



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

3

30 January 2020

7.02 pm – 9.35 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Doina Cornell (Chair)	P	Councillor Steve Robinson	P
Councillor Martin Whiteside (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Mattie Ross	P
Councillor Nigel Cooper	P	Councillor Tom Skinner	A
Councillor Stephen Davies	P	Councillor Chas Townley	P
Councillor Nick Hurst	P	Councillor Ken Tucker	P
Councillor Keith Pearson	P	Councillor Debbie Young	A
Councillor Simon Pickering	P		
P = Present		A = Absent	

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive	Strategic Director of Resources
Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer	Interim Accountancy Manager
	Democratic Services and Elections

SRC.060

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Skinner and Young.

SRC.061

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

SRC.062

MINUTES

RESOLVED

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2019.

SRC.063

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

SRC.064**THE FAIR PAY AND SENIOR PAY POLICY STATEMENT**

The Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer outlined the annual policy statement. In response to a question he explained that in some instances staff worked part-time and in two different roles and were paid on two different salary scales.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL **That the statement is approved.**

SRC.065**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL CAPITAL STRATEGY**

The Strategic Director of Resources outlined the Capital Strategy which was reviewed annually. There was very little change from last year but more detail around leasing and how this would be accounted for. Clarification was given regarding the allocation of monies from Capital Receipts. Councillor Townley congratulated the Finance Team on their very comprehensive report.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL **To approve the Capital Strategy at Appendix A.**

SRC.066**THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2020/21, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Strategic Director of Resources outlined the above report that requested Members to consider the Council's financial position over the medium term and set a budget and the level of council tax for 2020/21.

All of the service committees had already agreed their budgets at their recent Committee meetings with recommendations to Strategy and Resources Committee who would make recommendations to full Council.

The estimates of major funding sources from the Government's one year spending review were highlighted, including the Government deferring its major reviews of Local Government funding until 2021/22. Funding from the New Homes Bonus had been rapidly declining and was expected to cease from 2023/24.

Reports on both the canal and Brimscombe Port projects would be presented at April's Committee meeting. The Fees and Charges Policy set out a comprehensive list of all fees and charges for clarity. It was anticipated that this would bring in additional income of £126k.

In response to Members' questions the following points were clarified:-

- Reference paragraph 3.14 the £106k was an addition to the budget for property maintenance. These budgets had previously remained fixed for many years and in the meantime inflation had considerably reduced their value.
- General fund to HRA – a business case for insourcing the day to day repair and maintenance of our Council houses had been made. There were no savings included within the MTFP but the service would be closely monitored and savings considered in future budget rounds should they materialise.

- Reference paragraphs 3.23 (£100k) and 3.24 (£50k); these were both growth items for the new Strategic Leadership Team to have the resources to (a) bring sites within the district that are currently empty or disused into use and (b) for the Council's Health and Wellbeing team to work with outside organisations to develop projects to assist community groups. Both of these sums of money were estimates for the resources needed to bring projects forward.
- Reference page 61, the Environment Committee's budget for Carbon Management was mostly made up of salaries. More information about the breakdown of that budget would be sent to Members by the Strategic Director of Resources. At the present time there is work underway to produce an action plan. Updates are provided at the Environment Committee.
- The naming of new streets was usually undertaken by the Parish/Town Council at the request of the developer.
- Reference paragraph 3.17, the current lease expires in September 2020 and dialogue with the College is taking place.
- The cost for Car Parks (Other) on page 59 referred to enforcement.
- Some fees and charges for e.g. gambling were statutory.
- The Government's final settlement was expected in February 2020.

During debate Councillor Cooper raised concerns regarding the Council investing a considerable sum of money into one investment and not being able to call on the money quickly if required. Liquidity must remain a primary concern.

It was commented that the Audit and Standards Committee performed their function very well. Where possible investments should be made within the District. The local plan review should recognise the use of brownfield sites.

It was suggested that an opportunity had been missed regarding the climate emergency in terms of the budget; an Officer/Member Group would be reviewing this. Funding had been identified for carbon reduction projects within the reserves and the Officer/Member Group would be considering which projects could be funded or facilitated. Budgets could be further reviewed as workstreams develop.

Councillor Whiteside commented that the Council needed to be more creative to reduce the risk of flooding, not only on individual sites but on a whole valley scale. Community building and working in partnerships with others would reduce costs.

Councillor Pickering stated that not only the Council's existing housing stock but also the energy performance of privately owned homes needed to be improved. The Council could spend some money on providing guidance. People needed to be trained in retrofitting if this is to be deliverable and improving the energy performance of housing within the district would help reduce carbon emissions. It was possible for Grade II listed buildings to add internal insulation.

Councillor Townley had carried out research that had been based on energy certificates dating back from 2014. He estimated that a baseline figure of £30k may need to be spent on average per household and would circulate his research.

Councillor Cornell confirmed that there was a budget of £200k in the reserves for climate change. Discussions would be taking place with Group Leaders on projects working towards carbon neutrality next week.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried, with one abstention.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL (Subject to the Government's final settlement announcements):

1. To approve the updated Medium Term Financial Plan as set out in Appendices A-E;
2. To increase the council tax by £5 to £212.52 at Band D, an increase of less than 10p per week for the services provided by Stroud District Council;
3. To note the uncertainty around the impact of changes to local government funding in 2021/22;
4. To approve the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix E;
5. To approve the planned changes to the reserves as set out in Section 4 of the report and Appendix F;
6. To approve the fees and charges policy and list of Council fees and charges as set out in Appendices G and H.

SRC.067**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) – REVISED 2019/20 AND ORIGINAL 2020/21 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20 – 2023/24**

The Interim Accountancy Manager presented the above report which outlined the revised estimates for 2019/20 and the original estimates for 2020/21. It was anticipated that there would be a saving of £40k next year. For 2020/21 there was the sum of £181k in reserves. The increases were set out within the report. The charges for gas had been reduced and the savings would be passed on to our tenants.

It was not anticipated that there would be any savings made in 2021 for the in-house housing repairs and maintenance service. Reports would be presented to future meetings of both Housing Committee and Strategy and Resources Committee outlining costs against the business case.

There were changes to the capital programme because both the green and amber schemes are expected to be completed. HRA properties could be used for temporary accommodation which would enable tenants to remain within their local area.

Attention was drawn to the assumption that the rate of inflation would not be higher than 2%. If the rate did rise above 2% it could cause financial pressure on the HRA.

Councillor Pearson expressed his concern that 2 years ago garage sites in Upton St Leonards were going to be redeveloped and no building works had begun. Councillor Townley confirmed that a report providing an update would be presented to Housing Committee in either March/June 2020.

A development strategy on how the HRA would be looking to purchase land would be considered by the Housing Committee. In the meantime having a land purchase budget in place would enable Officers to purchase land quickly under delegated powers, should the opportunity arise.

Councillor Hurst inquired on the deliverability of the former Ship Inn site and its future use. In response, Councillor Townley, Chair of Housing Committee confirmed that discussions were taking place with the Town Council; all options are being explored. Sometimes the deliverability of a project was outside of our control due to unforeseen factors.

Councillor Townley confirmed that the figures within the report were the best estimates that could be made given the complexities. His view was that the budget had been well constructed.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

- RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**
1. The revised HRA revenue budget for 2019/20 and original budget 2020/21 are approved.
 2. The movement to and from HRA balances and capital reserves as detailed in Appendix B and section Error! Reference source not found. are approved.
 3. That from 1 April 2020:
 - i) Social rents and affordable rents are increased by 2.7%, in line with national rent guidance.
 - ii) Garage rents are increased by 2.7%.
 - iii) Landlord service charges are increased by 2.7%, except district heating charges which are decreased by an average of 21%.
 As detailed in Appendix A.
 4. That the HRA Capital Programme for 2019/20 to 2023/24, as detailed in Appendix C, be included in the Council's Capital Programme.

SRC.068

CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN PROGRESS

The Chief Executive outlined the progress that had been made since the last update in December. The Salvation Army building was no longer available to purchase but had been offered to the Council on a long lease. This option was currently being explored. The targets for CDP 3.13 would be within the next update.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

- RESOLVED** To note the progress made on the Corporate Delivery Plan Key Actions for 2019-20, as set out in Appendix 1 and highlighted in this report.

SRC.069

LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS

The Chief Executive outlined the progress that had been made. Keith Gerrard the Strategic Director of Communities would be starting on 2 March 2020. We were very close to achieving our first four objectives and would be working on the other four once all new Strategic Directors were in post. The new Corporate Policy and Governance Team would be helping to meet these objectives.

Councillor Robinson requested a list of Strategic Directors and the services that would report to them and the Chief Executive confirmed that this would be circulated at a future date.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

- RESOLVED** To note the progress made in Quarter 3 on implementing the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

SRC.070**WORK PROGRAMME**

The Changing Future of Play Areas scheduled for 5 March 2020 needed more work to be undertaken and would be presented at a future meeting. Two additional items were added to the meeting on 16 April 2020, Water Source Heat Pumps and the Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 3.

RESOLVED To note the above update to the Work Programme.

SRC.071**MEMBER/OFFICER REPORTS****Performance Monitoring**

The notes from January's meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting. Councillor Pearson was concerned that the risk CCR.10 had been reduced from 16 to 4. The planning service had recently lost several very experienced members of staff. The perception of Town and Parish Councils was that planning was not up to speed and there were major problems with the planning portal. The Strategic Director of Resources confirmed he would look into this. The new performance monitoring template was very good and there were no other issues to report.

Leadership Gloucestershire

Councillor Cornell confirmed that the last meeting had taken place on 19 December 2019. Several agenda items had been deferred; the next meeting was due to be held in March 2020. New funding streams would be explored to bring income into the district. More information would be available for Committee's meeting in March.

The Chief Executive had recently been to the Houses of Parliament and confirmed that devolution was back on the agenda with more accountability. The message was for District Councils in Gloucestershire to work together.

SRC.072**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

There were none.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.

Chair