

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 6 February 2020 at 7.00 pm

at the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Nathan Boyd (Chair), Jerry Avery, Ron Batstone, Samantha Bowring, Cheryl Briggs, Mike Pighills and Max Thompson

Officers: Steve Culliford, William Jacobs, Candida Mckelvey, Richard Spraggett and Mark Stone

Also present: Councillor Andrew Crawford and Councillor Patrick O'Leary

Number of members of the public: Nil

Sc.27 Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Councillors Robert Maddison and Andy Foulsham.

Sc.28 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.29 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements. The Chairman briefly ran through housekeeping.

Sc.30 Public participation

None.

Sc.31 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

None.

Sc.32 Revenue budget 2020/21 and capital programme to 2024/25

The committee considered the Interim Head of Finance's report on the revenue budget 2020/21 and the capital programme to 2024/25.

Councillor Crawford briefed the committee on the budget report. It was a difficult task to provide the report on time, due to the December elections. The officer's hard work resulted in a forensic, line by line analysis of the budget.

Councillors attended a comprehensive pre-briefing on the budget report.

Council Tax announcement has been delayed until the 14 February, due to the Thames Valley Police tax element being delayed.

There was a £500,000 budget for transformation, and a £5 Council Tax increase for Band D properties. Climate Emergency has been allocated £106,000.

Clarifications:

- It was confirmed that when the budget allows next year, there will be a working group to consider a move towards a single district council.
- Transformation will include a review of community and leisure services, to reduce losses.
- Enforcement budget is lowered due to the department already having 14 enforcers. Further staffing would not improve outcomes.

The Portfolio Holder for finance confirmed that he had confidence in the 2020/21 budget. It was forensically carried out. 96 percent of budget lines delivered within 2 percent of budget; the variance was small. The council's external auditors commented that this is a well-managed budget and councillors were encouraged to attend the Audit and Governance Committee if they want to.

The committee discussed budget assumptions, and clarification was given by officers and the portfolio holder.

For example, planning fees overestimation: There is little control over some budget aspects – the estimates are based on historical evidence and land in the pipeline. The budget has been produced alongside services, to identify where we can offset income and expenditure. For example, if there are less planning applications, do not recruit vacant posts.

The new IT system in Revenue and Benefits has shown a reduction in overpayments, meaning the council has less to clawback.

Thanks were given to the Officers. The committee noted the report but did not make any recommendation to Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 7.26 pm