
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2012

COSP.80/12 BUDGET 2013/14 – 2017/18

Revenue Budget Reports

(a) Summary of New Revenue Spending Pressures

The Director of Resources submitted report RD.44/12 summarising the new revenue spending pressures and reduced income projections which needed to be considered as part of the 2013/14 budget process. The issues were to be considered in the light of the Council's corporate priorities.

The Executive had on 19 November 2012 (EX.138/12) received the report and forwarded it to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for consideration as part of the 2013/14 budget process.

The Director of Resources advised that it was clear that all of the pressures could not be accommodated within existing resources (including use of reserves) and decisions would be needed throughout the budget process to limit pressures to high priority and unavoidable issues to ensure that a balanced budget position was recommended to Council February 2013.

Members then considered the following new priority for revenue spending and reduced income which fell within the areas of responsibility of this Panel.

- **Localisation of Council Tax Support**

The Council Tax Benefit would be abolished from 1 April 2013 and would be replaced by Localised Support for Council Tax (LSCT). It was the responsibility of each Council to set its own scheme which would see council tax benefit changing to a legal discount. The Government was reducing funding by 10% at the same time as the localisation. It was anticipated that the pressure identified would be as a result of losing the 10% of funding as well as additional take up of the scheme.

- **New Homes Bonus – 2011/12**

The New Homes Bonus allocations were for a period of 6 years and the pressure reflected the 2011/12 allocation which would cease in 2017/18.

- **Homelessness**

An additional non-recurring government grant to support homelessness was included in Report RD.45/12 – Summary of New Saving Proposals and Additional Income and the pressure utilised the grant to provide additional homelessness support.

Members asked if the cost of the Elections Individual Registration was known yet and what impact the Living Wage had on the budget.

The Director of Resources responded that the Elections Individual Registration costs were not yet known and the Living Wage would be a recurring cost of £30,000. Any increase to the Living Wage would become part of the salary budget.

RESOLVED – That Report RD.44/12 be noted.

(b) Summary of New Savings Proposals and Additional Income

Report RD.45/12 had been circulated to the Panel by way of background information.

The Director of Resources summarised the proposed savings relating to Pay Award Savings 2012/13, Council Tax discount review, Leisure Contract Savings, Asset Review, Housing Benefit Admin Grant and the reprofiling of Transformation savings.

A Member asked how the savings would be achieved with regard to the Leisure Contract and Herbert Atkinson House. The Director of Resources explained that, subject to negotiations, the Council would not charge rent for Herbert Atkinson House and the grant to Tullie House would be reduced to cover the costs over a staggered period.

RESOLVED – That Report RD.45/12 be noted.

(c) Review of Charges 2013/2014

• Local Environment

Report LE.34/12 was submitted, setting out the proposed fees and charges for the services falling within the remit of the Local Environment Directorate.

The Executive had on 19 November 2012 (EX.133/12) considered the report and agreed for consultation the proposed charges (including the amended charges for Talkin Tarn car park), as set out in Report LE.34/12 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2013; noting the impact of those charges on income generation, as detailed within the report.

The Director of Local Environment reported that the increase made within the charges report was in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan increase of 3.8%. Charging for the use of parks and green spaces had been introduced in 2012/13 to ensure there was a more formal arrangement for the use of parks and allowed for a more planned approach. There had also been an introduction of a bond which would be used if damage was caused to the area by an event organiser and would be used reinstate the area.

A Member was extremely disappointed to see the increase in charging for car parking and activities at Talkin Tarn. She felt that the increases were discriminatory and unfair towards rural areas as the Council did not charge for parking at urban parks; she also felt that the increase contravened the City Council's equality policy. Additionally she felt that the increase would discourage visitors to the Tarn.

The Director of Local Environment responded that the agreement when the City Council took over the running of Talkin Tarn had been that Talkin Tarn would be cost neutral for the City Council and that had not happened; the proposed charges would offset the net cost of £87,100 that was currently met by the Council. She added that the Council was keen to retain the current standards at the Tarn but would require additional income to do so.

Speaking in his capacity as former Portfolio Holder a Member clarified that part of the negotiations for the transfer of Talkin Tarn ensured that money raised from charges made at the Tarn had to be ring fenced for Talkin Tarn. The County Council had given £40,000 per annum to the City Council for five years for the Tarn as part of the agreement and this arrangement had now ended.

A Member commented that Talkin Tarn was different in many ways to municipal parks in urban areas as it was not part of an obvious community that fed into the park.

A Member asked if any consideration had been given to the effect the charges may potentially have on the surrounding roads, if visitors did not want to pay the parking charge they may park on the roads into the Tarn and this had been an issue for the Police previously.

The Director of Local Environment that, in response to those concerns, the Executive had amended the proposed charges at their meeting on 19 November 2012 so that parking was free before 10.00am and after 6.00pm.

RESOLVED – That the observations of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as outlined above, be conveyed to the Executive

- **Community Engagement**

Report CD.53/12 was submitted, setting out the proposed fees and charges for the services falling within the remit of the Community Engagement Directorate.

The Executive had on 19 November 2012 (EX.134/12) agreed for consultation the increase in charges, as set out in Report CD.53/12, with effect from 1 January 2013; and noted the impact thereof on income generation as detailed within the report.

The Director of Community Engagement reported that there had been an increase in the administrative charges for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and an increase in the charge for Hostel Services. The increase to the DFG charge had brought the revenue cost of delivering DFG up to national levels.

The increase in the Hostel Services charge had been in response to the changes to the provision of Hostel Services, the £5 increase to the Homeshare rate made up the shortfall in the Housing Benefit.

In response to a question regarding the support provided by Riverside Carlisle for DFGs, the Director of Community Engagement agreed to bring more details back to the next Panel meeting.

RESOLVED – That report CD.53/12 be noted.

Capital Budget Reports

(d) Revised Capital Programme 2012/13 and Provisional Capital Programme 2013/14 to 2017/18

The Director of Resources submitted report RD.46/12 detailing the revised capital programme for 2012/13, together with the proposed method of financing as set out in Appendices A and B. The report also summarised the proposed programme for 2013/14 to 2017/18 in the light of the new capital pressures identified, and summarised the estimated and much reduced capital resources available to fund the programme.

The Executive had on 19 November 2012 (EX.140/12) considered the report and decided:

That the Executive :

1. Noted the revised capital programme and relevant financing for 2012/13 as set out in Appendices A and B of Report RD.46/12;
2. Recommended that the City Council approve reprofiling of £3,000,000 and savings of £2,080,300 from 2012/13 identified in the review;
3. Made recommendations to Council to approve virements from underspends from Kingstown Industrial Estate (£150,100) and Families Accommodation Replacement (£100,000) to fund additional expenditure at the Resource Centre;
4. Had given initial consideration to the capital spending requests for 2013/14 to 2017/18 contained in Report RD.46/12 in the light of the estimated available resources; and
5. Noted that any capital scheme for which funding had been approved by the Council may only proceed after a full report, including business case and financial appraisal, had been approved."

Details of the new capital spending proposals which fell within the area of responsibility of the Panel were as detailed on the Agenda for the meeting.

- **Disabled Facilities Grants** – The Disabled Facilities Grant allocation would not be announced until January 2013, it had been indicated that the grant would be protected at the 2012/13 levels. A further report would be presented to the Executive once the 2013/14 allocation had been received.
- **Methodist Arts Centre** – A 3 year programme of works to develop a sustainable Arts Centre in the Methodist Hall. If the scheme was approved there may be a requirement to utilise some of the funding in 2012/13.
- **Harraby School and Community Campus** – The Harraby School and Community Project was a capital new build scheme designed to deliver a three form entry primary school, community centre, library, theatre and other sports facilities in the former North Cumbria Technology College site.
- **Leisure Facilities** – Sports and leisure facilities would be significantly improved through a capital scheme which would address the need of appropriate wet and dry facilities servicing the whole of the district. It would be informed by a sports facility strategy which was in production.

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

- Did the Harraby School and Community Campus project fall within the remit of Carlisle City Council?

The Director of Resources confirmed that the project was a community project opposed to an educational project, the project would affect the whole ward and would link into the City's Sports Strategy. The figure set out in the report was not final and would be subject to negotiations.

The Director of Community Engagement reminded the Panel that work on the Sports Strategy was underway and the full document would be available in early December.

- Would the location of the proposed swimming pool go out to consultation with the public?

The Director of Community Engagement responded that consultation had taken place with key stakeholders on the site appraisal. The recommendations from the consultants report would be used as advice for the Council. It would be the Council's decision if they wanted to hold a public consultation.

- Did the Council plan to buy the Methodist Hall on Fisher Street?

The Director of Community Engagement stated that it was the Council's aspiration to gain access to the Methodist Hall without purchasing it; it was hoped that a third party would purchase the Hall and have an agreement to allow the City Council access. If this did not happen then other options would be explored further.

A Member asked how the proposed Arts Centre in the Methodist Hall would work with Tullie House. The Director of Community Engagement felt that the proposals would be very positive for the historic quarter and projects for the area and would be in partnership with Tullie House. He was clear that it was important to ensure that the proposed Arts Centre would enhance the offer in the area and not replace any.

RESOLVED: To accept the recommendations as set out in Report RD.46/12.