

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 31 January 2017

Present

Councillor Buckley (Chairman)

Councillors Branson, Carpenter, Fairhurst, Francis, Hughes, Patrick, Quantrill, Shimbart, Smith D, Wade and Ponsonby

14 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

15 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Board held on 22 November and 21 December 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

17 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

18 Chairman's Report

The Chairman advised the Committee that as part of their review of the Council's Standing Orders, the Budget Scrutiny and Policy and Development Panel were undertaking a survey of all Councillors to find out how they thought standing orders could be improved, particularly in relation to public access, participation in council meetings and accountability for decision-making. The Chairman requested the members of the Board to submit a return.

19 Budget 2017/18

The Board was given an opportunity to consider and comment upon the draft Revenue and Capital Budget 2017/18 to 2021/22. The Leader of the Council, the Director for Strategy and Governance, the Chief Finance Officer and the Corporate Accountancy Team Leader answered members' questions in connection with the report.

The Board discussed in detail the proposed property investment proposals which formed a part of the Council's budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Board expressed concern that the Budget Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel had not been consulted on these proposals and that insufficient time and information had been given for members of the Board or

other Councillors to give proper consideration to these proposals. The Leader of the Council offered a number of options to the Board including:

- (i) holding a seminar; and
- (ii) rearranging the Cabinet timetable

to enable the Board to scrutinise these proposals prior to the Council meeting and/or all Councillors to consider the proposals and submit comments to the Cabinet via the Scrutiny Board Chairman and the Scrutiny Lead for the Budget Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel prior to the Council to be held on 22 February 2017.

The Chairman requested that a briefing paper on the property investment proposals be circulated to all Councillors, to allow all members the opportunity to comment and submit concerns to the Scrutiny Board Chairman and the Scrutiny Lead of the Budget Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel to raise these concerns at Cabinet.

The following points were also raised during the course of the discussion:

1. it was not proposed to increase the fee for removal of rats and mice in 2017/18;
2. if the Council did not include the property investments proposals within the 2017/18 budget the shortfall could be met from using General Funds;
3. a failure to agree to the investment proposals would have detrimental impact on the Council in the long term which could only be avoided by making efficiencies and cuts and/or a rise in Council tax;
4. the Council did not accept an offer from the Government for a four year grant settlement as this would have required the Council to increase Council tax contrary to its policy and for the Council to publish information which would have a detrimental impact on the Council's competitiveness;
5. paragraph 5.2 of the submitted report should be amended by the deletion of the words "and an increase in";
6. Appendix A of the submitted report was correct; and
7. the Business rate figures set out in Appendices A and D were correct; Appendix D of the submitted would be amended to clarify the reasons for the difference between the two figures in these appendices.

RESOLVED that

- (A) That the Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council:

- (a) The proposed Revenue & Capital Budgets for 2017/18, including a Council Tax rate of £192.78 at Band D, representing a 0% increase on the current charge and continuing the Council's freeze on its portion of the Council Tax since 2009/10.
- (b) The Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential indicators, and the Prices for Services subject to (i) to (iv) below,

Subject to:

- (i) paragraph 2.9 of Appendix E of the submitted report being amended to require the approval of the Cabinet on all property purchases and to provide clarification on how much may be invested in this scheme any one year;
 - (ii): the questions attached as Appendix A to these minutes being referred to the relevant Heads of Services to provide the answers to these questions to all members of the Scrutiny Board;
 - (iii) a briefing paper on the property investment proposals being sent to all Councillors to enable these Councillors to submit their concerns to the Chairman of the Scrutiny Board and Scrutiny Lead for the Budget Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel prior to the Cabinet Meeting to be held on 8 February 2017; and
 - (iv) the Chairman of the Scrutiny Board and the Scrutiny Lead for the Budget Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel being given an opportunity to present the comments received in response to (iii) above to the meeting of the Cabinet to be held on 8 February and/or the Chairman of the Scrutiny Board calling in the property investment proposals for scrutiny with the intention of presenting the findings of this scrutiny to Council on 22 February 2017.
- (B) That the Cabinet be requested to ensure that in future years the Budget Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel be given ample opportunity to consider the budget prior to finalisation of the draft proposals

20 Scrutiny Board Work Programme

The Board was given an opportunity to review progress made by the Crime and Disorder Panel and the scrutiny and policy development panels since the last meeting.

RESOLVED that

- (a) The progress reports of the Crime and Disorder Panel and the Scrutiny and Policy Development Panels be noted;

(b) The following topics be added to the Scrutiny Board Work Programme

- Encouraging Investments in the Borough through Business Rates Incentives
- Business Rates Revaluations and their impact on local businesses

21 Review of Shared Management Arrangements with East Hampshire District Council

The Board was given the opportunity to consider and comment upon the Review of the Shared Management Arrangements with East Hampshire District Council Report. The Scrutiny Lead for the Marketing Business Development and Five Councils Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel presented the report and answered any questions raised. The Chief Executive was invited to join the meeting and answer any questions in relation to the report.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be recommended to consider offering consultancy services to aspiring Councils on successful partnership work.

22 Review of the Transfer of IT under the Five Council's Contract

The Board was given the opportunity to consider and comment upon the Review of the transfer of the IT systems under the Five Councils' Contract Report. The Scrutiny Lead for the Marketing Business Development and Five Councils Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel presented the report and answered any questions raised. The Cabinet Lead for Strategic Innovation, Infrastructure and Projects was invited to join the meeting and answer any questions in relation to the report.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Leads be recommended to note the contents of the report.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 7.24 pm

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Chairman

Questions to Be Referred to the Relevant Heads of Service

1. Appendix B of the submitted report - Row 2 'Business Hub' (proposed by Economic Development). During all of our lengthy discussions with Julia Potter and Dan Grindey, no mention was made of this Project. Where has this arisen from, what are the costs for and how will it be used?
2. Appendix E of the submitted report – **Schedule 1** - 3rd Paragraph. Question: 'There was external borrowing in place as at January 2017 of £3.7M' – for what?
3. Appendix F of the submitted report – **Environmental Services** - Allotments: What is the rationale for increasing the cost (per Sq Metre) by 1p? How much will this increase generate? How much officer time will be taken up adjusting the charges? Quite simply, is it necessary/beneficial?
4. Appendix F of the submitted report – **Refuse and Recycling**: What is the rationale for increasing (yet again) the cost of garden waste by a further 10% (year on year)? Supplementary – have letters already been sent out informing residents of this intent?
5. Appendix F of the submitted report – **Neighbourhood Support** - Cemeteries: It is assumed that these increases in charges are to bring them in line with other local authorities. Is this the case?
6. Appendix F of the submitted report – **Planning** - Planning Development: During the Budget Scrutiny – the Head of Planning intimated that there was a desire to increase the costs of holding a DCF. Why has this not been carried into the 2017/2018 budget?
7. Page 32 of the submitted report– is a duplicate of Page 26.
8. Appendix F of the submitted report – **Customer Services** - Elections – Are these charges set by legislation?
9. Appendix E of the submitted report – Para 1.4 indicates that the Council 'has held no external borrowing'. Question – Does this mean we are debt free on all of our current property investments?

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