

Finance and Assets Policy Development Advisory Group
18 JANUARY 2021

Present: Councillors: Paul Clarke (Chairman), Matthew Allen, Tony Bevis, Michael Croker, Brian Donnelly, Frances Haigh, Nigel Jupp, Richard Landeryou, Gordon Lindsay and Stuart Ritchie

Also Present: Councillor Ruth Fletcher

13 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes from the previous meeting on the 2nd November were received.

14 **2021/22 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION (CTR) SCHEME AND 2020/21 DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

The Revenue and Benefits Operations Manager presented an overview of a decision to be taken by Cabinet on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The recommendation was to retain the same approach for the next financial year, which was to support low income households through means tested council tax discounts.

The Council were awarded funding for a one off payment of £150 for CTR customers, as part of the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Scheme set up in response to the pandemic. A proportion of the funding still remains and the Council are required to disperse this by the end of the year to financially vulnerable residents.

The Revenue and Benefits Operations Manager presented a range of options of how to disperse the funds. The recommended option included additional support for the existing 1,600 CTR customers who still owe council tax after having a reduction.

15 **PROCUREMENT OF SECURITY SERVICES**

The Head of Property & Facilities briefed the Group on the tender process which would be undertaken for the procurement of the Council's Security Services. The new contract would begin on the 1st June and continue a partnership with Mid Sussex District Council, with an addition of after-hours Duty Manager Service added.

16 **2021/22 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

The Director of Corporate Resources updated the Group on the 2021/22 Budget and the Council's financial position. The update included details of an

increase of net expenditure for the Council, largely due to a reduction in parking income and leisure service expenditure pressures caused by the pandemic.

The Council had received a one off grant from Central Government. Despite this, there was still significant uncertainty in the medium term. This is due to Central Government funding reviews, external pressures and decarbonisation challenges.

The one-off grants mean that the financial position of the Council in 2020/21 and 2021/22 is one of break even. However, in the following three years it was predicted the Council would be setting budget deficits unless significant action is taken. This is due to the increase in net expenditure and a reduction Central Government grants. The Group also noted the Council's forecast level of reserves, along with plans in order to maintain them above the agreed minimum level.

The Director of Corporate Resources gave an overview of the estimated potential Capital Commitment spend on all services from 2022 to 2030, this included refurbishing key properties like Leisure Centres and changing the Council's fleet of vehicles. The Central Government Fair Fund Review and a review of business rates were anticipated in the coming years, which may have an impact on the Council. It was also highlighted that there may be changes to Council Tax banding which would have detrimental effect on the Council's financial position.

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

The Forward Plan extract for the Finance & Assets portfolio was noted.

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN