
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2019

HWSP.70/19 BUDGET 2020/21 – 2024/25

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted the annual budget reports, noting that the Panel's consideration marked the beginning of the process for setting and approving the Council's Budget.

(a) Budget Update - Revenue Estimates 2020/21 to 2024/25

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted report RD.29/19 providing a summary of the Council's revised revenue base estimates for 2019/20, together with base estimates for 2020/21 and forecasts up to 2024/25 for illustrative purposes. The base estimates had been prepared in accordance with the guiding principles for the formulation of the budget over the next five year planning period as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Charging Policy; Capital Strategy; and Asset Management Plan approved by Council on 10 September 2019.

The report set out known revisions to the MTFP projections, although there were a number of significant factors affecting the budget that were currently unresolved, details of which were recorded at Section 1.3. A summary of the outstanding key issues, together with the resource assumptions were also provided at Section 4.

The Executive had on 18 November 2019 (EX.95/19) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the revised base estimates for 2019/20 and base estimates for 2020/21.
2. Noted the current Medium Term Financial Plan projections, which would continue to be updated throughout the budget process as key issues became clearer and decisions were taken.
3. Noted the initial budget pressures, bids and savings which needed to be taken into account as part of the 2020/21 budget process.
4. Noted the review of the earmarked reserves as outlined in paragraph 9 and Appendix F to report RD.29/19.”

In considering the report, Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Following a request for clarity the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources explained that the Sexual Assault Referral Service was a new spending pressure which had been added to the budget on a recurring basis.
- It was suggested that the recycles income target was set too high and consideration should be given to reducing the target in future budgets.

The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that the expected income reflected ongoing concern. Work was being undertaken by the County wide group to address some issues and settle on a target

which all authorities were comfortable with, this would be included in the 2022/23 to 2025/26 budget process.

- In response to a question regarding responsibility the Deputy Chief Executive clarified that the City Council were responsible for a significant number of footway lighting in the City. The City Engineer had identified an opportunity to replace the sodium footway lighting with LED lighting which would reduce the energy consumption as well as produce a financial saving.

RESOLVED – 1) That report RD.29/19 Budget Update – Revenue Estimates 2020/21 to 2024/25 had been submitted to the Panel;

2) That the Panel supported the permanent contribution to the Sexual Assault Referral Service and the invest to save scheme to install LED lighting in footways.

(b) Review of Charges 2020/21

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources presented the Review of Charges reports informing the Panel that there was a 3% increase on the overall level of income in line with the Corporate Charging Policy.

Community Services

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted report CS.25/19 which set out the proposed fees and charges for 2020/21 relating to those services falling within the Community Services Directorate.

The charges highlighted within the report would result in an anticipated level of income of £2,929,300 against the MTFP target of £3,132,800 which represented a shortfall of £203,500 against the MTFP target. Details of the proposed charges in relation to those areas within the Panel's remit as detailed on the agenda, were contained within the report.

The Executive had on 18 November 2019 (EX.96/19) received the report and decided:

“That the Executive:

1. Had reviewed the proposed charges as set out in the body of Report CS.25/19 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2020, noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.
2. Made the report of proposed charges available to relevant Scrutiny Panels for their review and comment.”

In considering the report, Members raised the following questions or comments:

- A Member asked why the use of parks charge had different fees for commercial events.

The Health and Wellbeing Manager responded that large commercial events occupied the parks for some time and were charged per day along with reinstatement fees to protect the Council.

- A new private car park had opened at Talkin Tarn, had this affected the car parking income for the area?

The Health and Wellbeing Manager explained that there had not been a significant reduction in the use of the Council car park as a result of the private car park.

- The number of attendees at events held at the Old Fire Station had reduced, had there been any consideration given to reducing the ticket prices to encourage more people to attend events?

The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that there was a significant variety of ticket prices for events at the Old Fire Station. There had been a reduction in the number of events offered and discussion was under way with different promoters to encourage more events to take place. He clarified that the Dormitory Room and the Parquet Room were both fully booked up as exhibition and gallery space. The ground floor had flexible space and a programme of events were booked in but there was room in the programme for more events.

- Did the MOT charge compete with other providers?

The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the City Council garage's priority was the maintenance of the Council's vehicles and the assessment of taxis, if there was availability then the garage carried out MOTs for customers to generate some income.

- A Member supported the reduction in the charges for refurbished bins to encourage a decrease in the demand for new plastic.

RESOLVED – That the Charges Review Report 2020/21 – Community Services be endorsed (CS.25/19).

Governance and Regulatory Services

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Service submitted report GD.46/19 which detailed the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Governance and Regulatory Services Directorate.

The report set out the proposed charges relative to Environmental Health and Housing; Homeless, Prevention and Accommodation Services; and Legal Services, and the Corporate Director noted that all the increases proposed were in-line with the Council approved, Corporate Charging Policy.

The introduction of the proposed charges was forecast to generate income of £872,500 in 2020/21 as summarised in the table at paragraph 5.9.1 of the report.

The Executive had on 18 November 2019 (EX.98/19) received the report and decided:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges as detailed within Report GD.46/19 and accompanying Appendices, with effect from 1 April 2020; noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.”

In response to Members' questions the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services clarified that the reduction in the stairlift fee was due to a better price through the framework agreement. He also confirmed that anyone could apply for a Disabled Facility Grant (DFG), adding that Riverside carried out some of their own DFG work.

RESOLVED – That the Charges Review Report 2020/21 – Governance and Regulatory Services be endorsed (GD.46/19).

(c) Revised Capital Programme 2019/20 and Provisional Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2024/25

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted report RD.30/19 detailing the revised Capital Programme for 2019/20, now totalling £23,222,900, together with the proposed method of financing. The report summarised the proposed programme for 2020/21 to 2024/25 in the light of the new capital proposals identified, together with the estimated capital resources available to fund the programme.

Section 4 provided details of the current commitments and new spending proposals. Any capital scheme for which funding had been approved by Council may only proceed after a full report, including business case and financial appraisal, had been approved. A summary of the estimated resources compared to the proposed programme year on year was also provided.

The Executive had on 18 November 2019 (EX.100/19) received the report and decided:
“That the Executive:

1. Noted the revised capital programme and relevant financing for 2019/20 as set out in Appendices A and B to report RD.30/19;
2. Had given initial consideration and views on the proposed capital spending for 2020/21 to 2024/25 given in the report in the light of the estimated available resources;
3. Noted that any capital scheme for which funding had been approved by Council may only proceed after a full report, including business case and financial appraisal, had been approved.”

In considering the report, Members raised the following questions or comments:

- Did the vehicle and plant commitment take account of the Council discussions to transfer to an electric fleet?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources clarified that the budget was to replace vehicles and plant like for like.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder added that the technology for electric vehicles was not quite ready yet. He had made some initial investigations into the cost of changing all of the vehicles and plant to electric and it was estimated that it would cost approximately £15 to £25 million. He outlined the potential borrowing costs for the sum adding that the only way for the authority to meet the costs would be to increase council tax by 15 – 18%.

RESOLVED – That the Revised Capital Programme 2019/20 and Provisional Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2024/25 (RD.30/19) be endorsed.