

## MINUTE EXTRACTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS CONCERNING THE 2018/19 BUDGET CONSULTATION

### Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 9 January 2018

#### 183. 2018/19 Draft Budget Proposals

The Panel was invited to consider its response to the Executive's draft budget proposals for 2018/19. It was being consulted as part of the statutory consultation process which would conclude on 30 January 2018, after which it would consider the outcome of the consultation exercise at its meeting on 13 February 2018, before recommending the budget to Council.

Arising from questions and discussion the following points were made:

- Percentage increases were based on market pricing whilst ensuring residents could access services. As a guide most services were raised in line with RPI.
- Concerns were raised about a particularly high increase in the cost of applying for a Street Café and it was noted that prices had been suppressed whilst the Lexicon was being built to encourage new traders and prices now reflected the more prosperous town centre
- Increase in Sports Hire were a reflection of other local authorities cost for similar facilities and followed the councils policy to view competitor's pricing.
- For buildings with a size of over 100,000sqm, it was confirmed that the cost package would be bespoke.
- The affects of China no longer taking aluminium and plastics would have a minimal effect on addressing waste and recycling in the Borough.
- Traffic Survey data was being sold to third party consultants for commercial use and it was questioned whether the price could be increased.
- A range of feedback had been received from members of the public regarding the new LED lights and it was confirmed there would be enough budget to look at individual areas and make adjustments where necessary.
- Steve Loudoun would report back on the costs and capital gains as a result of the new LED lighting installed.
- The delivery of housing by Surrey Heath had been slower than anticipated which meant their requirement for SANG was also reduced. It was confirmed that the land could be returned to BFC for SANG use but was currently not needed.
- Steve Loudoun would report back on why there was 64.4% increase in cost to use the memorial chapel at the Crematorium
- The events charging policy at local libraries was as per council policy so a surplus would be made to cover both the speaker and additional money towards running costs.
- Concerns were raised about the increase in cost for the residents parking scheme as some residents struggled to afford the cost of the permits and consequently were parking just outside the permit zone. It was noted the full cost of the scheme was currently not being covered. Steve Loudoun would confirm what the cost would be to make it cost neutral.
- Concerns were raised about whether the cost savings proposed in the budget would impact services provided by the Council and it was confirmed that the savings were believed to be genuine efficiencies which may increase some risks but would not impact services.

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### Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 10 January 2018

#### 88. 2018/19 Draft Budget Proposals

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning presented the Draft Budget Proposals for 2018/19 for Children, Young People and Learning.

It was noted that any specific financial questions from Members would be directed to the Finance Business Partner for Children, Young People and Learning.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- It was clarified that provision for inflation and pay awards would come out of the schools budget.
- Clarity was requested around paragraph 8.13 and 8.14 in the report regarding reduction in schools budget. The Director commented that no school in Bracknell Forest was in a detrimental budget situation, rather there were some schools which would gain more than others. The central government agreed national funding formula for schools put a cap on the amount to be passed to schools over a 2 year implementation period. Members requested that this message be clarified before being publicised to schools and through the budget.
- The revenue funding values from Pupil Premium and Free School Meals grants was not yet known for 2018/19. It was anticipated that other demands on school budgets such as pay awards to teaching staff may not be included in the grant allocation.
- Members recognised the potential impact of having a change of Minister for Education in central government.
- It was clarified that the Local Authority would be supporting all schools to ensure their budget was used to best effect.
- Following the withdrawal of the Educational Services grant, the Schools Forum had agreed to contribute £20 per child to fund Educational Services going forward.
- Although the timescale to respond to the settlement seemed short to Members, the Director gave reassurance that Governing Bodies had seen the information in draft form before the settlement was formally released on 16 December 2017.
- The outcomes for other Local Authorities were not known, however it was understood that the London boroughs and large county Councils had not benefitted from the new formula.
- Members were reassured that the Elevate programme would remain in Bracknell Forest, however the mechanics of delivery would change to meet the demand of online services rather than a shop front in Princess Square.
- Statutory education psychology on the recommendation of a school would continue to be funded by the Local Authority, but parents who requested an education psychologist assessment would now be charged.
- It was clarified that if CAMHS or another Health service referred a child to Education Services, they should describe the necessary outcome rather than prescribing a service such as Education Psychology.
- It was requested that Members' concern be noted regarding the figures in the Capital Programme bids, as it was felt that these were too costly.

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**Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 11 January 2018**

**31. 2018/19 Draft Budget Proposals**

The Panel noted that the Executive had agreed the Council's draft budget proposals for 2018/19 as the basis for consultation with the O&S Commission, O&S Panels and other interested parties. The detailed figures were of little relevance to the Panel as the Public Health grant was almost entirely funded from ring-fenced specific grant.

The Borough Treasurer's report indicated that the Public Health Grant in 2017/18 was £4,157,000 and the Panel was informed that although the allocation for 2018/19 was likely to be around 2.5% lower, it would be possible for the Council to work within a slightly lower Public Health budget. The Panel noted the report and reserved comment in the absence of any further detail on the 2018/19 budget.

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### Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 16 January 2018

#### 78. 2018/19 Draft Budget Proposals

The Panel noted that the Executive had agreed the Council's draft budget proposals for 2018/19 as the basis for consultation with the O&S Commission, O&S Panels and other interested parties. Extracts from the 2018/19 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme reports of relevance to the Panel had been circulated to assist members to frame questions and any comments on the draft budget proposals.

The Panel noted the Service Pressures/Development for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing totalling £2,633k arising mainly from current levels of demand and legislation changes. However, there were also a number of offsetting savings that had been identified, which together with the substantial Transformation Programme savings shown in the commitment budget, would enable the Council to set a manageable budget for the year ahead.

Arising from comments and questions the Panel noted:

- There was a risk that now that the Government had placed for the responsibility for social care with the Secretary of State for Health, changes could follow which would adversely affect the Better Care Fund Allocation.
- The new conversations model for care assessors together with other initiatives, including a greater involvement with the voluntary sector, had enabled substantial transformation savings to be built into the commitment budget in both 2018/19 and 2019/20 which were considered to be sustainable.
- The pressure arising from the high cost of the transfer of care packages from Children's to Adult was due high cost family expectations, particularly around the education element of the package. In the longer term the Transformation Programme was due to look at ways the cost of these packages could be managed more effectively.
- The saving of £27k in rent for the Waymead premises since this would no longer be used. Alternative more suitable premises would be found to continue to provide respite care.
- A small increase in the fee for making arrangements to find an alternative placement for people (funding their own care) whose care provider had failed. The cost of the care remained with the individual.
- The Capital Programme contained provision to increase the loan to Downshire Homes Ltd (DHL) to purchase 25 properties for homeless households and 5 properties for households with learning disabilities. A review of the governance arrangements for DHL was due to take place.

The Director was asked to circulate to members further information /explanation on the following:

- The provision of £8k in the commitment budget for 2019/20 for support to former Independent Living Fund recipients.
- Clarification about the Council owned properties in Reading, Blackwater Valley and East Thames Valley used for homeless families.