

**MINUTES of the MEETING of the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE,
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES, ON
THURSDAY, 11 JANUARY 2024**

Panel Members in attendance:			
		* Denotes attendance ∅ Denotes apology for absence	
		** Denotes in attendance via Teams in a non-voting capacity	
∅	Cllr G Allen	*	Cllr M Long (Chairman)
*	Cllr L Bonham	∅	Cllr P Munoz
*	Cllr J Carson	*	Cllr A Nix
*	Cllr B Cooper	∅	Cllr C Oram**
*	Cllr S Dennis	*	Cllr G Pannell
∅	Cllr A Dewynter**	*	Cllr S Penfold
*	Cllr N Dommett	∅	Cllr A Presswell
∅	Cllr T Edie	*	Cllr S Rake
∅	Cllr D Hancock**	*	Cllr M Steele
∅	Cllr J Hawkins	*	Cllr B Taylor (Vice Chair)
∅	Cllr S Jackson	*	Cllr G Yardy
∅	Cllr L Lawford		

Other Members also in attendance:
Cllrs Abbott, Birch, Brazil, Hodgson, Hopwood, McKay and O'Callaghan

Officers in attendance and participating
Chef Executive; Deputy Chief Executive (via Teams) Section 151 Officer; Democratic Services Manager and Head of Finance (via Teams)

BA.01/23 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited to serve as Chairman for the duration of this meeting and it was subsequently:

RESOLVED

That Cllr M Long be appointed to the role of Committee Chairman for the duration of this meeting.

Cllr Long proceeded to exercise his discretion to invite nominations to serve as Vice-Chairman for the duration of this meeting and it was then:

RESOLVED

That Cllr B Taylor be appointed to the role of Committee Vice-Chairman for the duration of this meeting.

BA.02/23 MINUTES

The minutes of the Budget Advisory Committee meeting held on 19 January 2023 were confirmed as a true and correct record.

BA.03/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting, but there were none made.

BA.04/23 DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024/25

Members considered a report that asked for their views on the content of the draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals report for 2024-25.

Since this was the first year that a number of recently elected Members had been required to consider the Council's Budget Setting process, the Chief Executive outlined the process to be followed prior to presentation of the final Budget recommendations to the Full Council meeting to be held on 15 February 2024.

The Section 151 Officer provided a comprehensive presentation on the published agenda report and, on a section-by-section basis, invited questions from Members, with particular reference being made to:

- (a) the additional income streams identified. Having sought specific assurances that the car parking and Follaton House rental income targets were attainable, officers informed the Committee that, based upon previous year trends and the rental market, they were confident that these were achievable;
- (b) the budget implications associated with adopting the Council Plan (and Delivery Plans). Officers confirmed that it was intended that the final draft of the Council Plan would also be presented for adoption to the Full Council meeting on 15 February 2024;
- (c) the aspiration for a two-tier car parking charging structure to be introduced. A number of Members expressed their support for the implementation, if the technology permitted, of a two-tier charging structure whereby resident charges were set at a lower level than the equivalent charges for visitors;
- (d) asset devolution to town and parish councils. Some Members highlighted instances of town and parish councils who had been transferred ownership of Council assets (e.g. public conveniences) and were now facing financial challenges associated with the ongoing maintenance of these facilities.

In the ensuing debate, some Members highlighted that, alongside the transfer of ownership, the District Council had provided one-off funding to those town and parish councils. At the invitation of the meeting, the lead Executive Member indicated that there were no plans to change the current arrangements. Furthermore, given the timing of town and parish councils being required to set their precept, then, if this matter was to be revisited, then it would need to be in time for the 2025/26 Financial Year;

- (e) the precept differentials between town and neighbouring parish councils. In response to a Member highlighting the additional strain on town council services from neighbouring parish councils (that had considerably lower precepts), it was noted that unless a parish council was willing to provide a financial contribution to a town council, then the only other process to rectify this apparent unfairness was a Community Governance Review;
- (f) the Second Homeowners Council Tax Premium. Whilst noting that conversations were ongoing with councils across Devon, the Committee fully recognised that the additional monies generated through this Premium should be allocated towards supporting the Council's declared Housing Emergency;
- (g) the Capital Programme. In response to a request, it was agreed that the Council's current Capital Programme would be appended to the Budget report to be presented to the Executive meeting to be held on 25 January 2024;
- (h) Plymouth and South Devon Freeport. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that there was to be no borrowings associated with the Freeport in the 2024/25 Financial Year.

It was then:

RECOMMENDED

That the Budget Advisory Committee **RECOMMEND** to the Executive:

- i) an increase in Council Tax for 2024/25 of 2.99% being modelled (This would increase a Band D council tax for 24/25 from £185.42 to £190.96 – an increase of £5.54 per year or under 11pence per week);
- ii) the financial pressures of £2,846,000 (as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report);
- iii) the savings/additional income of £1,460,000 (as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report);

- iv) the net contributions to/(from) Earmarked Reserves of £60,427 as shown in Appendix D of the presented agenda report, including the proposed use of £704,173 of New Homes Bonus funding to fund the 2024/25 Revenue Budget as set out in 3.20 of the published agenda report and £400,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve as set out in 3.13 of the published agenda report; and
- v) approval of the Capital Bid for £90,000 to renew and upgrade the Council's bank reconciliation software be funded from the annual revenue contribution of £181,600 into the Capital Programme, as set out in section 8.4 of the presented agenda report.

(Meeting started at 3.00 pm and concluded at 4.55 pm)

Chairman