

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

4 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Cllr MR Lay - Chairman
Cllr C Ladkin and Cllr P Williams – Vice-Chairmen

Cllr JMT Collett, Cllr MJ Crooks, Cllr SM Gibbens, Cllr LJ Mullaney, Cllr A Pendlebury, Cllr MC Sheppard-Bools, Cllr R Webber-Jones and Cllr HG Williams

Also in attendance: Councillor MA Cook and Councillor KWP Lynch

Officers in attendance: Matthew Bowers, Bill Cullen, Julie Kenny, Rebecca Owen, Sharon Stacey, Rebecca Valentine-Wilkinson and Ashley Wilson

639 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor H Williams, seconded by Councillor Webber-Jones and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

640 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

641 BUDGET REPORTS

(a) Medium Term Financial Strategy

Members received the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22 to 2023/24, with current and anticipated pressures being highlighted. During discussion, reference was made to:

- The net reserve figures
- The phasing out of the New Homes Bonus
- Collection fund adjustments
- The savings put forward by Directors
- The increase in fee charges linked to green waste and council tax
- The impact of coronavirus restrictions on high streets and, as a result, business rates
- The importance of not using earmarked reserves to pay for structural deficits
- The crematorium project, which would be completed in the final quarter of 2021/22
- The support provided to businesses during the coronavirus pandemic which would be covered by the government.

It was explained that a balance had to be achieved between making savings and minimising service reduction and compulsory redundancies and, in anticipation of the need to make savings, over the last year a number of permanent post vacancies had not been filled. It was also noted that entering into and leading on partnerships had produced many savings. A member queried the depth in which savings had been investigated, for example stationary supplies, and in response officers reported that efficiencies had been made over several years including supplies and services. The organisation had become

lean and this was reflected in the council's relative position nationally as one of the lowest council tax rated authorities.

In relation to the impact of coronavirus restrictions on retail, it was noted that figures showed market towns had fared better than cities and it was reported that interest continued to be expressed in vacant units in Hinckley.

A member asked for a calculation to be provided when the Medium Terms Financial Strategy was considered by Council to show what level the council tax would be if the green waste service was provided at no additional cost to users.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

(b) General fund budget

The proposed general fund revenue budget was presented to the meeting.

In discussing grants for businesses during the coronavirus restrictions provided by the government and administered by the authority, it was expected that these would be completely covered by the government for 2020/21, however it was noted that these were shown within the corporate services budget for accounting purposes.

With regard to the leisure centre, it was noted that whilst restrictions were in place the leisure centre operator could claim support from the council under the contract but this would no longer be an obligation once restrictions were lifted. It was also noted that the impact of loss of legal fees for non-collection of council tax would return to normal.

In relation to costs of bed & breakfast, reference was made to the 'everyone in' initiative which was developed by the government during the first lockdown in order to accommodate anyone who was rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. The challenge was finding suitable properties to move those people onto, particularly due to the majority of those accommodated being single persons and the low number of one-bedroomed properties available, and the complex needs of some of those people for which support would be provided. The anticipated further increase in homelessness once the full financial impact of Covid-19 affected residents was highlighted, along with the anticipated increase in evictions once the current suspension of evictions was lifted. It was noted that, whilst the council worked to support its tenants and eviction was a very last resort, the majority of landlords were in the private sector and the council had little input into their operations.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

(c) Housing revenue account budget

Consideration was given to the housing revenue account budget for 2021-22.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

(d) Fees and charges

The scale of fees & charges for 2021/22 was presented to members.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

(e) Capital programme 2020-21 to 2023-24 and capital strategy

The capital strategy and capital programme were received by members.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

(f) Treasury management and prudential indicators

Members received the prudential indicators for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and the treasury management strategy for 2020/21 to 2023/24. Discussion ensued on borrowing, savings and risk.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

642 MINUTES OF FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY

The minutes of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny meetings held on 5 October and 23 November 2020 were received for information.

(The Meeting closed at 8.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN