

EXECUTIVE – SPECIAL MEETING

MONDAY 11 DECEMBER 2017 AT 4.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor Glover (Leader / Chairman)
Councillor Dr Tickner (Deputy Leader, and Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Mrs Bradley (Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Ms Quilter (Culture, Heritage and Leisure Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Miss Sherriff (Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Southward (Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder)

OFFICERS:

Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Corporate Director of Economic Development
Chief Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Nedved (Chairman of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel)
Councillor Mrs Riddle (Chairman of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel)
Councillors Allison and Bainbridge (Observers)

WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the special meeting.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That the Agenda be agreed as circulated.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted at the meeting.

EX.131/17 BUDGET 2018/19 – FEEDBACK FROM THE SCRUTINY PANELS ON THE DRAFT BUDGET REPORTS
(Key Decision – KD.23/17)

Portfolio Finance, Governance and Resources

Relevant Scrutiny Panel

Health and Wellbeing; Economic Growth; Business and Transformation

Subject Matter

Speaking by way of introduction, the Leader indicated that the Scrutiny Panels had scrutinised the draft Budget Reports for 2018/19 considered by the Executive on 20 November 2017.

The purpose of the special Executive meeting was to give consideration to the Minutes of the undernoted Scrutiny Panel meetings, copies of which were submitted:

- (a) Health and Wellbeing – 23 November 2017 (HWSP.31/17)
- (b) Economic Growth – 30 November 2017 (EGSP.33/17)
- (c) Business and Transformation – 5 December 2017 (BTSP.41/17)

Invitations had been extended to the Scrutiny Panel Chairmen to speak at the special meeting today.

The Leader noted that the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel was not in attendance. He confirmed, however, that Executive Members had received the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 23 November 2017 which would be taken into account.

The Chairman of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel was present at the meeting and summarised the Panel's response in the following terms:

- The £235,000 Non-Recurring Pressure relating to economic development initiatives which the Council wished to pursue, such as Borderlands, Business Interaction Centre, Development Brief for Morton District Centre, Promotion of Central Plaza Redevelopment and promotion of City Centre redevelopment options was universally welcomed. The only issue related to how the funding would be allocated.
- A number of Members had expressed concern that encouraging long-stay use of the Council's car parks at the Civic Centre and Bitts Park would have a detrimental impact on retail in the city centre as larger numbers of long-stay users would reduce the amount of spaces available for short-stay users wishing to access stores within the city.

A Member noted that the construction of Council's temporary Customer Contact Centre within the Civic Centre car park had reduced the number of spaces available at the facility. He was concerned that incentivising long-stay use of the car park would further limit the spaces available for short-stay users of the facility who had business at the Civic Centre, and that may particularly impact on residents from rural areas, without access to public transport who were required to use cars to access the Civic Centre.

Discussion had also taken place with regard to the potential changes to car parking provision in the city following the proposed redevelopment of the ground floor of the Civic Centre and the demolition of the former Cumbria County Council offices; and occupancy levels of retail stores within the City Centre.

- It was understood that the University of Cumbria had decided not to renew its lease of the Business Interaction Centre (BIC). There was some concern that the new spending proposal for the coming financial year, on the facility, was a significant sum. Members were however assured that the Council was taking a pro-active and positive approach to the redevelopment of the Centre and hoped that would prove to be successful.

The Chairman concluded by highlighting the Panel's recommendation that the proposed reduction in the level of charge levied for the 4 – 9.5 hour period in the Civic Centre car park be removed from the Executive Budget proposals. He was pleased that the recommendation was supported by the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel and expressed the hope that the Executive would look kindly on that issue.

The Chairman of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel reported that one of the topics under discussion at the Panel meeting related to the continuation of the grant to match fund sexual assault referral service projects by Cumbria Police (£20,000 non-recurring two year pressure). It was felt that the grant should be included as a recurring pressure.

The Disabled Facilities Grants had been underspent which was somewhat worrying. The Chairman wished to see a robust plan on how that grant allocation would be spent in future.

The Panel was supportive of the recommendation made to the Executive by the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel and recommended to the Executive that the proposed reduction in the level of charge levied for the 4 – 9.5 hour period in the Civic Centre car park be removed from the Executive Budget proposals.

The Panel further recommended that the following line be removed from Section 6.2 of the Revised Capital Programme 2017/18 and Provisional Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23:

“No major one-off schemes unless fully funded from grants or external funding”

The Deputy Leader, and Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder thanked the Financial Services Team and Officers for their work in preparing the budget documentation; and the Chairmen of the Economic Growth; and the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panels for their addresses to the Executive. He further wished to place on record thanks to all Scrutiny Panel Members for their scrutiny, awareness and questioning.

In terms of the Review of Charges for 2018/19, the Deputy Leader reminded Members that the proposals took account of the MTFP's 3% increase but that had not been applied across the board as factors including market forces and local conditions had been taken into account.

The Executive would give detailed consideration to the issues and recommendations raised prior to putting forward their draft Budget Proposals for consultation on 18 December 2017.

The Deputy Leader also summarised the budget consultation process which would culminate in consideration of the 2018/19 Budget at the special Council meeting scheduled for 6 February 2018.

In conclusion, the Leader echoed the Deputy Leader, and Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder's comments; and expressed his thanks to all Members for their work in guiding the Executive. He also thanked the Chief Finance Officer and her team for their work to date and in the coming weeks.

Summary of options rejected None

DECISION

That the Scrutiny Panels be thanked for their consideration of the draft Budget reports; and their comments / recommendations, as detailed within the Minutes submitted, would be taken into account as part of the Executive's deliberations on the 2018/19 Budget.

Reasons for Decision

The views of the Scrutiny Panels would be taken into account as part of the 2018/19 Budget process

[The meeting ended at 4.15 pm]