

Extract from the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting of the
Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 6st December 2016

AS.75 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017/18 TO 2020/21

The Committee was invited to consider and to comment on the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2017/18 to 2020/21, and to provide feedback to the Cabinet and the Council as part of the formal Budget consultation process.

The circulated report had been considered by the Cabinet at its Meeting on 17th November 2016. The Leader amplified various aspects of the report, including in relation to budgetary pressures faced by the Council. The Leader drew attention to the proposed 1.99% rise in Council Tax, and explained that such proposal would depend on the Government's financial settlement for the Council, and the final budget outturn. The Leader stated that the draft MTFS would be subject to public consultation, and he expressed the hope that the response rate would be higher than it had been in previous years.

In response to various questions from Members, it was reported that the Secretary of State was currently consulting on the future of New Homes Bonus (NHB); as a rural District, the Council would wish to see NHB protected as it constituted a significant income stream; a reduction in NHB from six to four years would have an adverse financial impact for the Council; the Council received significantly less financial support from the Government than it had received five years ago as NHB had not replaced other funding streams which had been lost; the capital sum which had originated from the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of the Council's housing stock in 1997 had diminished, and could become exhausted in the near future due to permanent demands, such as mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants; in the opinion of the Leader, it was unlikely that the Council would hold significant capital reserves in the future as its asset base finite; there was no ratio between capital and revenue reserves; the Council was able to borrow to fund capital projects if it could afford to finance such borrowing, but would consider using its own funds before going out to the market; it was unlikely that any forthcoming expenditure would be met by the Local Enterprise Partnership, which tended to lead on highway structure projects; only short-term unavoidable budget pressures had been detailed at Appendix A2 to the circulated report as the Government made annual financial settlements for local government; if public sector wages increased by more than 1.1%, the Council would have to consider alternative methods for the control of salary budgets; and rate relief for small businesses would be continued in the financial year 2017/18.

In respect of that specific point, the Leader urged Members to encourage small businesses within their Wards to apply for the maximum rate relief available. In response to a further question from a Member, the Leader reminded the Committee that this Council had no remit in relation to funding for public transport services, which was a function of the County Council. Notwithstanding that, the Leader hoped that Gloucestershire County Council would continue to

support community transport initiatives, and he stated that he would be willing to support a campaign to increase the use of public transport, but not to commit the Council to funding such services. In response to questions from another Member, it was reported that, while the outcome of the recent re-valuation of the Pension Scheme were not in the public domain, the Leader was 'comfortable' with the sums detailed at Appendix A2 to the circulated report in that respect; and that the figures detailed in the circulated report related specifically to this Council.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Leader expressed the view that the Cirencester Car Parking Project constituted an opportunity for the Council, rather than a risk. It was further reported that the procurement of any additional car parking would be in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

RESOLVED that the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2020/21 be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

Note:

The Chief Finance Officer undertook to circulate details of local government financial processes to all Members of this Committee.

Responses to consultation questions from website

There were 8 resident responses to the website consultation. The questions posed and responses are set out below:

Q5 The Council has indicated that it may need to increase its council share of the council tax by a maximum of 1.99%. This would increase council tax for a Band D property to £128.91. What are your views on this level of increase in council tax?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Support	Strongly Support
3	0	1	2	2

Q6 The Council is proposing to freeze parking charges for 2017/18. What are your views on this proposal?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly Agree
0	2	1	2	3

Q7 The Council is proposing to freeze garden waste collection fees for 2017/18. What are your views on this proposal?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly Agree
0	1	0	1	6

Q8 The Council is planning to make savings by continuing to expand its shared services arrangements with its partner councils (West Oxfordshire and Forest of Dean District Councils). The programme of change is known as the 2020 Vision. By delivering savings in this way, the Council is more able to protect services for local people. How do you view this approach?

Agree
Disagree

Q9 The Council is not proposing to make any changes to standards in front line services for 2017/18. What do you think about this proposal?

Agree

Disagree

Q10 The Council is not proposing to make any changes to grants to the voluntary sector for 2017/18. What do you think about this proposal?

Agree

Disagree

Q11 The Council is considering extending its existing pre-application charging service to include a wider range of Planning application types where advice can be requested by a potential applicant. What are your views on this proposal?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	1	2	2

Narrative Feedback from Website Consultation

1	The Council has made very few visible moves, either to meet the UK's targets under the 2008 Climate Change Act within its own organisation or to help the District's inhabitants meet those targets. Other Districts, such as Stroud, have provided schemes to support their inhabitants in reducing both carbon emissions and in reducing fuel poverty.
2	IF i receive a "pay rise" of 1 per cent in 2017 Where do I find the money to pay a 1.99 per cent council tax rise?
3	I commend the Council for looking for ways of sharing with its partner Councils. However, I would rather that the Council looked at some of the grants that it gives away. I do not know why it continues to support the Cotswold Conservation Board - I raised this point last year too. Surely that is a saving that can be made, Mr. Stowe?
4	Regarding Council Tax - I would suggest to freeze it once again as you made enough money in parking fees. I don't feel it's fair to raise it once again as it will hit those on low incomes the hardest yet again. I'm afraid to say this but CDC has lost touch with the people once again and only thinking of profit. How about a slight reduction to help those in need. I, as a council tax payer, do not feel I am getting a good service for the amount of money we pay in certain areas. £124 per month is a joke and this should be lower. You raise the tax, you put more families into struggle which then puts them into debt
5	I feel strongly we should be improving the allocation of funds to social care .
6	Regarding question 11, I couldn't disagree more strongly. The latest 'Consultee Comment' response to the Bathurst proposed planning application 16/00054/OUT by the CDC Local Plan Examination Coordinator Chris Vickery shows clearly there are serious problems within the CDC planning dept, in that documents are not read and analysed properly. There have been hundreds of objections, many detailing why the proposed development is not sustainable, yet he has written "The identification of this land as a sustainable and deliverable mixed use proposal is supported by substantive evidence". Definitely not a service you should be thinking about charging for giving advice, at least not until the dept has been sorted out. Freezing car parking fees is good. Reducing them would be better. But I did not see any question about putting money towards building new car parks / building decked parking. Lack of car parking needs to be addressed now for current residents and visitors to the town centre, and even more will be needed if any new houses are built at Chesterton.
7	There should be no increase in Council Tax. Instead cuts should be made in non essential services and funding to groups that do not benefit all residents.
8	Shared services have gone to far, CDC is a cash rich Council and there isn't need for further intergration for the sake of it.

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 7TH FEBRUARY 2017
(SPECIAL MEETING)

FEEDBACK FOR CABINET/COUNCIL

Having regard to the information gleaned from its involvement in the review of planning enforcement thus far, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers it highly likely that a recommendation will be forthcoming seeking funding for additional service resource.

(END)