

Decision Ref No:

EX.033/12

Subject Matter:

**** BUDGET 2012/13 - CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS AGREED BY THE CITY COUNCIL ON 7 FEBRUARY 2012**

(With the consent of the Chairman, and in accordance with Rule 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, this item was included on the Agenda as a Key Decision, although not in the Forward Plan for consideration at this meeting)

(In accordance with Paragraph 15(i) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Mayor had agreed that call-in procedures should not be applied to this item)

There were submitted the Budget Proposals approved by the Executive on 16 January 2012 (EX.005/12) and the following proposed amendments to the Executive's Budget recommendations for 2012/13 which were referred to the Executive by the City Council on 7 February 2012:

(a) Environmental Enhancements

"To ensure that funding, £75,000 per annum for two years, is available to support a dog fouling/pavement clean up 'hit squad' with responsibility for both cleaning areas where dog fouling is prevalent and issuing fixed penalty fines to owners that do not clean up after their dogs. This proposal is to be funded from council reserves."

(b) Education Officer (Dog Fouling)

"To fund a temporary Education Officer post, costing £15,000, for a six month period ending 30th September 2012, to provide advice and to educate residents on dog fouling issues, pending the completion of the Local Environment Directorate restructure which will introduce this post from 1st October 2012. This temporary position is to be funded initially from council reserves in 2012/13, subject to the finalisation of the 2011/12 outturn position, at which point confirmed under spends within the Organisation Development section will be used to replenish reserves."

(c) Carlisle Focus

"To ensure that funding is available to fund a part time Dog Warden with responsibility for cleaning areas where dog fouling is prevalent. This proposal is to be funded from reducing the number of Carlisle Focus magazines produced and thus saving £13,000 per annum."

(d) Consultants and Professional Fees

"To ensure that funding is available to fund a part time Dog Warden with responsibility for cleaning areas where dog fouling is prevalent. This proposal is to be funded from a recurring £10,000 reduction in the fees paid by the Council on consultant and professional fees."

The Director of Local Environment submitted a supplementary briefing report LE.07/12 to assist the Executive in responding to the above budget amendments. The public and Members rightly placed a high value on the cleanliness of the City's streets and the reduction in anti-social behaviour, such as dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering. She outlined the transformation work undertaken in 2011 which sought to improve the position, commenting that dog fouling continued to be of particular concern to residents. Dog fouling patrols alone had not proved effective in reducing the incidence of dog fouling and, in order to make a further significant reduction, it would be necessary to adopt a three strand approach to address the anti-social behaviour of a minority of dog owners i.e. Education, enforcement and improved clean up activities.

To that end, in addition to improved street cleansing regimes, as part of the transformation of the Local Environment Directorate, a new Team had been developed to address environmental crime and co-ordinate other enforcement and education activities (consisting of a Team Leader and two Education and Enforcement Officers).

To support that work, the Executive had already proposed (with their Budget) that an Environmental Support Team be established to provide additional high profile responsive street cleansing resources during the implementation of the new programmes of street cleaning, and enforcement and education activities.

The additional resource of £98,000 proposed by the budget amendments would be used for:

- two part time dog wardens to clean up areas where dog fouling was prevalent as a recurring budget increase of £23,000;
- a dog fouling/pavement clean up team for both the clean up and issue of Fixed Penalty Notices non-recurring budget increase of £75,000 for 2012/13 and 2013/14; and
- a non-recurring budget increase of £15,000 for a temporary six month Education and Enforcement Officer pending the implementation of the new Education and Enforcement Team.

Alternatively, an amended budget could be made available in 2012/13 and 2013/14 to provide additional resources to address street cleaning issues, in particular dog fouling, in a balanced approach using the three strands of education, enforcement and clean up. A flexible solution could include consideration of campaign work, additional specialist equipment, as well as some additional staffing resources to achieve a marked improvement in street cleanliness over the next two years.

(e) Grants to Third Party Organisations

"To provide financial support to the:

- (1) Credit Union (£5,000), to fund a publicity campaign against loan sharks and pay day loans;
- (2) Carlisle Churches Together (£5,000), in supporting their homelessness initiatives."

The Director of Community Engagement submitted a supplementary briefing report CD.23/12 providing an update on plans by Carlisle and District Credit Union to fund a publicity campaign against loan sharks and pay day loans. He outlined the background to and main focus of the Carlisle and District Credit Union, informing Members that it was proposed that the Wellbeing Team support and monitor the appropriate awareness raising sessions through Community Centres or staff cascading relevant information to the various groups they worked with.

The Director of Community Engagement submitted a further supplementary briefing report CD.24/12 updating Members on plans by Churches Together in Carlisle and District to support homelessness initiatives in Carlisle. He explained that the funding grant proposed by the Council's amendment would enable Churches Together to continue to develop the initiatives mentioned within his report. It was proposed that the Wellbeing Team would support and monitor the appropriate targeting of resources to enhance the said initiatives.

The Director of Resources reported that there would be no consequences of accepting the above amendments on the Council's recurring revenue reserve. However, there would be an increase in the Council's non-recurring revenue budget for both 2012/13 and 2013/14 of £100,000 and £75,000 per annum respectively. There would be an equivalent reduction in the level of overall Council reserves available. He added that the proposals had no impact on the level of Council Tax increase proposed by the Executive; nor would they have any impact on the Capital Programme proposed by the Executive.

The Director of Resources report further outlined the main changes to the Executive's Revenue Budget Proposals for 2012/13 resulting from the amendments. Members should note that his comments were based upon the assumption that all of the amendments would form part of the 2012/13 revenue budget. If, as indicated at the Council meeting, the grants to third party organisations were to be funded from within existing budgets, that would increase the Projects Reserve to £169,000 by 2016/17.

The Leader then tabled amended Budget Proposals which had been revised following the

reference back from the Council meeting on 7 February 2012.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder reported that the Executive's original budget proposed to Council on 7 February included an additional £70,000 per annum to fund a 'Community Clean Up Team'; provisionally this was intended to be for a two year period whilst significant changes within the Local Environment directorate 'bed in'.

Following cross party discussions after the Council meeting, which took account of both the Labour and Independent party's amendments, the Executive's revised proposal now included total funding of £155,000 which included the original £70,000 put forward in the original budget proposal.

The new resources would be targeted at community cleaning issues, in particular dog fouling. The proposed new team would take a focused approach to address those issues, delivering targeted education, enforcement and clean up activities.

The flexible approach would include focused campaign work and new resources to achieve a marked improvement in street cleanliness over the next two years. The Community Clean Up Team would provide additional staff capacity for extra clean up, particularly dog fouling and other reactive street cleaning. In terms of clean up, innovative methods would be explored to improve efficiency and quality of clean up. Targeted education campaigns would seek to change the behaviour of the small minority of residents who dropped litter, fly tipped rubbish or did not pick up after their dogs. Extra resources for enforcement activity such as Dog Fouling Patrols and associated issue of Fixed Penalty notices and follow up legal support would also be available.

The Leader added that in addition to the above amendment and in response to discussions at the last Council meeting, the Executive's revised budget proposals now included an additional £10,000 for grants to the Credit Union (£5,000) to fund a publicity campaign against loan sharks and pay day loans; and Carlisle Churches Together (£5,000) to support their homelessness initiatives.

The Executive recognised the excellent work undertaken by those organisations and despite challenges of setting a balanced budget the Executive were delighted to be able to provide the additional support.

With regard to the amendment referring to the reduction in the number of Carlisle Focus magazines produced the Executive had reflected on the proposal and were not minded to include this in the revised budget proposals. He explained that the Carlisle Focus magazine was a key communication tool for the City Council and provided useful information to residents on the Council's services, events and activities within the District. The magazine was also key in promoting important messages such as the community clean up campaign already highlighted. He concluded by noting that the combined efforts of Councillors had already delivered significant extra resources to the Community Clean Up Team and it was not necessary to reduce an important communication tool.

The Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder supported the proposals and felt that the changes left the budget in tact and allowed the Executive to move the Council forward whilst delivering the Council Tax freeze.

The Leader stressed that the changes to the budget did not affect the pledge to freeze Council tax for two years and provide value for money for tax payers. Front line services would continue to be provided alongside investment the economic growth of the City.

Decision:

That the Executive agreed the following amendments and that a revised Budget document, incorporating the amendments, be submitted to the City Council on 23 February 2012:

- a) a non recurring £10,000 reduction in the professional fees budget for 2012/13
- b) additional funding for two years of £85,000pa to address community cleaning issues, in particular dog fouling
- c) include a non recurring £10,000 for grants to the Credit Union (£5,000) to fund a publicity campaign against loan sharks and pay day loans; and Carlisle Churches Together (£5,000) to support their homelessness initiatives.

Key or Non-Key Decision:

Key

Key Decision Ref:

Portfolio:

Governance and Resources; Environment and Housing

Who made decision:

Executive

Date:

17-Feb-12

Reports and Background Papers considered:

Minutes of the City Council on 7 February 2012; Report of the Director of Local Environment LE.07/12 - Consideration of the Budget Amendments Carried by Council 7 February 2012, Reports of the Director of Community Engagement CD.23/12 Credit Union and CD.24/12 Carlisle Churches Together

Reasons for Decision:

The Executive had to respond to the proposed amendments of the City Council and, accordingly, would submit a revised Budget document to the City Council on 23 February 2012

Summary of Options rejected:

None other than alternative sources of funding utilised.

Interests declared:

None

Date published:

21-Feb-12

Urgent decision not subject to call in:

Yes

Consent of Chairman/ Deputy Chairman of Council to Urgency:

Received 9 February 2012

Deadline for call-in:

Not applicable

Implementation date if not called-in:

Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

Call-in notified to and date notified:

Approved for implementation on:
