

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 30 January 2015

Present

Councillor Shimbart (Chairman)

Councillors Cousins, Galloway, Perry, Smith D, Smith K, Tarrant, Turner, Ponsonby, Mackey (Standing Deputy) and Mrs Shimbart (Standing Deputy)

35 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Buckley, Keast and Lenaghan.

36 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 18 November 2014 be approved as a correct record.

37 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

38 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest from any of the members present.

39 Chairman's Report

There were no matters the Chairman wished to report to the Board.

40 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2015-16

The Board was given an opportunity to consider and comment upon the proposed Revenue and Capital Budgets 2015/16.

The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Lead for Environment and Neighbourhood Quality, the Executive Head for Governance and Logistics and the Corporate Accountancy Team Leader were invited to join the meeting and answered members' questions in connection with the report.

Several questions were submitted before the meeting and these and their related responses are attached to these minutes in Appendix A.

The Board then held a detailed discussion over various aspects of the budget and the following points were raised during the course of the discussion:

- The hire charge rate for rooms at the Public Service Plaza;
- Car parking charges throughout the borough;
- The implementation of new IT systems;
- An update on the legal services project; and
- The cost of hiring cricket nets.

Following the discussion it was suggested that after the 2015 elections a training session on Local Government finance be held for Councillors.

At the conclusion of the debate the officers were thanked for all their hard work in preparing a comprehensive budget report.

The Scrutiny Board RECOMMENDED to Cabinet

- (1) The proposed revenue and capital budget for 2015/16, which included a Council Tax rate of £192.78 at Band D (represented a 0% increase);
- (2) The Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators; and
- (3) The proposed Prices for Services for 2015/16.

41 Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2014/15

The Board was given an opportunity to review progress with regard to the work undertaken by the scrutiny and policy development panels since the last meeting and to identify any additional matters for inclusion in the Board's work programme.

RESOLVED that the progress to date with regard to the Board's work programme be noted and that no additional matters be selected for scrutiny/policy review at the present time.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.00 pm

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Chairman

Scrutiny Board 30 February 2015 – Appendix A

	Questions Raised By:	
Page 17	1. Cllr Andrew Lenaghan	<p>As we have hand held computers could the Beachlands paper permit season ticket be abolished and the Registrations recorder on the system. I am sure we can overcome 2 registrations being allowed on a permit. The car parking attendants could then check quite quickly and accurately if the car is legally parked. This would overcome the wholly disproportionate charge for lost tickets which I am sure were put in place to alienate the public. If the system cannot cope and we have to continue with permits I would like to see this charge reduced to a reasonable charge to cover the admin cost only. Going by how quickly Councillor Permits are issued for parking I would have thought a maximum of £10 would be in order unless you can give a good reason for the charge.</p> <p><u>Response:</u></p> <p><i>Unfortunately, the handhelds will not allow the CEOs to record whether a vehicle is parked or not if these permit details were contained within it. Therefore it would not be possible to identify if both cars are parked at the same time. There are paperless options we could use but these will require investment in new IT to implement. Again we would need to remove the option for two registrations on the permit which has been a popular option.</i></p> <p><i>If supported by my Cabinet Lead I am happy to reduce the charge for lost permits to the same as the admin fee as that would cover the costs still.</i></p>
17	Cllr Andrew Lenaghan	<p>Our loyal long standing customers seem to be penalised with a larger % increase for Beach hut hire. I would like to see these stand still for a year following a few years of serious increases and disruption. This could be made up by increasing the daily hire charges which as a % are considerably less. The daily rate is seriously good value especially when you compare the daily summer rate to the winter rate. I don't know how many huts are involved or how we compare to other resorts, but I would have thought anything less than £150 per week was a bargain in the high season. I think this needs a serious strategy and marketing review as there seems very little science to the structure.</p> <p><u>Response:</u></p> <p><i>Cllr Briggs to provide a response at the Scrutiny Board.</i></p>
	3. Cllr John Perry	<p>The Budget looks reasonable for 2015/16; however, I am unsure how the Council can comply with para 2.4 on page 75 of the Agenda if no projected cash flow statement has been prepared particularly since the reversal of depreciation of £2.26M and the reserve contribution of £0.3M on page 13; together with the £158k of bad debt provision release all produce revenue but no cash.</p> <p>Therefore I propose that that we request a projected cash flow statement to ensure that the budget is balanced and does</p>

		<p>not require excessive bank borrowings.</p> <p><i>Response:</i></p> <p><i>The specific answer to that is that the budget as set out in Appendix A has a section called "Statutory Adjustments" which meets the requirement of para 2.4 of ensuring the capital spending decisions impact on the revenue budget are included.</i></p>
4.	Cllr John Perry	<p>I am also not happy with the proposed increase in the High Hedges complaint fee increase from £390 to £500; I would be happier with an increase to £400. Could I ask how many submissions were made in 2013/14 and 2014/15, and what is the cost of administration of them in those years?</p> <p><u>Response:</u></p> <p><i>We had 2 applications in 2013 with a fee of £270 paid for each. None in 2014.</i></p> <p><i>An assessment of time and cost was undertaken just before Christmas, and found that the total cost to the Council, even of a 'straightforward case', is £596.01, compared with the fee income of £270. Hence the decision to increase the fee to more closely reflect the actual cost.</i></p>
Page 18	Cllr Ralph Cousins	<p>What was the total car parking income for 2013/14, 2014/15 and the anticipated income for 2015/16?</p> <p><u>Response:</u></p> <p>2013/14 - £856,000.00 2014/15 - £893,558.00 (end of Quarter 3) 2015/16 - £882,000.00 (projected)</p>
6.	Cllr Faith Ponsonby	<p>In setting the budget, has allowance been made for the possible increase in salary level of the lowest grade workers to reach the level of the 'living wage', currently £7.85 per hour, in accordance with the recent motion passed at Council?</p> <p><u>Response:</u></p> <p><i>Yes, this has been allowed for when setting the budget.</i></p>