

ITEM 4

Commenced: 6.00pm

Concluded: 9.05pm

Corporate Scrutiny and Governance Board – Scrutiny of Budget Proposals 2015-2018 15 December 2014

Present Councillor Lisa Eldret (Chair)
Councillors Davis, Ingall, Pegg, Stanton & Whitby

Members of all other scrutiny boards were invited to attend the meeting and the following were present:

Councillors Ashburner, Care, Harwood, J. Khan, MacDonald, Poulter, Turner, Troup, Williams

All members of the Council Cabinet were present:

Councillors Banwait, Afzal, Hussain, Martin, Shanker, Rawson, Repton , Russell

20/14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Carr and Dhindsa, as members of the CS&G Board and from members of other scrutiny boards invited to attend as follows:

Councillors Bayliss, Bolton, Hezelgrave, Keith, A Holmes, M Holmes, Keith, Naitta, Tittley, Webb, Wood

21/14 Late items introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

22/14 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

23/14 Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2014

Approval of the minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny and Governance Board meeting held on 13 October 2014 was deferred until the next scheduled meeting.

24/14 Scrutiny of Budget Proposals 2015/16

The Chair reminded Members of the importance of the Equality Impact Assessments relating to the proposals, details of which had been circulated in paper format in advance of the meeting.

The Chair introduced a methodology for the conduct of the meeting –the intention being to enable all boards to have an opportunity to scrutinise the budget proposals, taking a holistic view of the whole budget, rather than by specific board or directorate.

The Leader of the Council presented an overview of the proposals, drawing attention to the first part of the document, which set out a fifteen year vision for Derby, and appealed to all stakeholders to contribute to the consultation.

The second part of the document addressed the challenge of setting a balanced budget for 2015/16 and the subsequent two years, bridging the gaps in funding and adjusting to reduced contributions from government.

The Leader stated that the Council currently delivers discretionary services that cost significantly more than the level of savings which will be required in the next three years. The saving target for 2015/16 was £22million.

The Leader drew Members attention to 'The Big Conversation', the largest public consultation that the council had ever undertaken. The budget simulator had highlighted, to those who had attempted it, the difficulties of setting a balanced budget and revealed a clear message that services which protect vulnerable citizens should be protected.

The Director of Finance and Procurement gave a presentation which began by setting the national context of reduced funding affecting all local government, but particularly Derby, as it was 'highly geared', being reliant on government funding.

The budget consultation document set out how the £22million saving target was broken down by directorate, with individual lines of increased income, reduced funding and pressures.

Funding had been diverted from a number of areas to re-balance the budgets of the CYP and AHH directorates.

Each budget line included a potential impact in terms of fte reductions, where applicable. A question was asked about the employee reduction in Legal & Democratic Services, but the Cabinet Member responded that consultation had yet to begin, so it would be inappropriate to discuss the specifics of that proposal.

The anticipated savings targets for 2016/17 and 2017/18 were stated as £24million and £23million respectively. These would have to be addressed through a challenge to funding proposals, to achieve a better settlement for Derby, and a further review of assets, structures and service provision.

The budget proposals were examined directorate by directorate and Council Cabinet members in turn presented the key points of the proposals as they related to their portfolio areas. Members, regardless of which board they sat on, were able to ask questions, which were responded to by either the Cabinet Member or senior officer present from the Directorate or Finance team.

At each point a question was asked about reductions in contract fees and the Director of Finance and Procurement responded at each point, but also undertook to circulate a fuller list of that aspect of the proposals.

In addition to the Revenue Budget proposals, all Members received details of the Capital Programme from the Director of Finance and Procurement and were able to ask questions on issues arising.

At the conclusion of the questioning on the Capital Programme the Chair thanked members of the Council Cabinet and senior officers in attendance for

their full engagement with the process and invited them to leave the chamber.

There followed discussion and debate on what recommendations the joint scrutiny boards should submit to the Council Cabinet.

It was agreed that the following recommendations form the basis of a report to Council Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.

In respect of the Adults, Health and Housing Directorate savings proposals:

That the Shared Lives Scheme be extended to include young people leaving care.

Reason for recommendation

The Council successfully operates a Shared Lives Scheme for people with learning disabilities. Members felt that this principle could be extended to support young people leaving care and be of benefit to individuals who are struggling to remain in their under-occupied homes.

In respect of the Children and Young People's Directorate savings proposals:

That all opportunities to enable the co- location of children centres with schools be explored, where appropriate.

Reason for recommendation:

Members were informed that an offer had not been taken up from a school to help manage a Childrens' Centre and continue to provide much needed services. As a result the Childrens' Centre was closed for most days of the week and only provided a much reduced service. Members felt that the Cabinet should investigate the opportunities to co-locate childrens' services with schools and share resources where appropriate.

To explore how incentives and bonus schemes for the successful recruitment of in- house foster carers can be extended, to encourage more individuals to recruit carers through their networks.

Reason for recommendation

The costs of placing children with external foster carers are significantly higher than placing them with in- house foster carers. These account for 45% of the cost of the budget. Members suggested Cabinet should consider all options to help increase the number of in-house foster carers by offering incentives and bonuses to individuals, including to council employees, which lead to successful recruitment of foster carers.

That the B-line card continue to be supported, to provide discounted travel for young people and that this be funded through a revision of the funding model for the 'Make more Music for Derby' scheme.

Reason for recommendation

To preserve a valuable benefit to the young people of Derby, whilst identifying a cost neutral way of doing so

In respect of the Neighbourhoods Directorate savings proposals:

To work with local communities, to expand the use of the 'adopt a street' scheme, to enable and encourage Neighbourhood Boards, local groups and local businesses to manage and maintain or sponsor shrubberies and planted areas that can no longer be maintained by the Council.

Reason for recommendation

It was important that local communities be made aware of sites that are under threat of removal by the posting of simple notices and that Neighbourhood Boards be encouraged to explore all opportunities to continue to fund existing planting schemes, before they are removed.

That 'safer access' be a requirement in the design of new schools as school crossing patrols budgets come under pressure.

Reason for recommendation

This measure has the twin benefits of making journeys to school safer and reducing pressure on school crossing patrol budgets.

To review the use of lighting in council car parks at night.

Reason for recommendation

Council car parks are well lit at night to help maintain safety and security. However there are a number of car parks that have few or no vehicles parked overnight. The recommendation would entail switching off lights in car parks which have little or no demand for overnight parking.

To explore partnership arrangements with a private sector provider of pest control services to continue to offer a service to vulnerable customers.

Reason for recommendation

Members were informed that costs of provision are cheaper in the private sector, yet the council is often the first port of call for customers. An agreement with a partner provider could keep the price to the customer low by exploiting the trusted brand of the council.

MINUTES END