

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held on Wednesday, 14 December 2022 in the Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 9.30 am
Concluded 9.55 am

Members of the Executive – Councillors

LABOUR
Hinchcliffe
I Khan
Ross-Shaw
Jabar
Duffy

Observers: Councillor Pollard

Apologies: Councillor Sarah Ferriby

178. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

179. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

180. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

There were no recommendations to the Executive.

181. PROPOSED FINANCIAL PLAN AND BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2023/24

The Budget proposals had been developed under an unprecedented level of uncertainty and financial pressure. They sought to meet cost pressures arising from inflation and growing demand; invest in support to the most vulnerable, protect frontline services as far as is possible from cuts, and retain capacity to deliver on the district's ambitions for clean and inclusive growth.

Given the on-going uncertainty around funding and the volatility of the external environment a one-year budget is proposed.

The Budget proposals included:

- £58.6m to meet cost pressures arising from inflation and increases in pay and in the National Living Wage. Given the volatility of energy prices this may be subject to change before Budget Council in February 2023.
- Significant new investment in support for Children's Social Care of £45m subject to agreement with the new Children's Trust and Department for Education.
- Additional support for Adult Social Care of £5m.
- £2.7m to meet the cost of demographic growth in Adults, Children's and Waste Services.
- £31.3m of budgeted savings; making greater use of financing flexibilities, additional income, and partner contributions as outlined in Appendix E and F to Document "AI".
- 4.99% increase in Council tax and Social Care Precept as outlined in the Chancellor's Autumn statement, raising an additional £11m for vital local services.
- £30.5m of reserve use for as outlined in Appendix G to Document "AI", pending the publication of the Government's provisional settlement in late December.
- The proposals would potentially result in 3 redundancies, and every effort would be made to ensure that staff affected will be redeployed in line with Council policy.
- The intent to continue to focus on the delivery of efficiencies and cost-effective service delivery whilst improving outcomes.
- Proposals for a number of new investments to be added to the Capital Investment Plan including Vehicle replacements (£3m), Property Programme improvements including investments to help move the Councils estate to net zero (£4m) - this will help supplement other energy efficiency schemes already in the CIP, IT equipment upgrades (£2m), Additional contingency to help mitigate additional construction inflation (£10m), and City Centre Regeneration (£18m).

While increased Council tax and the use of reserves were in line with Government expectations for dealing with current financial challenges, they do not represent a fair or sustainable solution to those challenges. The Council will continue to lobby for the reforms and certainty required to secure financial stability and deliver the investment that the district needs.

A number of assumptions had been made about how national funding outlined by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement would apply to Council finances. The actual amounts to be received will be better known when the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities publishes the Provisional Local Government Settlement in late December 2022.

The Leader stated that the budget position was constrained going into 2023/24, with reliance being placed on drawing on reserves. Since 2010, £310m had been taken out of the Council's budget, which had had a significant impact on service delivery.

Demand for services were growing, with critical pressures in Adults and Children's Social Care. Child poverty levels in the district were increasing which would have a lasting impact. Despite proposed increases of 5% to Council Tax bills, the level of revenue raised remained relative, given the low Council Tax base and the majority of the district's housing being in the lower Council Tax bands, compared with the affluent south.

Growing the economy was seen as the way out of poverty, however Government had to understand the financial constraints facing Councils and reform Local Government funding so the equity is restored.

The Council had a transformation policy which it was adhering to, but the pressures in Adult and Children's Social Care remained a critical issue both locally and nationally, with the Local Government Association recognising the huge funding gap facing Councils up and down the country, therefore a sustainable way of funding Local Government was desperately needed.

The Assistant Director for the Office of the Chief Executive stated that the aim of the budget consultation was to reach out to as many people as possible by using effective messaging, bespoke engagement and exploiting the online potential.

The Leader highlighted that the budget consultation process would run until the 25 January 2023, and she urged that residents and interested parties have their say on the budget and make their views known, and it was therefore:

Resolved –

That Executive, having considered the Council's public sector equality duty as set out in Document "A1":

- (1) Approve for consultation as required with the public, interested parties, staff and Trade Unions the proposed Council Tax and Social Care precept for 2022/23 set out in section 4.8 to Document "A1".**
- (2) Approve for consultation as required with the public, interested parties, staff and Trade Unions the recurring investments as set out in Appendix C to Document "A1".**
- (3) Approve for consultation as required with the public, interested parties, staff and Trade Unions the new savings proposals as set out in Appendix E to Document "A1".**

- (4) **Note the proposed use of reserves as set out in Appendix G to Document “AI”.**
- (5) **Approve for consultation the proposed new capital schemes as set out in section 7.10 and 7.11 to Document “AI”.**
- (6) **Approve the consultation mechanisms and processes set out in section 8 to Document “AI”.**
- (7) **Approve for consultation as required with the public, interested parties, staff and Trade Unions the existing pressures as set out in Appendix “A” to Document “AI”.**

ACTION: Director of Finance

Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Executive

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER