

Finance & Parking Policy Development Advisory Group
16 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillors: Tony Hogben (Chairman), Matthew Allen, Tony Bevis, Martin Boffey, Paul Clarke, Michael Croker, Ray Dawe, Brian Donnelly, Nigel Jupp, Richard Landeryou and Stuart Ritchie

15 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held on 7 November were received.

16 **2023/24 BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

The Head of Finance and Performance gave a comprehensive presentation to the group on the 2023-24 draft budget summary which would be taken to Cabinet on 24 January.

Key points advised included:

- A proposed £13.5 million budget was being set for 2023/24 and Net expenditure increased by £1.2 million from 2022/23 this reflects the significant impact of annual inflationary and salary cost pressures.
- £4.85 Council Tax increase was proposed amounting to 2.99% at Band D.
- A 2 year Provisional settlement was received in December 2022, advising a 4.9% total funding increase however this is significantly below inflation.
- There had been a 780 increase in Council Tax houses in Band D.
- In the medium term there was significant uncertainty due to fair funding, levelling up, business rates, indirect cost pressures from WSCC, de-carbonisation challenges, environment, replacing significant infrastructure and food waste.

Discussion considered the Coronation budget, Transformation and income generating projects, Capital programme, Cost of Living budget allocation and Reserve limits.

The Group discussed the financial implications on the budget following the deferring of the Local Plan. It was considered that any subsequent work undertaken after the Government guidance was issued should not have a huge cost implication, however the Director of Resources would liaise with Planning to gain clarity and revise the budget if necessary.

The Head of Finance and Performance updated the Group on recent Government Grants the Council had received.

Information was provided and views sought from the Group on the proposed Local Authority Housing Fund for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

In late December 2022, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced a £500m scheme to support authorities who are helping with providing accommodation to families fleeing conflict in Ukraine and Afghanistan. The Council was proposing to accept the allocation of £2.656m from Government and add £3.21m of its own funding to provide 14 standard and 2 larger homes by 30 November 2023 deadline.

The group were generally supportive of the proposal however raised concerns at finding the right properties at the right prices within the tight timeframe. It was agreed that recommendations would be taken to Cabinet and Council and further information would be considered at a future PDAG.

17 **2023/24 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME AND HOUSING BENEFIT MODIFIED SCHEME**

The Director of Resources updated the Group on the 2023/24 Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Housing Benefit Modified Scheme.

The Group were reminded that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme provides financial support to residents on low incomes and provides a means-tested discount to reduce their Council Tax payments.

West Sussex County Council and Sussex Police had been consulted on increasing the amount of cost for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, however due to significant budget pressures and a proportionately higher share of the cost than Horsham District Council they were not in favour of this.

It was therefore recommended for 2023/24 there would be no changes currently to the existing scheme.

The Council also provides a local housing benefit modified scheme which disregards war disablement and war widow pensions from housing benefit calculations and this is also reviewed every year. Recent work on the scheme showed it remained affordable for Horsham District Council and provided a good level of support to those less well-off residents.

The Group agreed that both schemes should be considered at Cabinet without any changes for 2023/24.

18 **BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY CHARITABLE RELIEF 2023/24**

The Director of Resources updated the group on Business Rates Charitable Relief for 2023/24. The group were reminded that last year the scheme changed to provide financial support to charitable and not for profit organisations by reducing their business rates by up to 100%. The Council subsidise their 80% entitlement of mandatory relief. It was proposed to the group there would be no change to the existing scheme for 2023/24. The PDAG unanimously agreed and this would be recommended to Cabinet in January and Council in February.

19 **PARKING: RE-PROCUREMENT OF THE ANPR SYSTEM**

The current parking contract for the Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system requires renewal later in the year. A procurement process will be undertaken to update specifications, build in improvements and offer a better service at a similar cost. Further updates will be provided at future PDAGs.

20 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE FINANCE PORTFOLIO**

The forward plan extract was noted. The Budget would be considered at Cabinet in January and Council in February.

The meeting closed at 6.48 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN