POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday, 9 February 2017 (7:00 pm – 7:50 pm)

PRESENT:

Councillor Clarke (Chair); Councillors Cross, Mrs Broadhurst, Holden-Brown, Garton, Hatfield, Lear, Mignot, Parkinson-MacLachlan and Pragnell

Also in attendance: Councillors Atkinson, Bicknell, A Broadhurst, Corben, Couldrey, Grajewski, Holes, M Hughes, Irish, Kyrle, Mann, Pretty, S Sollitt and Winstanley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Balaam

RESOLVED ITEMS (SUBJECT TO QUESTIONS ONLY)

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this time.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 10 November 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in relation to items of business on the agenda.

4. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

The Chairman advised that Clare Hooper, Democratic Services Officer, was leaving the Council and he wished to thank her, on behalf of Members for all her hard work and help over the last nine months and wished her well in the future.

Following the new arrangements of Cabinet portfolios a scrutiny training session had been arranged for on 2 March 2017 at 7pm. This would undoubtedly involve changes to the current work programme, as would the appointment of the new Commercialisation Manager in March. The Panel will then undertake an investigation into the Council’s commercialisation programme.
5. **GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18**

Consideration was given to a joint report of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Chief Executive concerning the Council’s proposed budget for 2017/18.

Sarah King, (CFO) and Corporate Director, Support Services, provided a presentation advising how the Budget was constructed from the approved Medium Term Budget Strategy, and included the continuing Efficiency Strategy. All Members had been invited to the meeting with an especial invite to the Audit and Resources Committee.

A revised table of expenditure relating to the Non-Parished Area 2017/18 (to replace pages 6 and 7 of the report) was tabled.

The process of preparing the Revised Budget for 2016/17, and the Budget for 2017/18, began in October 2016 when Cabinet and Council had approved the Medium Term Budget Strategy. This provided the background for the preparation of the Revised Budget for 2017/18. Taking account of the Grant Settlement from the Government, and allowing for a 0% Council Tax increase in 2017/18, the Draft Budget as presented was a balanced Budget that set the Council’s net Budget requirement in 2017/18 at £9,849,470. The Budget Summary (Appendix A to the report) included a projection for the Council’s Budget to 2019/20. The summary included the on-going efficiency savings the Council needed to meet in future years.

Service Managers had identified the following budgetary pressures that could not be resourced with the existing budgets, there were: loss of income for car parks of £100,000; two additional Elections in 2016/17 at £20,000; independent property asset valuations at £12,000 for 2016/17; the Apprenticeship Levy, a net budget of £63,000 that had been included for each year of this Strategy from 2017/18; and loss of MOT income due to resources and to which Cabinet were asked to approve a budgetary growth of £10,000 for 2016/17.

The CFO added that the service redesign was on target to save the £1.7M forecast, with an additional £1M to find as part of the Efficiency Strategy before the end of 2018/19; there had been no changes proposed to the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for 2017/18 and therefore the local grant to Parish/Town Council would continue for 2017/18 at a cost of £174,000 (this was met by Government grant with the balance being met from the surplus on the local scheme); and with the inevitability of interests rates rising from time to time, the intention was to continue borrowing short-term but to convert a proportion of the debt to long term early in the new financial year.

The CFO concluded that the Council’s current financial position was healthy and demonstrated the success of both its Efficiency Strategy and Asset Management Plan in acquiring assets with a high rental yield. There
was however a great deal of uncertainty regarding the future in terms of the general economy and the impact of the Government Resources Review. It was essential that the Council continued to develop further efficiency proposals that would deliver sustained savings over the next three years.

The Chairman thanked the CFO for an informative presentation and invited questions from Members. A few questions were asked by both Members in attendance and this Panel. They were responded to fully by the CFO.

Members thanked the CFO, her team, and the Chief Executive, for all the hard work involved in putting together what was a comprehensive and balanced budget and for managing the risk and finances effectively.

It was AGREED –

1. That the Budget report 2017/18 be recommended to Cabinet;
2. That the on-going support to Parish Councils be noted and supported; and
3. That training sessions be arranged for Members to increase their knowledge of commercialism.

(NOTE: Councillors Hatfield and Lear abstained from the vote.)

6. **ACTION LIST**

   The Panel considered its action list from previous meetings, which set out the recent decisions and actions arising from the Panel.

   It was AGREED that actions with a completion date be removed from the list.

7. **FORWARD PLAN**

   The Panel considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

   It was AGREED that the Forward Plan be noted.

8. **WORK PROGRAMME**

   Panel members considered their Work Programme to November 2017. The Chairman advised that Commercialisation at EBC had been deferred until the appointment of a new Commercialisation Manager.

   It was AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.