

At a Meeting of the **RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, **TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the 3rd day of **FEBRUARY 2015** at **2.00pm**

Present:

Cllr P R Sanders – Chairman	
Cllr R E Baldwin – Vice-Chairman	
Cllr S C Bailey	Cllr W G Cann OBE
Cllr T J Hill	Cllr A F Leech
Cllr C R Musgrave	Cllr T G Pearce
Cllr P J Ridgers	

Substitute: Cllr J Sheldon for Cllr J R McInnes

In attendance: Executive Director (Communities)
Finance Community of Practice Lead (COP)
Finance Business Partner
Member Services Manager

***RC 23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J R McInnes for whom Cllr J Sheldon substituted and Cllr E H Sherrell.

***RC 24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed but none were made.

***RC 25 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 2 December 2014 were confirmed as a correct record.

RC 26 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2015/16 TO 2018/19

The Chairman introduced a report that updated Members on the revenue budget position for the year 2015/16 and a forecast for the four years to 2018/2019. 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 guaranteed West Devon Borough Council's longer term viability.

The Finance Community of Practice (COP) Lead responded to queries raised throughout the report in respect of predicted inflation rates and business rate relief for charity shops. One Member noted the Members' Allowance figure and the Chairman explained that this was a prudent measure that related to the new governance structure but did not allow for the net effect of the reductions that the new structure would entail. Regardless, Members could only estimate figures as they would not be set until the Independent Remuneration Panel had met and made its recommendations to the Council.

During discussion, the majority of Members reluctantly agreed that the council had no option but to recommend a council tax increase of 1.9%. If the council accepted the council tax freeze grant, there was no guarantee that this amount would be built into the base budget and therefore the authority could be worse off in future years. Another Member stated that proposing a 1.9% increase was the most sensible way forward as it prevented more of the New Homes Bonus being used to support the revenue budget which would allow it to be available to help support the provision of much needed affordable homes in West Devon. It was then **PROPOSED, SECONDED** and on being put to the vote unanimously declared **CARRIED** that Members would recommend a 1.9% increase in council tax.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

- (i) That in order to set a balanced budget for 2015-16 an increase in Council Tax of 1.9% is agreed (which equates to a Band D council tax of £208.39 for 2015/16, an increase of £3.89 per year or 7 pence per week). This option equates to a Council Tax requirement of £4,054,644 (as shown in Appendix B1)
- (ii) That the financial pressures in Appendix A of £484,400 are accepted
- (iii) That the proposed savings of £148,700 set out in Appendix A are adopted
- (iv) That the Collection Fund surplus of £60,589 be agreed
- (v) That an additional £567,710 (if council tax is increased by 1.9% as per Appendix B1) or £601,160 (if council tax is frozen as per Appendix B2) of New Homes Bonus Grant is used to balance the 2015-16 Budget. (This is in addition to the £657,059 of New Homes Bonus already built into the budget assumptions to be used for 2015-16).
- (vi) That the Total Net Expenditure of the Council for 2015/16 is £8,134,325 (Appendix B1 and B2 of the presented agenda report refers)
- (vii) To approve the 2015/16 Capital Programme projects totalling £451,000 as per 8.1 of the presented agenda report.
- (viii) To finance the 2015/16 Capital Programme of £451,000 by using £212,000 of New Homes Bonus funding and £239,000 of Government grant (as per 8.1 of the presented agenda report).

- (ix) That the Council transfers £2,610 of its allocation of New Homes Bonus for 2015/16 to an Earmarked Reserve called 'Community Investment Fund – Dartmoor National Park', to be applied for and drawn down by Dartmoor National Park as required.
This amount is a one-off payment and the position will be considered annually by the Council as part of the budget process. The condition is that this is for use within the boundaries of the Borough Council only.
- (x) That the Council Tax Support Grant of £87,285 be passed onto Town and Parish Councils. (This is a reduction of 15% from 2014/15) as per Appendix D.
- (xi) That the minimum level of the Unearmarked Revenue Reserves be maintained at £750,000 as per Section 7.
- (xii) That the level of reserves as set out within the presented agenda report and the assessment of their adequacy and the robustness of budget estimates be noted. This is a requirement of Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003

***RC 27 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014-15 QUARTER 3 TO 31 DECEMBER 2014**

The Chairman presented a report of the Finance Business Partner that gave Members an indication of the potential year-end financial position of West Devon Borough Council for the revenue budgets for 2014/15 and to bring to Members' attention any significant variance from the revenue budgets set. The report enabled Members to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budgets for 2014/15.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2014/15 financial year for the revenue budget be noted.

RC 28 OUR PLAN – ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN

The Chairman presented a report of the Community Manager that sought formal approval of the draft Annual Delivery Plan document for 2015-16. The plan was the Council's corporate plan and part of the 'Our Plan' strategic approach to the development of both a Local Plan for the area and the Corporate Planning Framework.

During discussion, Members sought clarity on the authority being delegated to the Community Manager and were advised that it related to design of the document and correction of any typographical errors. Any changes to the actions would require Committee approval. Members also highlighted the importance of the paragraph within the presented appendix that stated how the Annual Delivery Plan would be measured and reviewed.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

- To adopt the draft Annual Delivery Plan as the Council's corporate plan for 2015/16; and
- To delegate authority to the Community Manager to make minor changes to the document in order to finalise it for publication.

***RC 29**

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA APPROVAL PROCESS

The Chairman presented a report of the Strategic Planning Officer that sought authority to change the current process so that the approval of an area as a Neighbourhood Plan Area be delegated to the Group Manager (Universal Customer Services) (GM UCS). He advised that the current process was cumbersome and this proposal would replace it and be less bureaucratic.

The Community Manager responded to questions related to the funding of the process and confirmed that once an area had been designated that Neighbourhood Plan Group could apply for and receive £5,000. Further funding streams were available if a referendum was necessary. All of the funding would be available for as long as central government provided it.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Authority to approve the designation of Neighbourhood Plan areas be delegated to the GM UCS in consultation with the Leader of Council and the appropriate local ward Member(s);
- (ii) The appropriate changes to the Council's Neighbourhood Planning Protocol (as set out in the presented appendix to the report) to reflect this change be agreed; and
- (ii) Authority to amend the Neighbourhood Planning Protocol to reflect any future changes to the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations be delegated to the GM UCS in consultation with the Leader of Council.

(The Meeting terminated at 2.30 pm)

Chairman