

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

1 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mrs R Camamile and Mr KWP Lynch – Vice-Chairman

Mr DC Bill MBE, Mr SL Bray, Mr WJ Crooks, Mr DW MacDonald, Mr BE Sutton,
Mr R Ward, Mr HG Williams, Mr DS Cope, Mrs H Smith and Miss DM Taylor

Also in attendance: Councillor MA Cook, Councillor M Hall, Councillor J Kirby, Councillor
K Morrell, Councillor M Nickerson and Councillor MJ Surtees

Officers in attendance: Rebecca Owen, Ilyas Bham, Bill Cullen, Julie Kenny, Caroline
Roffey and Ashley Wilson

304 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Roberts.

305 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Crooks, seconded by Councillor Camamile and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2017 be
confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

306 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

307 BUDGET REPORTS

The budget reports were presented to members and discussed separately.

308 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Scrutiny Commission received the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for
2018/19 to 2022/23. In response to a member's questions, the following points were
noted:

- Increased housing in the borough (resulting in an additional 11.3% collections since the last review) had put pressure on existing waste rounds to the point where an extra round was required. This not only necessitated an additional vehicle, but staffing and other associated costs
- Figures were included for both lease and purchase of a new refuse fleet, and due to the maintenance costs on a purchased fleet, the lease hire was the better option. It was noted that an update report on this decision would be brought to the next meeting
- The reserves would be kept at 15% but, at present, were projected to be lower in the final year of the MTFS, which was an additional year
- The Parish and Community Initiative Fund was recommended to be increased to £150,000, with an additional reserve to fund more projects if necessary

- In light of Unison objecting to the employer's pay offer of 2%, there were some reserves to meet any pressures arising from the final decision
- Income from the New Homes Bonus had dropped due to the slowing down of new home completions
- A cautious view had been taken in relation to non-domestic rates as the outcome was unknown at this stage. Whilst different figures in relation to retention of business rates had been mentioned, the method of distribution had not been outlined so there was no further clarity, but more time had been spent improving business rates forecasting in the MTFS
- Service pressures had been factored into the MTFS to ensure budgets were available where required
- Block C of the Crescent was realising a return of around £300k but it was hoped that the remaining units would be let within the next year which would increase the return in line with that originally forecast
- Some pressures in the MTFS were included last year but were due to arise in 2018/19, such as loss of dry recycling credits
- There was an increase in parking fees proposed for 2018/2019 but not for future years (subject to a separate report).

The finance team was thanked for its hard work in preparing the budgets.

309 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2018-2019

Members received the 2018/19 general fund revenue budget. Attention was drawn to the budget summary on page 44 of the agenda pack and the revised 2017/18 budget on page 46.

A member asked for clarification in relation to the discretionary business rate relief schemes as it has been suggested that the criteria used when they were agreed would limit the number of businesses eligible for them. In response it was noted that the criteria had been relaxed to enable more businesses to benefit and that a report would be produced to update members on this.

A member expressed concern about the recent news that the Chinese government was to ban importing of plastic waste and asked whether that would affect the value we receive for them. In response, it was explained that following Leicestershire County Council's direction of HBBC for dry recycling, from 1 April 2018 the county council would retain and recycle the materials collected so it would not affect HBBC.

In relation to the 'Homelessness prevention underspend due to capacity issues', it was explained that this was ring fenced grant funding intended for homelessness prevention work as agreed by Council on 7 December 2017 and the wording would be amended to more accurately reflect this.

310 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET

The 2018/19 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget, including the housing repairs account, was presented. Discussion ensued in relation to the right to buy scheme and, in response to members' questions, the following responses were provided:

- A proportion of income from right to buy sales went to the government, with HBBC retaining about 25%
- Members would be provided with figures for the amount saved in rent administration, repairs and other tenancy management costs against the lost rental income outside of the meeting

- The income from a right to buy sale depended on variables including how long the purchaser had been a tenant.

311 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017-2018 AND 2020-2021

The Scrutiny Commission gave consideration to the capital programme 2017/18 to 2020/21. Attention was drawn to the spend on the Developing Communities Fund beginning to increase now the funding was being drawn down and the increase in the Parish & Community Initiative Fund.

312 FEES AND CHARGES 2018-2019

Consideration was given to the fees and charges for 2018/19. During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The decrease in the charge for collecting bulky waste to attempt to discourage fly tipping. A member suggested that it was mostly building supplies that were fly tipped, and in response it was noted that it was an issue across all categories of waste and that a countywide campaign was planned
- The need to be flexible in charging for replacement bins as it wasn't always the resident's fault that the bin was damaged. It was also noted that theft of bins can be a problem
- Co-mingled recycling would commence from 1 April. Members would be briefed before commencement
- Gambling Act licensing fees were nationally set, hence them not increasing in line with other fees
- There was a change to the way hackney carriage licensing fees were paid in that the MOT fee was now paid direct to the garage and not paid via the local authority, so although the fee appeared to have reduced, this was due to a change in the charging regime.

313 TREASURY MANAGEMENT & PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

Prudential indicators for 2017/18 to 2020/21 were outlined and the expected treasury operations were explained.

Councillor Taylor left the meeting at this juncture.

314 TACKLING UNTIDY GARDENS

This report was deferred to the following meeting.

315 OFF STREET PARKING PLACES ORDER

The Scrutiny Commission gave consideration to a report which recommended varying the Off Street Parking Places Order following an independent study of car park usage.

The introduction of card payment (including contactless) facilities was welcomed but the importance of ensuring machines were easy to use was noted.

Councillor Bray wished it to be noted that he objected to the recommendation within the report and made the following points:

- Car parking was a major issue amongst the public
- Any increase in car parking charges would push more people to park on street, exacerbating inconvenience to residents

- Whilst an additional 10p would not affect visitors to the town or occasional car park users, for those working in the town centre every day the increase would have a greater impact
- The increase in the cost of residents permits would affect those residents who already struggled to park near their homes
- Whilst it was noted that New Street car park was very busy, it was suggested that this was because it was a free car park, and any imposition of a charge (in light of the per month charge proposed) would increase on street parking and reduce use of the car park, again exacerbating the situation for residents
- Increasing charges for council car parks would put additional pressure on Sainsbury's car park and, as a result, further increase traffic in that area
- Paragraph 8.3 referred to ward councillors having had the opportunity to discuss the changes to the residents parking permits, yet the invitation to discuss had not been convenient for those that work and was not flexible and, as a result, he had not been able to engage in the discussion. He emphasised that it had been agreed that member meetings would be held at 6.30pm and that HBBC had always been supportive of councillors that were in full time employment, so this was disappointing.

Reference was made to a report scheduled for the Scrutiny Commission on 22 March on the car parks action plan, and it was suggested that the action plan and the report before members at this meeting should be brought together and in order to achieve this, this report should be deferred. In response, officers advised that this report needed to go to Council on 22 February as it was linked to the budget reports.

RESOLVED – the reservations raised be noted and submitted to Council and a further report on the town centre car parks be welcomed.

316 EQUALITIES MONITORING

Members gave consideration to a report which presented workforce data for the period April 2016 to March 2017, including the gender pay gap position. It was noted and welcomed that the pay gap was smaller than in the private sector and the local government average.

317 EXTENSION OF MEETING

Having reached 9.28pm and in accordance with council procedure rule 8, it was moved by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Lay and

RESOLVED – the meeting be permitted to continue to the conclusion of all remaining business.

318 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Scrutiny Commission was presented with the pay policy statement for 2018/19.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

319 BIG PIT SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

Councillor Williams, as chairman of the Big Pit Scrutiny Group read out the following statement:

“The Big Pit Scrutiny Group as agreed by Council on 7 December 2017 met on 8 January 2018 to scrutinise the processes followed in relation to the site known as ‘the Big Pit’, Ashby Road, Hinckley.

The group considered responses from statutory consultees in relation to the concerns raised in the petition presented to Council and other matters raised by members. The processes undertaken following the consultee responses and analysis of the information was scrutinised.

The majority of the group came to the conclusion that due consideration had been given to the matters raised and processes had been undertaken correctly in accordance with relevant procedures.

Councillors David Bill and David Cope wished to have it recorded that they remain dissatisfied and that there are still outstanding issues relating to this site that need to be resolved.”

A member expressed concern that only the processes had been investigated yet wider issues had been raised. In response, members were reminded of the remit of the Scrutiny Commission and the importance of not prejudicing the planning process.

320 SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2016-18

The work programme was noted.

(The Meeting closed at 9.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN