

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 11 February 2016 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 Judy Roberts (Chair), Alice Badcock (Vice-Chairman), Ed Blagrove, Debby Hallett, Vicky Jenkins, Monica Lovatt, Ben Mabbett and Chris Palmer

Officers: David Buckle, Susan Harbour and Simon Hewings

Also present: Councillor Matthew Barber

Number of members of the public: 0

Sc.30 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Katie Finch.

Sc.31 Minutes and actions arising and referral

The minutes were not available for consideration and would come to the next meeting.

Sc.32 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations.

Sc.33 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

There was no urgent business and no Chair's announcements.

Sc.34 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee

There were no statements, petitions or questions from the public.

Sc.35 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

Grants review was added to the work programme.

Sc.36 Vale Council 0216 Revenue Budget 2016-17 and Capital Programme to 2020-21

Matthew Barber, Cabinet member for finance; William Jacobs, head of finance and Section 151 officer, and Simon Hewings, chief accountant were present to introduce the item and to answer questions from the committee.

The committee considered the head of finance's report on the revenue budget 2016/17 and the capital programme to 2020/21. The report brought together the relevant information upon which Cabinet had recommended a budget and capital programme to Council on 17 February 2016. Supplementary paper appendix E setting out the prudential indicators for Cabinet's recommendation to Council, had been circulated in advance of the meeting. All councillors had been invited to a budget briefing earlier in the month.

The committee asked questions of clarification. A summary of the key issues raised during the question and answer session is below:

- Under the new leisure contract with GLL "Better", the Council receives a fee from the contractor, but pays for capital works;
- Costs between Vale and its partner council, South Oxfordshire District are split according to use of particular contractors/services;
- An increase of 0.5 FTE for the air quality officer would enable proactive responses to action plans;
- Additional financial resource to support housing strategies would provide an additional resource to support neighbourhood plans;
- The housing strategy is not aimed specifically at housing an additional number of families but at providing a strategy for the proper mix of housing, managing the waiting list and prioritising the right people;
- Although the Housing Benefit bad debt budget looks high in numerical terms, it is a very small proportion of the overall budget;
- The collection rate for council tax is ultimately over 99.9 percent;
- The revenue growth bid for the business innovation strategy would support growing small business and help to identify what the council could do to provide practical support.

There followed a lengthy discussion around the renovation of the Charter car park in Abingdon. This included, *inter alia*, the feasibility of expanding car parks in Abingdon, Wantage, Faringdon, Grove and Botley; and also the council's commitment to public transport and bicycles.

RESOLVED

To agree that cabinet recommend to council that it:

- a. Sets the revenue budget for 2016/17 as set out in appendix A.1 to the report in this agenda pack;

- b. Approves the capital programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21 as set out in appendix D.1, together with the capital growth bids set out in appendix D.2 of the report in this agenda pack;
- c. Sets the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix E, which was supplementary to this agenda;
- d. Approves the medium term financial plan to 2020/21 as set out in appendix F.1 to the report in this agenda pack.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm