

The recommendations of the Budget Task and Finish Group were presented to the Improvement and Review Commission meeting on 24 January 2018. Following this meeting Cabinet members were sent the final recommendations for consideration and their responses are as follows:

Recommendations

Planning

- 1) That £500k reduction be achieved in 2019/20 however it was recognised that year 2 and 3 were aspirational and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) needs to be updated and reflected, and the new unitary needs to be informed. Planning to revisit their budget and discuss alternatives with the Head of Finance and Cabinet Member for Finance.

Reasons for recommendation:

Concerns about ability to deliver the promised efficiency savings.

Response: The recommendation is AGREED.

The Portfolio Holders for Finance and Planning have reviewed the position and the MTFS within the budget papers for 2019/20 has a commentary reflecting the serious risks facing the delivery of the savings proposed in the "Fit For Competition" programme.

Strategic Acquisitions and Infrastructure

- 2) That Cabinet provide proposals to deliver the Princes Risborough relief road and Phase 7 of the Town Centre Masterplan, and to report progress within the next six months.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable strategic acquisitions and infrastructure to help deliver the Princes Risborough relief road and Phase 7 of the Town Centre Masterplan.

Initial work will need to be undertaken on the Princes Risborough relief road so that the new development can commence. This work is urgently required due to the delay from central Government of the successful Housing Infrastructure Funding Bid. It was noted that Abbey Barn Lane was not a priority in terms of deliverability.

Phases 5 and 6 of the town centre Masterplan were due for completion at the end of 2019, this would enable phase 7 works to start immediately after. Cabinet to consider virement from strategic acquisitions and infrastructure if budgets cannot be found elsewhere.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED

The Strategic Land Acquisition (Planning Portfolio) element of the Capital Programme is now referred to as Strategic Land Acquisition/Infrastructure thereby allowing for Phase 7 to be delivered from that funding source should an updated business case, including the detailed costs and the key milestones, be supported by Cabinet.

Talks are ongoing with Homes England to progress the resolution of the HIF funding position for both the Abbey Barn Lane realignment and the Princes Risborough relief road.

Community

- 3) To use the best procurement route to promote delivery and this can include the suspension of contract standing orders

Reason for recommendation:

To enable delivery on projects in appropriate timescales using the best method of procurement available.

Response: The recommendation is AGREED.

Cabinet welcome the support of the Task and Finish Group in utilising a flexible approach to the delivery of projects to facilitate delivery in the most effective and efficient manner.

- 4) That the procurement team be provided with funds for additional resources.

Reason for recommendation:

There are currently only two members of staff in the procurement team who deal with and support officers with procurement contracts. As there were a number of projects being developed this was creating a significant increase in workload and additional resources would need to be considered.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED.

The resource requirements of teams will be reviewed to ensure that business as usual can be delivered as well as the work required for MLG. This work has commenced and once the detailed implementation plan has been assessed then appropriate action will be taken. The Head of Finance & Commercial is looking at the resource requirements required to ensure delivery of the projects is facilitated.

- 5) If the Modernising Local Government process is delayed then the Council revisit the procurement thresholds.

Reason for recommendation:

The current thresholds create delays due to the process required.

Response: The recommendation is AGREED.

Cabinet is aware that HoS DLP was working with the appropriate committees and other members of SMB, including S151 Officer to review and improve the Constitution and associated delegations, to make the documentation and controls more fit for purpose and appropriate for an agile commercially minded council. This work will be restarted if MLG is delayed.

- 6) It be noted that the Budget TFG support the waiver of Contract Standing Orders for the

proposed works at Court Garden.

Reason for recommendation:

So that works can be undertaken within an acceptable timescale.

Response: The recommendation is AGREED.

Cabinet welcome the support of Budget Task and Finish and hope they will endorse the approach set out in the draft paper to Council in February.

- 7) That a review of Street Wardens be undertaken within 3 months and additional resource be provided if the project is successful (6 street wardens).

Reason for recommendation: So that the amount of Street Wardens can be increased and be distributed across the District. This would also enable the existing Anti-Social Behaviour Officer to focus on current issues in the rest of the district.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED

An earmarked reserve has been created to set aside funding for Street Wardens. This can either be used to fund street wardens for a number of years or to increase the number of wardens. There is a recruitment, induction and training process for the new Street Wardens to complete before they are fully operational. However we will want to know that this service is a worthwhile investment and will review it from inception onwards and report on its effectiveness as soon as we have sufficient information on performance.

Economic Development & Regeneration

- 8) That additional revenue funds be made available for the feasibility work to facilitate the continuity and delivery of Capital Projects, including, but not exclusively including, car parks, regeneration and the local plan

Reason for recommendation:

So that officers and departments at the Council can undertake projects without additional resource pressures

Response: The recommendation is AGREED.

Cabinet welcome the support of Budget Task and Finish Group to the approach taken in 2019/20 to putting aside specific money in the revenue budget for detailed feasibility activity to promote the economic development of the District.

- 9) To accelerate and expedite all regeneration projects so that they can be delivered ahead or on schedule.

Reason for recommendation:

As the District Council has Capital projects already agreed that these are able to be fulfilled.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED

All regeneration projects are being managed to deliver the expected outcomes as set out in agreed business cases. Resource requirements are being verified to ensure that projects can be delivered on time and to budget. The additional money set aside in the

feasibility budgets will help to ensure any delivery that can be expedited will be actioned appropriately.

- 10) That a Project Manager be appointed to oversee delivery and to support the Deputy Leader with implementation plans.

Reason for recommendation:

So that an officer can be responsible and drive forward projects. Also so that they are able to report to the Strategic Management Team and Members on a regular basis.

(a) The Deputy Leader be given the additional role to oversee the delivery of all projects both revenue and capital.

Reason for Recommendation

To support other Cabinet Members where additional help is required

Response: The recommendation is NOTED.

Dedicated project management resource is in place to support the overall co-ordination of delivery plans and this is presented to members at Major Projects Group and to SMB through the programme boards structure. Cabinet members receive regular updates through Portfolio Holder briefings and will have access to review progress from the project management software that supports the programme board governance arrangements. The Deputy Leader attends Major projects and will have access to the project management software to review progress.

- 11) To identify the land acquisition and car parking capacity across the District.

Reason for recommendation:

To improve investment options and car parking for the future of the District.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED.

The Head of Regeneration and Investment is working on producing a detailed feasibility report to consider the future of car parking provision in the District which will help sustain the economic vibrancy of the major towns and to consider the environmental impact and be delivered effectively and efficiently.

- 12) That Cabinet undertake urgent investigations into a residents parking scheme for all Wycombe District Council car parks.

Reason for recommendation:

To provide parking discounts for residents in the District.

RESPONSE: The recommendation is NOTED

The report on the future of car parking provision (11 above) will include an investigation into the feasibility of establishing a residents parking scheme.

- 13) That Cabinet consider additional short term free or low cost parking in High Wycombe town centre, specifically the High Street.

Reason for recommendation:

To encourage members of the public to shop in the town centre therefore supporting the local economy.

RESPONSE: The recommendation is NOTED

The report on the future of car parking provision (11 above) will include consideration of short term free parking. Parking tariffs and their effect on economic development and transportation will also be considered as part of the regeneration strategy and transport visioning work which will commence in the next months. It should be noted that on street parking is currently a BCC responsibility.

- 14) That Cabinet note that a Task and Finish Group will be undertaken to consider Parking in the District.

Reason for recommendation:

To support the delivery of future parking in the District.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED.

The Head of Regeneration and Investment is in discussion with councillors as to the scope of this Task and Finish Group with a view to expanding its remit to include transport issues more broadly. This would allow it to integrate with forthcoming work on the Regeneration Strategy and a Transport Vision for High Wycombe.

- 15) To note that the Budget Task and Finish Group support the implementation of an increase in parking charges.

Reason for the Recommendation:

The increase in parking charges has been scrutinised by the Budget TFG.

Response: The recommendation is AGREED.

Cabinet welcome the support of the Task and Finish Group to the proposed increase in parking charges.

Housing

- 16) To note that the Budget TFG supports the funding for the delivery of HMO licensing.

Reason for recommendation:

To provide support for HMO Licensing as this would generate future income.

Response: The recommendation is AGREED.

Portfolio Holder (Housing) will consider how best to proceed with HMO licensing and the associated opportunity to charge appropriate fees. This has been built into the budget for 2019/20 and will be kept under review to determine how quickly the process can be scaled up to match up demand whilst retaining the principle of self-financing.

- 17) That the Council enter into a Service Level Agreement with Wycombe Homeless Connections on a 3-5 year basis.

Reason for recommendation:

To bring stability to the delivery of services to the most vulnerable and enable Wycombe Homeless Connections to plan over a longer term helping to minimise potential adverse effects due to a change in the Authority.

Response: The recommendation is AGREED

The Head of Environment and Housing will work with Wycombe Homeless Connections on developing an SLA fit for the next five years therefore providing certainty of the terms of engagements over the medium term to reduce uncertainty.

- 18) That additional funding both in capital and revenue as required be provided to the Cabinet member for Housing for temporary accommodation in the District.

Reason for recommendation:

To reduce the significant cost of bed and breakfast accommodation.

RESPONSE: The recommendation is NOTED

Cabinet welcome the support of the Budget task and Finish Group in setting aside money for new Temporary Accommodation within the District. This investment will provide suitable fit for purpose accommodation and lead to overall reductions in bed and breakfast costs.

- 19) That additional funding both in capital and revenue as required be provided to the Cabinet member for Housing for additional resources to deal with Housing in Multiple Occupation in the District.

Reason for recommendation:

A considerable amount of work was being undertaken to monitor and license HMOs in the District and additional staff as well as additional resources were required to support this work.

RESPONSE: The recommendation is NOTED

Any additional resource will match with the principles of self-financing the inspection regime. The Head of Housing & Environment is reviewing options with the team and will review progress with identification of new HMOs, conditions found within them and the numbers of licences issued. If progress with ensuring that the majority of HMOs in the town are licensed or in the process of being licensed is not seen as satisfactory, allocation of staff resources will be revised. Currently, income predictions for HMO licensing appear to be on target - the licence fees are intended to make the regime self-funding.

Environment

- 20) That £150k be provided for a new recycling collection vehicle.

Reason for recommendation:

Currently flatted developments are unable to have their waste recycled, a new vehicle would support this option.

Response: The recommendation is AGREED

Cabinet thanks the Task and Finish group for supporting the proposal that was agreed at December Cabinet to divert the resources away from the “bring banks” and towards improving existing bulk bin collection services to flatted properties. The bring banks service is due to be discontinued as a result of abuse by traders and falling legitimate usage. However, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, the £150k capital proposed for bring bank vehicle purchase should be added to the existing capital allocation for purchasing new fleet for use in the new refuse and recycling collection contract, which will commence in June 2020. This will allow additional flexibility in future fleet configuration and support the introduction of new technologies into collection services.

21) To note that a Task and Finish Group will be undertaken to consider the new Joint Waste Contract.

Reason for recommendation:

To support the delivery of a new Waste Contract in an improvement role in the same way the previous contract was delivered.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED

The Waste Contract procurement is a joint process across the three Waste Collection Partnership authorities. A project plan is being coordinated and managed by a project management specialist using project management methodology, and progress is regularly reported to the Joint Waste Collection Committee. The general approach to be taken and the contract specifications have already been agreed through the JWCC and are part of the tender which is currently out to the market. An additional scrutiny process might introduce a significant workload for the project team who also have their normal day to day duties to deliver, and so a one off review of the project by a Task and Finish Group is requested, so that progress can be reviewed and highlights and features of the new contract may be examined and questioned by Members. The project team also intends to start issuing updates between January 2019 and June 2020 through its communications plan, to ensure that members are kept informed.

ICT

22) That contingency of ££235,000 be considered for funding to support the delivery of the Digital First Programme if required.

Reason for recommendation:

To support the Cabinet Member and officers with the strategy.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED.

Cabinet thanks the Task and Finish group for its support for this important project. The budget set aside for the delivery of Digital First has been considered in detail and the allocation set aside are robust and are being tested through the procurement process. Any additional money that may be required will be considered first against the corporate contingency held in the Finance portfolio and secondly against reserves.

Community Support Grants

23) That Community Grants be continued and provided to Parish and Town Councils as previously agreed.

Reason for recommendation:

So that Parish and Town Councils and continue to be supported in the District.

Response: The recommendation is NOTED

Community leadership budgets are being increased to £2k per member as previously committed to in 2015.

Council Tax Support Grants to Town and Parish Councils will not be paid in 2019/20 as Wycombe District Council will not be receiving any Revenue Support Grant. The amount of grants paid has been gradually reduced in line with RSG received and this approach and the consequential reductions have been communicated to Town and Parish Councils over the past few years.

Community Grants will continue to be provided and town and parish councils can continue to bid if they have an event or project that is eligible.