

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held on Thursday, 11 January 2024 in Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 10.30 am
Concluded 11.25 am

Members of the Executive – Councillors

| |
|---------------------|
| LABOUR |
| Hinchcliffe (Chair) |
| I Khan |
| Ross-Shaw |
| Ferriby |
| Jabar |
| Duffy |

Observers: Councillors J Clarke Coates, Davies, Felstead, Love, Poulsen, Pollard and Steele

Councillor Hinchcliffe in the Chair

68. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

The Director of Legal and Governance stated that Executive Members will be granted dispensations under the Localism Act 2011 in relation to their declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests relating to employment, sponsorship and land prior to the consideration of the Budget on 20 February 2023.

ACTION: Director of Legal and Governance

69. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

70. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

There were no recommendations to the Executive.

LEADER OF COUNCIL & CORPORATE

(Councillor Hinchcliffe)

71. 2024-25 BUDGET PROPOSALS - FINANCIAL ANALYSIS, INITIAL FINANCIAL OUTLOOK AND BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024-25 AND BEYOND

The Director of Finance submitted a report (**Document “AE”**) which set out the 2024-25 Budget Proposals - Financial Analysis, Initial Financial Outlook and Budget proposals for 2024-25 and beyond.

The Leader stated that the Council has had to make cuts in the region of £350m since 2010, as the Government had failed to adequately fund Local Government. This reduction was now particularly acute in the face of increasing demand for services such as adult and children’s social care as well as, inflationary pressures. The situation was untenable and before the Executive this morning were a set of budget proposals for 2024/2025.

The Chief Executive stated that this was very much a partial budget based on the proviso that we manage to obtain the exceptional financial support that had been requested from Government. Based on the projection there was a projected gap of £120m for 2024/2025; a number of efficiency savings were set out in the report to plug this fiscal gap.

The Director of Finance set out the budget proposals for 2024/2025 following the Local Government Settlement which were detailed in Document “AE” and earmarked for consultation with staff, Trade Unions, public and interested parties. The proposals had been developed in an unprecedented level of financial pressure and in the context of a rise in the demand for adult and children social care services. The Council was in close dialogue with Government regarding the challenges we faced, and that without financial support the Council would not be able to deliver a balanced budget for 2024/2025. Further details of the budget proposals were alluded to, the details of which were set out in Document “AE” and the related appendices.

The public consultation process was also referred to and that the closing date for this consultation will be 17 February 2024, with the final report setting out the details will be presented to Budget Executive meeting. The consultation process will be expansive and target as many stakeholders as possible. Equality Impact Assessments had been undertaken on the proposals and the details will also be presented to the Budget Executive.

The Leader in particular highlighted the gap in the funding of adult and children’s social care and the need for Government to bridge this gap was imperative. The Council valued all Council services, and it was with a heavy heart that these cuts were being proposed, however it was imperative that the Council set a balanced budget. The Leader alluded to the difference between capital and revenue funding and stressed that capital funding could not be utilised for revenue purposes.

The Deputy Leader echoed the above comments and stressed that many

Councils up and down the country faced a similar situation to the one we faced in Bradford and it demonstrated the dire financial situation facing Councils, and that without the necessary funding more and more Councils would be issuing Section 114 notices.

The Children and Families Portfolio Holder stated that the continued improvements being made in Children's Social Care had to be seen in the context of rising demand for services, however the lack of funding was exacerbating the situation.

A number of Councillors from the main opposition group were present at the meeting and asked a number of questions around the proposed budget proposals, which are set out below, together with the responses.

That it was difficult to make alternative budget proposals without having sight of the budget beforehand. In response, the Leader stated that in making alternative budget proposals, the opposition group needed to be in dialogue with finance officers.

That the growth in the district referred to in the report did not have any value attributed to it, in terms of a growth in GDP or the number of jobs created as a result of this growth. In response the Leader stated that economic growth and regeneration were very much part of our ambitions for the district which would lead to job creation and enable people to come out of poverty, and that a number of initiatives over the years had enabled this growth to happen.

That despite the financial pressures facing the Council there has been a longstanding issue with regards to the Councils' finances and that the proposals set out today had not been thoroughly thought out and in terms of 1 City Park and what level of occupancy would be required in order for a profit to be made. That the proposed cuts disproportionately impacted on the Shipley and Keighley wards, in particular with the cuts proposed for the Youth Service. That the Squire Lane Project would most likely be scrapped given the costs associated with this project and the money saved from this project could be better utilised to plug the gap elsewhere. In response the Leader stated that the front line youth service provision would remain unaffected and that any proposed cuts would only impact on back office. That the Squire Lane Project would be considered as part of the Leisure review. 1 City Park was a welcomed development and create jobs, and that the business case was a robust one, with an occupier to be announced in due course.

That the report lacked detail and clarity and therefore the public would struggle to fully engage with the consultation process and that further clarity was needed on issues such as asset transfer/disposals. In response the Leader stated that the proposals around sports facilities and asset disposals would be subject to further consideration by the Executive in March.

That the projected savings of 900k to the Museums and Libraries had not been achieved; that the proposed introduction of £35 for permit parking would impact on residents with the least ability to pay for the increase and that for many, access to off street parking was limited; that why was the tourist information centre in Bradford not closed earlier; why was the proposed efficient routing system for waste collection not implemented earlier; Why was a trust never set up for Ingleborough Hall; that the free parking for Councillors should be removed. In

response the Leader stated the parking proposal charges was in line with what other Councils were doing; the leasing arrangements for the library had not yet been renegotiated for the central library; in terms of the rerouting of the waste refused vehicles, further improvements and efficiencies were already being looked at. That as there was backlog of maintenance and the fact that the Ingleborough Hall was not running to full capacity, a trust was never pursued, and that alternative provision was available.

The Leader stressed that despite the financial challenges, the Council's ambitions for the district remained unchanged as well growing the economy and improving transport links for the benefit of our residents. However, the funding needs of this Council had to be recognised by Government. She also urged the public and interested parties to engage with the budget consultation process, and it was therefore:

Resolved –

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

- (1) Approved for consultation as required with the public, interested parties, staff and Trade Unions the proposed Council Tax and Social Care precept for 2024-25 as set out in section 5.1. to Document "AE".**
- (2) Noted the recurring pressures as set out in Appendix B to Document "AE".**
- (3) Noted the savings previously consulted on as set out in Appendix C to Document "AE".**
- (4) Approved for consultation as required with the public, interested parties, staff and Trade Unions the new savings proposals as set out in Appendix D to Document "AE".**
- (5) Noted the Financing and central budget adjustments as set out in Appendix E to Document "AE".**
- (6) Noted the proposed new capital schemes and removals from the Capital investment plan as set out in section 10 to Document "AE".**
- (7) Approved a HRA rent increase in accordance with the Government's Rent Standard of CPI (6.7% as at September 2023) +1%, in total 7.7%, for Council housing stock from 1 April 2024.**
- (8) Approved an increase to HRA service charges for Tenants in Extra Care of CPI (6.7% as at September 2023) that is 6.7% from 1 April 2024.**
- (9) Approved the consultation mechanisms and processes as set out in section 12 to Document "AE".**
- (10) Approved to join the LCR Business Rates pool as outlined in section 5.10 to Document "AE", noting that the continuation of the Pool will be dependent on none of the member authorities choosing to withdraw within the statutory period after designation.**

To be actioned by: Director of Finance

Overview and 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