

Finance and Assets Policy Development Advisory Group
5 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillors: Brian Donnelly (Chairman), Paul Clarke, David Coldwell, Leonard Crosbie, Nigel Jupp, Adrian Lee, Tim Lloyd and Stuart Ritchie

Apologies: Councillors: John Bailey and John Chidlow
Absent: Councillors: Simon Torn

30 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held 9th July 2018 were received.

31 **COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME OPTIONS**

The LGSS Operations Manager for Horsham attended the meeting of the Advisory Group to discuss the options for 2019 regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The current scheme had been in place since April 2016 and the proposal was for the scheme to remain unchanged for 2019/20. A paper was circulated and this proposal would be presented to Cabinet later in the month.

The options for 2020/21 were to change the scheme to incorporate the impact of Universal Credit though either a banded scheme or a de-minimus/tolerance rule.

This would require full public consultation and the Operations Manager expected to start talking to Councillors about the change early in 2019/20.

The Group noted the proposals.

32 **DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS COUNCIL PROPERTY ASSETS**

The Head of Property and Facilities presented to the Group a report on the disposal of surplus Horsham District Council property assets.

The report sought Cabinet's authorisation for the disposal of assets, at a value greater than the minimum target figure set out in the report. Then for the decision to be delegated to the Cabinet Member for final ratification.

The list of properties and associated details was presented to the Group.

It was the opinion of a number of Members at the meeting that some of the available land should be considered for affordable housing investment.

Members queried other available Council owned property assets which could be released to generate income. The Group noted that there was a systematic process for site handling and identifying surplus land which could potentially be sold.

The Group concluded that it would like this decision suspended until the position on affordable housing was clarified.

The Cabinet Member advised that he had taken the comments of the Group on board and would have further discussions based on these concerns before a decision was made.

33 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Head of Finance presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update.

The presentation detailed the assumptions, options to generate or increase income, the New Homes Bonus (NHB) scenarios.

The Group discussed the income options such as a rise in Council Tax and increase in charges i.e. parking.

The figures presented had not taken into consideration the impact of the opening of the new Everyman cinema on the Capitol, nor any potential plans to invest in the Capitol should there be a business case to do so. It was anticipated that these figures would be available in the February MTFS.

The Council was under continued pressure to find areas of income or savings.

The Head of Finance presented the NHB figures based on three scenarios – no change, the NHB ending and the NHB continuing but sharpened. The Group noted that no change was unlikely.

Some Members of the Group felt that Council Tax should be increased to the maximum limit available.

The Group noted the presentation.

34 **INSURANCE CONTRACT**

The Group received the report on the Council's insurance contract.

The current contract was due to expire on 1st April 2019. A joint tender with several other local authorities is in progress. In order to meet the timescales in implementing a new contract, the report recommended that Cabinet delegate

the Contract Award of the insurance contract to the Director of Resources in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets.

The Group noted the report.

35 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE FINANCE AND ASSETS
PORTFOLIO**

The Group noted the Forward Plan extract for the Finance and Assets portfolio.

The meeting closed at 7.21 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN