

EXECUTIVE

10 FEBRUARY 2016

Present:

Councillors: Gribble (Deputy Leader), Barker, Clemens, Goodey, Hellier Laing, Lake and Russell.

Apologies:

Councillor Christophers

Non-Executive Members in Attendance:

Councillors: Brodie, Clarence, Dennis, Dewhirst, Golder, Haines, Hook, Nutley and Prowse.

Officers in Attendance:

Nicola Bulbeck – Chief Executive
Phil Shears – Deputy Chief Executive
Sue Aggett – Business Lead
Amanda Pujol – Business Manager
Simon Thornley – Business Manager
Lesley Tucker – Chief Finance Officer
Neil Aggett – Monitoring Officer
Martin Flitcroft – Finance Manager
Fergus Pate – Principal Growth Point Officer
Alex Lessware – Senior Planning Officer

Executive decisions will take effect from 10.00 am on Tuesday, 17 February 2016 unless called-in or identified as urgent in the minute.

In the absence of the Leader, the Deputy Leader chaired the meeting.

322. MINUTES

The minutes of the Executive held on 5 January 2016 were approved and signed as a correct record.

323. MATTERS OF URGENCY / MATTERS OF REPORT ESPECIALLY BROUGHT FORWARD WITH PERMISSION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Deputy Leader submitted that Teignbridge aimed to be an aspirational Council and was convinced that the forthcoming BBC Radio 1 Big Weekend at Powderham Castle would inspire a generation to fulfil their potential in the years to come through music and the arts. Trust between Exeter City and Teignbridge District Council's that had been developed as part of the Greater Exeter, Greater Devon partnership had enabled joint endeavours to reap

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benefits for their respective constituents and economies. Ticketing information would be announced through BBC Radio 1 on the 21 March 2016.

In light of the number of public in the public gallery, the Deputy Leader advised he would take the item regarding the Resettlement of Refugees first.

324. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

325. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

326. NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 4.5(L)

None.

327. RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

Members considered a report which outlined the position statement made by the UK Government on the resettlement of up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over the life of the current Parliament. Whilst the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would continue to refer people to the scheme, the UK would set the criteria for eligibility.

The Portfolio Holder for Community & Neighbourhoods advised that any resettlement would be facilitated by Teignbridge District Council who would enable properties to be available for occupation and Devon County Council who would provide health, education and social care needs. Teignbridge was seeking to house six families amounting to approximately thirty people. It was suggested that properties would be rented or leased in order to provide homes with families moving into the private sector, Refugees would have a five year humanitarian protection visa. Six families were suggested to judge the availability of suitable properties in the local housing market.

The Deputy Leader invited comments from non-Executive Members:

- Councillor Haines believed the number to be taken at this time was fair and proportionate and fully supported the report;
- Councillor Dewhirst was disappointed that more families were not being provided assistance and note the Isle of Bute was taking 15 families which when compared in size to Teignbridge was much smaller;
- Councillor Hook supported the report but asked:

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- what would happen to the families after the five year visa period expired;
 - what future conversations would be had with Devon County in terms of housing future refugees; and
 - that the press respect the confidentiality of refugee families and allow them to settle.
- Councillor Prowse fully supported the measures outlined in the report;
 - Councillor Brodie welcomed the report but was unaware of the number of offers received to use properties for this scheme. She wished to see the number families housed increase once the resettlement has been evaluated and asked how long it would be before any offer to home a family was made.

The Portfolio Holder for Assets & Resources submitted it was essential that complete homes were used so that they could live as integrated families within the district. While offers of hospitality had been received they were generally short lived which would not enable families to live independently which is what the Home Office encouraged. If successful with the initial allocation then the Council may be able to offer further places.

The Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing advised that the UNHCR had selected families based on a number of factors including vulnerability, disability and educational needs etc. and it was not possible to know what each family may wish to do after the five year period expired.

Resolved

That the Council support six Syrian refugee families as detailed in the report

328. FINAL FINANCIAL PLAN PROPOSALS 2016/17 TO 2018/19

Members considered a report which detailed the final financial plan proposals 2016/17 to 2018/19 for recommendation to Council on 23 February 2016.

In presenting the report, the Portfolio Holder for Assets & Recourses submitted that the consultation period was still ongoing but due to the timescales of publicising the Council budget meeting a decision was required on the recent government announcement. Members were aware that there had been a delay in receiving the final settlement from Government and an 11th hour government proposal would need to be debated regards whether to increase council tax by £5 on a Band D property in Teignbridge – this had not been built into the figures before Members and if minded to accept this it would be subject to Parliamentary approval later today and Council approval.

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Whilst council tax was a relatively small part of the overall income budget but it was still something that had to be determined and set; the revenue support grant was reducing further and by the end of the current Parliament was expect to be £0. That presented significant pressures on the Council and it was right for it to be taking measures now so that the transition to a £0 RSG environment would be much easier.

Currently the report before Members identified a small surplus however for the subsequent year identified a significant loss. It was clear that for future years the Council was unable to show the ability to maintain services as it previously had done. Council tax had been frozen for a number of years and during the ongoing consultation exercise, early results seemed to show that residents were in support of small council tax rises to ensure services were retained that might otherwise have to be scaled back or removed.

The proposed budget included small increases in car parking charges and capital receipts following the purchase of land in Newton Abbot which would enable income to be received in the ensuing years. The budget of the current and previous administrations aimed to be as transparent as possible and listed staffing changes, numbers of staff by department and the savings that individual departments had made following the annual business challenge round. This would be continued year on year for departments to identify savings and increased efficiencies where they were able to do so.

The Deputy Leader invited non-Executive Members to comment:

- Councillor Haines questioned whether the present public consultation would need to be restarted in the light of potential changes to council tax recommendations.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that a specific question relating to the proposed Council Tax increase was included in the public consultation however a more general question for subsequent years was used. The Portfolio Holder advised that of Devon authorities, all were planning to increase their council tax in line with the suggested proposals currently being debated in Parliament except for one who the Council had not received a response from.

- Councillor Prowse reiterated her wish to see funds available for promoting a new railway station for Exminster – due to the amount of development taking place it was important for it to be included on the new Metro line;
- Councillor Clarence praised the administration that in the face of reducing grants and funding the Council had empowered business development across the district and hoped to see it continue.

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The Business Manager – Strategic Place advised that the 10 Year Council Strategy went before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and referred to the railway station at Exminster; whilst it was not in the current three year programme the Council was looking at supporting it over the next ten years. It would be a decision for the railway industry and to some extent the County Council to make.

- Councillor Hook submitted that:
 - it was difficult at this time to comment on the proposed budget if the level of proposed council tax was to change without seeing comparative figures and forecasts. He requested that further details be circulated to all Members as soon as they were available;
 - he agreed statutory functions must be protected and therefore expressed concern at the expenditure of £100K to what he described as a vanity project for the Radio 1 Big Weekend; and
 - given that the Botanical Gardens at Shaldon had received £261K of which the majority was made up from grant funding, he questioned why no works were visible.

The Portfolio Holder advised that whatever decisions were taken by the Executive would be reflected in the papers going forward to Full Council. He reminded Members that expenditure now in terms of a legacy benefit could not be underestimated and was confident the Radio 1 Big Weekend would have massive benefits for the District's young people and economy at large for some time to come.

The Chief Executive advised that no works had commenced at the Botanical Gardens due to an ongoing tender process to appoint a contractor for the works. This was due to close shortly. Financial information from Government relating to new freedoms for shire district councils was forwarded to all 46 Councillors as soon as it was received. This would be the case with all further updates.

Councillor Russell sought clarification regards business rates retention.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that there would be a full consultation on this; the deadline had been extended – extra money was believed to have been put in the settlement with some flexibility but it would probably mean tighter grant funding in future.

The Deputy Leader proposed that the first bullet point of the budget recommendations that read:

The proposal to increase council tax by 1.95% or £2.93 to £153.10

be removed.

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The Portfolio Holder for Assets & Resources reminded the Executive that the Council had known for some time that RSG would be reducing and with the declining effect of New Homes Bonus beginning to be realised it would equate to a massive loss of income for the authority. Teignbridge was also expecting a loss of business rates once a redistribution of monies to higher level authorities had taken place and this would result in the Council having no resilience for future years. If action was taken early on it would ease the transition.

Resolved

That the first bullet point of the budget recommendations be removed.

The Portfolio Holder for Assets & Resources proposed that the Executive recommend an increase in Council Tax by £5 to make a figure of £155.17 on a Band D property – an overall increase of 3.33% or a further 4p per week over the original proposal. This was not in addition to the previously proposed figure of £2.93 but instead of. Councillor Clemens seconded the proposal.

Councillor Lake submitted that he was troubled by the sudden increase but was reassured with the financial assessment made by the Portfolio Holder and the Chief Finance Officer. He asked whether the Executive had the ability of maintaining the original proposal or whether the new rise could wait until next year.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the proposed budget was capable of delivering for 2016/17 but placed a lot of emphasis on departments finding savings that some Members may have found unpalatable. Without a 3.33% council tax rise the Council had little resilience in terms of staffing costs due to increases in national insurance contributions and a 1% pay award and the Council was keen to see that staff were adequately rewarded.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that a possible increase of £5 on council tax applied to this year only with no promises being made by Government for future years. New freedoms had to be accepted by 14 October 2016 but it was now a given that the current trends appeared to show funding moving away from District Council's to Social Care and Police – Members may not have the opportunity again.

Resolved

That these proposals be considered together with any subsequent consultation comments for approval by Council as the final budget for 2016/17 and the outline plan for the subsequent years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

In particular the proposed budget includes:

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- The proposal to increase council tax by 3.33% or £5.00 to £155.17;
- Increasing reserves slightly to 9.4% of the net revenue budget or just over £1.5 million;
- An increase in parking income of £142,000 partly to fund a programme of related capital investment over the next three years;
- Ongoing efficiencies using invest to save where possible including the approved Newton Abbot purchase;
- Continuing support for housing whilst backing business and bringing people and organisations together for local neighbourhood planning;
- Infrastructure delivery plan investment funded by community infrastructure levy and external sources where available;
- The statutory national living wage, and increased employer national insurance contributions of £236,000 from 1 April 2016;
- An assumed 1% pay increase each year where lower than the national living wage increase;
- Continuing staffing reductions and restructuring efficiencies; and
- Rural aid continuing at £40,000 plus the ongoing £25,000 Dartmoor Grant Fund for Teignbridge villages in the Dartmoor National Park.

329. PUBLICATION OF CLARIFIED REGULATION 123 LIST AND PUBLICATION OF REVISED SECTION 106 GUIDANCE

Members considered a report which advised that these documents supported the application and implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the Council's wider infrastructure planning programme. They were not new, but were updated versions of those adopted alongside the CIL Charging Schedule in 2014.

The clarified Regulation 123 List sets out items of infrastructure that could not be secured by way of Section 106 planning obligation. Items listed on the Regulation 123 list may be wholly or partly funded through CIL. The clarified Section 106 guidance sets out the types of planning obligation that could be secured. The Council's priorities for CIL funding were set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The Principal Growth Point Officer proposed amendments to item 6 of the Regulation 123 so that it would read as follows. This was for reasons of clarity:

'Playing pitches, allotments and parks which are not required through built development allocations. Playing pitches, allotments and parks which are not required to replace existing open space provision lost as a result of development.'

During discussion, the following points were made:

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- Councillor Hook asked who set the priorities and whether each was given the same weight or urgency. He asked whether a small group of members, including ward members specific to the project be set up to monitor the large sums of money potentially being decided upon;
- Councillor Brodie commended the report and believed that providing clarification would enable Section 106 monies to be used with greater effect and could only be a positive thing for the district;
- Councillor Dewhirst requested that Section 106 monies be listed for Members to review on Office 365 and did not understand why subjects such as sustainable urban drainage were included in the list when he believed this to be something a developer would provide. He also asked why the report referred to spending money on a slipway outside of Teignbridge.

In response, the Principal Growth Point Officer advised that:

- It was not a priority list; it was a list of projects that would could be funded through CIL; SUDs and other such matters were for the developers to provide;
- The Council was working with Sport England to develop a playing pitch strategy which had been commissioned approximately four months ago and in conjunction with that a leisure strategy was being brought forward;
- The Exminster slipway related to development in Exeter and East Devon – it would be impossible to untangle developments in all three authorities therefore a joint committee was established with devolved powers to determine what monies should be spent and where in that area.

The Portfolio Holder for Assets & Resources reminded Members that parishes would receive 15% of CIL monies and where a Neighbourhood Plan was in place that increased to 25%. Monies were held centrally and the District Council would work with respective Town & Parishes' on agreeing joint priorities.

Following questions relating to developer contributions towards health infrastructure, the Principal Growth Point Officer advised that further information would be provided by way of the Members' Newsletter

Resolved

- (a) That the publication of the clarified Regulation 123 List at Appendix A of the report be approved, subject to the amendments proposed by the

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Principal Growth Point Officer. This sets out items of infrastructure that may be partially or totally funded through CIL;

- (b) That the updated guidance on the use of Section 106 at Appendix B be approved; and
- (c) That subsequent changes to the European Site payment for new dwellings in the Exe Estuary and Dawlish Warren zones as set out at Appendix D be agreed.

330. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Forward Plan was noted.

Jeremy Christophers
Leader