

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 4 February 2014

Present:

Councillor Sutton (Chair)
Councillors Denham, Fullam, Hannaford, Mrs Henson, Owen and Pearson

Apologies:

Councillor Edwards

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Director Housing, Assistant Director City Development, Assistant Director Finance, Assistant Director Customer Access, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, HR Business Manager, Senior Housing Development Officer and Democratic Services Manager (Committees)

15

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

16

FUTURE WORKINGS OF SCRUTINY

The Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support advised of the recommendations of all three Scrutiny Committees on the establishment of a cross party working group to look into the future workings of scrutiny. The proposals should be brought back to Executive and then, subject to approval, be put to Full Council.

Councillor Shiel spoke under Standing Order no.44. He raised concerns regarding the changes proposed to the original recommendations of the task and finish group. He felt that the proposal would delay the good work that the task and finish group had already undertaken. The task and finish group meetings had been conducted in a democratic way and the Leader of the Council had been invited to attend.

Members discussed the role of scrutiny as a critical friend and the need for the Council to have a robust scrutiny process to ensure that Councillors were held to account.

Whilst the majority of Members supported the formation of a cross party working group to look into the future workings of Scrutiny, other Members had concerns regarding the merits of establishing a cross party working group in light of the previous work that had already taken place on the Scrutiny process.

RECOMMENDATION to Council that a cross party working group be established to look into the future workings of scrutiny and that the proposals are brought back through Executive to Full Council.

(In accordance with Standing Order 43, Councillors Mrs Henson and Fullam requested that their names be recorded as having absented from voting)

17

MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2014/15

The report and recommendations of the City Council's Independent Remuneration Panel were submitted in relation to Members' Allowances for 2014/15.

RESOLVED that this report be deferred.

18

ANNUAL PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The report of the Human Resources Business Manager was submitted seeking approval to the Council's Annual Pay Policy Statement 2014/15 which must be approved by Full Council each financial year in line with legislation. The policy included the introduction of Full Council approval for severance payments in excess of £100,000 to be effective from 1 April 2014 for decisions taken on or later than that date.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at its meeting on 22 January 2014 and the support and comments of the Members were noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the Pay Policy Statement 2014/15 be adopted and published in accordance with legislation.

19

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2014/15

The report of the Assistant Director Finance was submitted, seeking adoption by the Council of the Treasury Management Strategy report, incorporating the Annual Investment Strategy 2014/15, as required under section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003. The maximum that could be lent to any one organisation, other than the UK Government, would be £5 million and for an individual bank the limit would be £3 million.

The Assistant Director Finance clarified that there was no limit on the amount of funds that could be placed in the United Kingdom and investments in Foreign Countries would be limited to £3 million per country.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at its meeting on 22 January 2014 and the support and comments of the Members were noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council to adopt the new Treasury Management Strategy and delegations contained therein.

20

THE PRUDENTIAL CODE FOR CAPITAL FINANCE IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES (INCORPORATING THE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF MINIMUM REVENUE POSITION)

The report of the Assistant Director Finance was submitted setting out the proposed 2014/15 prudential indicators for capital finance for adoption by the Council and setting the annual statement for Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The report set out the maximum that the Section 151 Officer was allowed to borrow to cover the Operational Boundary and day to day Cashflow needs of the Council.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at its meeting on 22 January 2014 and the support and comments of the Members were noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council to adopt the:-

- (1) Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix A–C; and
- (2) Annual Statement of Minimum Revenue Provision for the Council.

21 **GENERAL FUND REVENUE ESTIMATES AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15**

The report of the Assistant Director Finance was submitted, seeking approval of the General Fund revenue estimates for 2014/15. This report also included the proposed Capital Programme for 2014/15 and future years, and a note of the proposals in respect of the Housing Revenue Account. Members were advised that this report was still in draft form as the final grant settlement had not yet been received.

Members expressed their frustration at the late notification of the final grant settlement.

The Assistant Director Finance clarified that £2 million had been set aside for major infrastructure from the New Homes Bonus with £0.5 million already being allocated.

The majority of Members supported the report and welcomed the flexibility to vary the fees and charges and the removal of the ring fence on capital receipts for the Canal Basin. Some other Members felt they could not support all the recommendations proposed.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at its meeting on 22 January 2014 and the support and comments of the Members were noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council:-

- (1) to approve the Council's overall spending proposals in respect of both its revenue and capital budgets;
- (2) to set aside the amounts allocated from the New Homes Bonus for major infrastructure along with the unallocated funds to finance the proposed new leisure complex, with any additional funding left over used to support the revenue budget in terms of financing and repaying borrowing that has been incurred;
- (3) to remove the ring-fence on capital receipts for the Canal Basin project;
- (4) to approve the council tax for each Band as set out in section 21.3, subject to Devon County Council, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Devon and Cornwall and the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority confirming their Band D levels respectively;
- (5) when the actual council tax amounts for Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Police Authority, and the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority are set then the revised council tax levels be submitted to Council on 25 February 2014 for approval; and

- (6) to note the Statement given by the chief finance officer as required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.

(In accordance with Standing Order 43, Councillors Mrs Henson and Fullam requested that their names be recorded as having voted against the recommendation)

22

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT DEVELOPMENT BRIEF FOR SOUTH WEST ALPHINGTON

The report of the Assistant Director City Development was submitted seeking views on a draft Development Brief for South West Alphington and approval of arrangements for public consultation on the Development Brief, in advance of its adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. The Brief related to the Council's purpose to 'deliver good development'.

Members were updated on the background, the content of the Draft Development Brief, the public consultation and the comments from the Alphington Village Forum. It was proposed that the Development Brief be subject to wider public consultation so that it could be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Planning Member Working Group had supported the document.

Councillor Clark spoke under Standing Order no.44. She was speaking at a Local Ward Councillor and representing the Alphington Village Forum. She was concerned that any development should protect the character of the existing area, asked who had assessed the gross developable area and was of the view that the maximum density should be 30 dwellings per hectare.

Councillor Ruffle spoke under Standing Order no.44. He had concerns regarding traffic congestion which would be exacerbated by the impact of the development in neighbouring Teignbridge and stated that self enforcing 20mph zones were essential. He questioned if the density proposed included 72 and 76 Chudleigh Road and if the proposed allotments would be able to be used by those allotment holders that would be displaced from the allotments near the school.

The Chair thanked the officers involved for all their hard work and welcomed the input by Alphington residents in the consultation process. She stated that a Devon County Council Highways representative had attended Planning Member Working Group and Members had raised with him the issue of a road layout which limited speeds to 20mph.

Members discussed the highway impact, speed reducing measures such as chicanes and the need to protect the skyline of the city. Hopefully Alphington residents would benefit from the New Homes Bonus grant by applying for community funds from the Council's budget that it set aside from this grant for community projects.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Access welcomed the 35% affordable housing and allotments whilst recognising that there was a need to be realistic about the density.

The Assistant Director City Development clarified that the Alphington Forum proposed maximum density was inconsistent with the Council's policy; the gross developable area had been calculated by the Council although this would need to be confirmed with the developer; 72 and 76 Chudleigh Road were not included in

the density; and that it was a planning law requirement that only new residents could apply for the proposed new allotments.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the draft Brief be approved as a basis for public consultation; and
- (2) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director City Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder City Development, to agree any further minor editorial amendments required prior to publication.

23

OPENING HOURS FOR CIVIC CENTRE -BASED SERVICES

The report of the Assistant Director Customer Access was submitted providing a review of the data that related to the Thursday late night opening pilot for Civic Centre-based services. The report also sought Members' views on future opening hours for the relevant services. The report was presented in the context of the Council's Customer Access work to determine the best way to respond to customers' needs and it was highlighted that the proposed hours could change in the future as a result of work to determine the most responsive and cost effective channels in which to meet customers' needs.

The Assistant Director for Customer Access updated Members on the data gathering exercise and the proposals to alter the opening hours from 8:30am-5pm Monday to Friday and 8:30am to 7pm Thursday to 9am to 5pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday and 9am to 6pm on Monday and Thursday. The hours of the Customer Service Centre would be continually reviewed to ensure that the opening hours met the demands and needs of the customer.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Access stated that the demands of customers would be kept under review and that work was being done to redevelop the Council's order to promote service delivery on line where appropriate.

The Assistant Director Customer Access clarified that due to the need for consultation with staff and stakeholders, it was anticipated that the revised hours would not come into force until at least the end of February. The cost of the Pilot was £22,314 which included publicity and staff overtime costs.

Members agreed that the current opening hours should be amended at the same time as commencing the new hours. It was noted that consultation with staff was taking place to identify and resolve any issues.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) efforts to ensure that the staff resources are used effectively in order to meet customer demand as part of the Council's systems thinking approach are noted;
- (2) the revised opening hours for the CSC be effective from the completion of consultation with affected staff for the services included in the 'Help Me' System; and
- (3) the end date of the current pilot of opening until 7pm on Thursdays be no later than Mid March to allow for consultation with staff and stakeholders.

24

RESEARCH PROJECT TO INVESTIGATE HOUSING NEED IN EXETER

The report of the Assistant Director Housing was submitted requesting approval to carry out a major research project into housing need in Exeter. Members were advised that the project was in partnership with Exeter University and would be funded from Section 106 monies.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Access Customer Access stated that this data gathering exercise would be invaluable to understand housing need and demand in Exeter.

The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture advised that work being undertaken by the Cost of Living Forum which would feed into this research project.

Members supported this research project noting that it would be a useful document when reviewing the council house waiting list and the Council's allocations policy.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the undertaking of a Research Project to investigate housing need in Exeter and, by extension, the functioning of the housing market in Exeter, be approved, this Research Project to inform the new Housing Strategy.
- (2) the research would be carried out by Exeter University in partnership with the Council's Housing Development Team, the total cost would not exceed £30,000 net, be noted.

25

EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2014-17

The report of the Assistant Director Housing was submitted seeking the adoption of the Empty Homes Strategy 2014-17 which sets out how the Council would deal with privately owned empty homes within the city. Members were advised that the Empty Homes Strategy had been developed in line with purposes in the Corporate Plan and of the five key objectives which flowed through the strategy.

Members welcomed this robust approach to bring empty homes back into use.

RESOLVED that the Empty Homes Strategy 2014-2017 be approved.

26

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

27

TENDER OF HOUSING GAS CONTRACT

The report of the Assistant Director Housing was submitted seeking approval to tender the new gas contract operating a different service delivery model.

Members supported that way forward.

RESOLVED that the tendering of the gas contract following a different service delivery model be approved.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.39 pm)

Chair

The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 25 February 2014.