

ITEM 12



PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION 21 April 2005

Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Response of Council Cabinet to the Commission's Revenue Budget Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the response of Council Cabinet to the Commission's 2005/06 Revenue Budget recommendation.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 At its meeting on 20 January 2005 the Planning and Environment Commission considered the Council's 2005/06 Draft Revenue Budget. The Commission's recommendations and its reasons for making them are set out below:

Recommendation 1 – That £70,000 of the unallocated Public Priorities Fund should be allocated to cover the operating costs of the Proof of Age card scheme during the 12 month period April 2005 to March 2006.

Reasons 1 - The Proof of Age card scheme has the potential to significantly reduce the purchase of age restricted items by underage customers and thereby to reduce the problems resulting from such purchases. Much excellent work has been done so far in this field by the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Division and this will be lost if funding ceases in March 2005.

Recommendation 2 – That city centre car parking charges be increased to the levels set out in Appendix 10 on page 129 of the draft Revenue Budget with the proviso that the increase in income, over and above that which would have been received had the car parking charges in Appendix 9 on page 128 been imposed, is used to fund improvements in public transport in Derby.

Reasons 2 – Implementation of the recommendation will make available an estimated £74,000 that can be used to address known public priorities by funding improvements in public transport.

Recommendation 3 – That £8,000 of the unallocated Public Priorities Fund should be contributed to the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Society.

Reasons 3 – There is no provision in the draft Revenue Budget for the Council to continue to support the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Society. Restoration of the canal will bring boats back into Derby, and is planned to create a 12.5 mile linear park suitable for many activities such as walking, fishing, cycling and horse riding.

Recommendation 4 – The Council should continue to participate in Britain in Bloom.

Reasons 4 – The Commission considered that participation in Britain in Bloom has a beneficial effect on the economic diversity and viability of the City.

Recommendation 5 – The draft Revenue Budget should be amended to include funding to implement the recommendations made by the Planning and Environment Commission as a consequence of their review of the Council's Tree Management Policy and the recommendations made by the Commission for improvements to the Parks Service.

Reasons 5 – For the reasons given in the Commission's reports on its review of the Tree Management Policy and to improve the service delivered to the public.

Recommendation 6 – The Commission recommends that reducing the number of grass cuts from 15 to 12 per year should not be considered as a further service budget proposal.

Reasons 6 – Reducing the number of cuts per year would reduce the level of public satisfaction with the service.

Recommendation 7 – The Commission recommends that:

- Crematorium charges should be increased by a maximum of 4%
- Burial charges should be increased by a maximum of 10%
- The cost of Cemeteries Grounds Maintenance (£274,000 per year) should be examined to see whether there are ways in which it can be reduced

Reasons 7 – Commission members did not consider it reasonable to introduce an 11.7% increase in cremation charges when this side of the Bereavement Service was already making a significant profit. It was recognised that the Burials side of the Bereavement service was operating at a significant loss, but Members considered that this should be tackled by increasing burial charges and by seeing whether it was possible to reduce the cost of Grounds maintenance.

2.2 Council Cabinet's response to the Commission's seven recommendations is contained in Appendix 5 of the report on 'General Fund Revenue Budget 2005/06 to 2008/09 and Council Tax Setting for 2005/06' that was considered by Cabinet on 22 February 2005 and is set out below:

Response to Recommendation 1

A one-off allocation in 2005/6 of £40k is proposed to test the effectiveness of the scheme for 12 months beyond the implementation. This allows 1.5 fte staff to work on promotion and education

Response to Recommendation 2

A modified proposal is now put forward which increases levels for off-street car parks in line with appendix 10, but retains charges for on-street parking at the appendix 9 lower level. Following revised calculations, this is estimated to provide £88k to be invested in public transport initiatives.

Response to Recommendation 3

Development and Cultural Services have been requested to review the potential for continued funding from 2004/5 underspends.

Response to Recommendation 4

As the 2004 winner we are not eligible to win in 2005, so it is proposed that savings from work to prepare for inspectors be direct to address pressures and other improvements such as Sunnyhill Bowling Green.

Response to Recommendation 5

Ongoing provision is proposed from the Public Priority Fund of £106k, allowing an additional officer to be appointed plus sufficient budget for a work programme for street and park trees to be implemented, equivalent to £400k over the next five years.

Response to Recommendation 6

Not being considered at this stage.

Response to Recommendation 7

Revised proposals are put forward to spread the burden of cost more equally over crematorium and burial charges to achieve a balanced budget.

Grounds maintenance costs will be subject to a base budget review in 2005/6.

For more information contact:**Background papers:****List of appendices:**

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Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None arising from this report.

Legal

2. None arising from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. None arising from this report.

Corporate Vision, values and priorities

5. This report links to the following of the Council's vision, values and priorities:

Vision:

- Healthy, safe and independent communities
- A diverse, attractive and healthy environment
- A prosperous, vibrant and successful economy

Values:

- Develop effective partnerships with all stakeholders, especially Derby's residents
- Adopt new ways of working wherever these will help us do things better and provide value for money, customer focussed services

Priorities:

- Improving customer service, in city centre and locally