council's overall situations and that the reductions were welcome.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder AGREED to RECOMMEND to Cabinet:

That the following items be approved:

1. the 2018/19 revenue budget
2. the 2018/19 fees and charges.

24. **LITTLEWORTH COMMON OWNERSHIP UPDATE**

The Members were asked to note the proposed transfer of the Littleworth Common site to SBDC following approval by the Environment PAG. It was advised that the advantages of the transfer were:

- The possibility of more sponsorship
- More income from the pub car park
- Easier to manage and maintain

There were no additional responsibilities that would result from the transfer.

It was asked what the asset value of the land was but since it was a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the land could not be built upon and the legal responsibilities would remain. It was agreed that the transfer to SBDC would help safeguard the area and resolve issues with the land.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that the Council takes a transfer of the freehold ownership of Littleworth Common shown edged black on the plan attached to the report and delegates final agreement of the transfer terms to the Head of Environment in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

25. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT - QUARTERLY REPORT QUARTER 2 2017/18**

The investments to the end of September 2017 still reflect the fact that interest rates are at historic low levels. The investments were held on a short-term basis due to the need over the next few years to fund capital projects. Overall the income from the investments was likely to be £50,000 under budget due to the lower interest rates. This has been reported through regular overall budget monitoring. The shortfall is likely to be offset by savings and income from elsewhere. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2018/19 in February 2018 was expected to further reduce down estimates from investments due to the use of the cash to fund projects. The Council has become less reliant on this income following the period of unprecedented low interest rates and has adjusted its financial strategy to reflect this.

**RESOLVED** that the Treasury Management performance for Quarter 2 2017/18 be noted.

26. **AOB**

None

27. **EXEMPT INFORMATION (IF REQUIRED)**

"That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 following item of business is not for publication to the press or public on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act."

(para 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))

28. **HOMELESSNESS DEBTS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Homelessness Management Task and Finish Group made the recommendation that Members of the Council be made aware of the current debt position and consider the write off of historic debts with a zero or very low probability of recovery incurred before the current process. The table 4.1 details the current debt position. The demand for Bed and Breakfast temporary accommodation by the homeless had increased considerably over recent years. It was a breach of the rules to keep families in such accommodation for over 6 weeks and so the Council were investigating various options and solutions.

The Council had previously tried to recover the full costs of housing homeless families but had now capped the charge at £25 per night, in order to ensure the charge was 'reasonable'.

Members noted that the Director of Resources had delegated authority to write-off debts up to £10,000 but larger amounts would come to the Committee. It was considered helpful to have further information on all write offs brought to the PAG so that Members would be aware of the level of debt across the various areas and any write off.

Members felt it would be important that the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities seek clarification on the following points as part of overseeing the changes in the way that temporary accommodation is managed:

1. Were families or others who arrive at 5.00 pm to claim homelessness subject to the same rigorous procedures as those who apply earlier in the day?
2. Were checks made to ensure that those housed had turned up at the venue before the bill was paid?

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

The meeting terminated at 6.33 pm

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