

At a Meeting of the **RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, **TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the **10<sup>th</sup>** day of **DECEMBER 2013** at **2.00pm**

**Present:** Cllr P R Sanders – Chairman  
Cllr R E Baldwin – Vice-Chairman  
Cllr S C Bailey Cllr T J Hill  
Cllr C M Marsh Cllr J R McInnes  
Cllr T G Pearce Cllr P J Ridgers

**Substitute:** Cllr R F D Sampson for Cllr W G Cann OBE

**In attendance:** Cllrs M J R Benson, D W Cloke, D M Horn and R J Oxborough

Chief Executive  
Chief Accountant  
Head of Finance & Audit  
Head of ICT and Customer Services  
Strategic Planning Officer  
Estates Manager  
Member Services Manager

**\*RC 18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr W G Cann OBE, for whom Cllr R F D Sampson substituted, Cllr C R Musgrave and Cllr E H Sherrell.

**\*RC 19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed, and Cllr C M Marsh declared a personal interest in item 11 (Minute \*RC 30 refers) by virtue of being a member of Okehampton Town Council. Cllr Marsh remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and vote.

**\*RC 20 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION**

The Chairman advised that the Council Summons for the meeting on 17 December 2013 had been published today and included a report on the replacement of the Head of Paid Service. The Chief Executive advised that ordinarily this decision would be a recommendation from the Resources Committee to full Council, however the timetable did not allow this to take place. Members generally agreed with the proposed way forward and were pleased that the speed of the process would prevent any distraction from progressing with T18.

**\*RC 21 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 September 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

**\*RC 22**

**BUDGET UPDATE FOR 2014/15 TO 2017/18**

The Chairman presented a report of the Head of Finance and Audit and the Chief Accountant (page 1 to the agenda) that provided an updated forecast of the budget situation for the year 2014/15 and an updated forecast for the four years to 2017/18. The forecast was intended to provide a framework within which decisions could be made regarding the future service provision and council tax levels whilst building an approach that guarantees West Devon Borough Council's longer term viability.

The Chairman advised Members that the third recommendation of the report that related to the Walk and Talk programme was to be deferred until further information was available in relation to the preferred way forward for Devon County Council. He also took Members through the agenda report and outlined key elements.

There was a detailed debate on the second recommendation that related to the Economy Service as Members were being asked to either continue with the proposed reduction in the Service, as per previous minutes (CM 88 refers), or to defer the reduction to enable it to be considered as part of T18. In conclusion, Members felt that it would not be appropriate to revisit the earlier decision and therefore concluded that the reduction in the Economy Service be progressed.

Following that debate, it was then **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The considerable progress made by the Council on the four year budget process covering 2014/15 to 2017/18 be noted;
- (ii) Council minute (CM 88) from 16 April 2013 and the Community Services Committee Minute (CS 25) from 12 November 2013 regarding the Economy Service has been considered and it be agreed to continue with the proposed £20,000 reduction in the Service for 2014/15.

**\*RC 23**

**REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2013/14 – QUARTER 2 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2013**

The Chairman presented a report of the Chief Accountant that gave Members an indication of the potential year end financial position of West Devon Borough Council for the revenue and capital budgets for 2013/14 and to bring to Members' attention any significant variances from the revenue and capital budget set. The report enabled Members to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2013/14.

In response to questions, the Head of Finance and Audit explained that the proposed savings in relation to travel expenses had not been achieved as the original baseline was higher than anticipated. There were also questions relating to the failure to achieve the target for contributions from parish councils towards public conveniences. The Head of Finance and Audit explained that the target was unrealistic.

This resulted in some debate and it was agreed that a further recommendation be added to request that the Community Services Committee review the position with public conveniences and be encouraged to take a robust approach.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2013/14 financial year for the revenue budget be noted; and
- (ii) The progress on the capital programme to 30 September 2013 be noted; and
- (iii) The Community Services Committee be asked to review the position in respect of funding for public conveniences and the Resources Committee encourages a robust approach.

#### **RC 24 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT**

The Head of ICT and Customer Services presented a report (page 27 to the agenda) that sought agreement from Members on the adoption of a revised Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for 2014/15. The scheme will take effect on 1 April 2014 and replace the scheme currently in place.

He outlined the background to the report and drew Members attention to the aspects of the propose scheme for 2014/15, which had been out for consultation. The consultation responses had been taken account of in proposing the scheme for 2014/15.

A Member queried whether the Council should take a conservative approach and limit the maximum liability restriction to 75% as per the consultation. The Head of ICT and Customer Services explained that the proposed figure of 80% had arisen from a great deal of financial modelling and would result in a cost neutral scheme for the Council.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** to agree the implementation of the proposed cost neutral local Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2014/15. The scheme introduced the following changes:

- 80% maximum liability restriction meaning that working age claimants pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax bill.
- A property valuation Band D restriction meaning that working age claimants living in larger properties do not receive greater levels of support than those living in smaller properties.
- An exception hardship fund to help those claimants experiencing severe financial difficulties.

#### **\*RC 25 WRITE OFF REPORT QUARTER 1**

The Chairman presented a report of the Head of Finance and Audit and the Head of ICT and Customer Services (page 51 to the agenda) that informed Members of the debt written off for revenue streams within the Revenue and Benefits Service.

It was noted that debts up to the value of £5,000 were written off by the Head of Finance and Audit under delegated authority. These debts were listed in the presented report for information.

In response to questions, the Head of ICT and Customer Services advised that the collection rate figures were benchmarked rather than the amount of monies written off, and performance at West Devon Borough Council was now improving although the collectable debt had increased considerably last year as a result of a number of changes made to the benefit and council tax schemes. He also confirmed that the figures for monies to write off were within an acceptable range. Finally, he advised that there would always be an element of local authority error resulting in overpayments, but that the Council had stringent audit processes in place.

It was **RESOLVED** that in accordance with Financial Regulations it be noted that the Head of Finance and Audit had authorised the write-off of individual West Devon Borough Council debts totalling £21,681.60 as detailed in Table 1 and 2 of the presented report.

**\*RC 26 WRITE OFF REPORT QUARTER 2**

The Chairman presented a report of the Head of Finance and Audit and the Head of ICT and Customer Services (page 51 to the agenda) that informed Members of the debt written off for revenue streams within the Revenue and Benefits Service. Debts up to the value of £5,000 are written off by the Head of Finance and Audit under delegated authority. These debts were listed in the presented report for information.

It was **RESOLVED** that in accordance with Financial Regulations, it be noted that the Head of Finance and Audit had authorised the write-off of individual West Devon Borough Council debts totalling £41,769.15 as detailed in Table 1 and 2 of the presented report.

**\*RC 27 PARTNERSHIP POLICY**

The Community Manager presented a report (page 63 to the agenda) that advised that the Partnership Policy had been updated and asked Members to consider and approve the revised policy.

In response to a question, the Community Manager agreed that the Policy could be used as a framework for a more robust agreement with South Hams District Council and that officers were currently considering this point.

It was **RESOLVED** that the updated Partnership Policy be approved and adopted.

**\*RC 28 APPLICATION TO DESIGNATE A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA FOR LIFTON**

The Strategic Planning Officer presented a report (page 73 to the agenda) that advised that Lifton Parish Council had submitted an application to the Council to designate a plan area in respect of preparing a neighbourhood plan. The application had been advertised for six weeks during which comments were invited about whether the plan area was appropriate and the Council had not received any objections to the designation of the plan area proposed.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The designation of the Lifton Plan Area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan be approved; and
- (ii) An application for financial support from central government to help cover the costs of the local authority associated with preparing a Neighbourhood Plan be supported.

**\*RC 29 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100(A)(4)**

It was **RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the Meeting for the undermentioned item of business on the grounds that exempt information may be disclosed as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.

**\*RC 30 STRATEGIC ASSET REVIEW - (PARAGRAPH 3 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE AUTHORITY HOLDING THAT INFORMATION))**

The Chairman presented a report of the Estates Manager (page 84 to the agenda) that advised Members that a comprehensive strategic asset review had been undertaken and any opportunities for each of the sites identified.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the programme as described in Appendix 1 of the presented report be agreed, subject to annual review and in accordance with Council Financial Procedure Rules.

(The Meeting terminated at 3.55 pm)

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**Chairman**