

EXECUTIVE

27 November 2018

* Councillor Paul Spooner (Chairman)
* Councillor Matt Furniss (Vice-Chairman) [in the chair¹]

Councillor David Bilbé
* Councillor Philip Brooker
* Councillor Geoff Davis
* Councillor Graham Ellwood

* Councillor Gordon Jackson
* Councillor Nigel Manning
* Councillor Nikki Nelson-Smith
Councillor Iseult Roche

*Present

Councillors Chandler, Gunning and Reeves were also in attendance.

EX54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Bilbé.

EX55 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

EX56 MINUTES

The Executive approved the minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2018. The Vice-Chairman, as the person presiding at the meeting, signed the minutes.

EX57 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

EX58 PARISH COUNCILS - CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS GRANT AID: APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE 2019-20

The Executive considered a report setting out details of the applications received from parish councils for financial assistance through the Concurrent Functions Grant Aid Scheme for 2019-20, for which a base budget of £90,000 had been recommended.

The Executive had been asked to approve the budget for 2019-20 at this time because the parish councils needed to be aware of the level of grant aid available to them so that they could build the sums into their budget calculations for the coming year. They would fix their budgets and precept requirements for 2019-20 in December and early January, enabling this information to be included in the Borough Council's final budget approval process in February 2019.

Parishes had been asked to complete a detailed application form and written estimate for each project and to identify how the project meets at least one of the fundamental themes within the Council's Corporate Plan. A total of 40 requests had been received from 21 of the 23 parish councils totalling £129,696, and a panel of officers had evaluated each of the bids. The panel had referred any queries raised back to the parish council concerned and had obtained satisfactory responses in all cases. Officers had suggested that four schemes be rejected as they did not meet the revised scheme criteria for 2019-20, and parish councils had agreed to

¹ the Vice-Chairman was in the chair as the chairman was temporarily incapacitated due to loss of voice

withdraw a further four schemes. The remaining bids totalled £115,168, which was £25,168 over the base budget of £90,000.

Officers had recommended approval of an amendment to the grant formula for 2019-20, limiting grant requests to two per parish and the remaining balance being met from the parish Council Urgent Schemes Reserve, in order to achieve a balanced budget.

Having considered the report, the Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the grant budget for 2019-20 be approved at £90,000, subject to final confirmation by the Council at its budget meeting in February 2019.
- (2) That the parish council requests for grant aid for 2019-20, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report submitted to the Executive, be approved.
- (3) That the current formula be amended for 2019-20 to limit grants to two per Parish and that the remaining balance of £25,168 be met from the Parish Council Urgent Schemes Reserve.

Reasons:

- To assist parish councils with expenditure on concurrent function schemes in 2019-20.
- To enable parish councils to take account of financial assistance from Guildford Borough Council when calculating their precept requirements for 2019-20.

EX59 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2019-20

The Executive considered a report on the outcome of the recent public consultation on the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS). The Council had a statutory duty to consider annually whether to revise its LCTSS, replace it with another or make no changes. The Council was also obliged to consult with interested parties if it wished to revise or replace the scheme. The Council must approve a scheme for the 2019-20 financial year by 31 January 2019.

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) enabled the Council to help around 5,000 households pay their Council Tax, by providing £5.7 million of support. These were households where low incomes did not cover essential housing costs. The cost was shared with Surrey County Council, Guildford's share being around 10%.

The Executive noted that, for 2018-19, it was proposed to make the following changes which, it was forecast, could be met from within the existing revenue budget:

- Increase Premiums to ensure that the help given does not unduly reduce due to inflation.
- Increase Non-Dependant Deductions to reflect an expectation that their contribution to the household expenses should increase each year.
- Update Income and Capital Disregards to include "the London Emergencies Trust" and the "We Love Manchester Emergency Fund". This reflected the government's change to the Pension Age scheme, and honoured the intention that help from these funds was to provide for exceptional circumstances. It also ensured that claimants were treated consistently across all schemes.

The Council carried out a stakeholder consultation between 24 September and 22 October 2018, the results of which were included in the report submitted to the Executive. The main findings from the consultation were:

- 50% agreed with updating the amounts used to calculate entitlement.
- 60% agreed with mirroring the disregards for income and capital for people affected by the London and Manchester disasters
- When asked whether all claimants should have to pay at least a certain fixed percentage of their council tax bill, nearly 60% agreed, although 80% of those respondents, however, said that it would not affect their household.

Changes to Premiums would increase the cost of the scheme; however, the nature of changing caseload and personal circumstances of claimants meant that the increase could be accommodated within the existing revenue budget.

The Executive acknowledged that the Council continued to operate in a tough financial climate and the medium term financial plan remained challenging. However, councillors recognised that passing on further savings via the LCTS scheme in 2019-20 would place additional financial pressure on vulnerable households. A discretionary hardship fund would continue to provide support to residents suffering adversely from the consequences of ongoing savings in welfare support over the past six years, in addition to the proposed changes for 2019-20.

Having considered the proposals, the Executive

RECOMMEND:

- (1) That the current Local Council Tax Support scheme (a summary of which is on our website), be amended for 2019-20, as set out in detail in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Executive, with effect from 1 April 2019.
- (2) That the Council maintains a discretionary hardship fund of £40,000 in 2019-20.

Reasons:

- (1) To ensure that the Council complies with government legislation to implement a LCTS scheme from 1 April 2019.
- (2) To maintain a discretionary fund to help applicants suffering from severe financial hardship

EX60 BUSINESS PLANNING - GENERAL FUND OUTLINE BUDGET 2019-20

The Executive considered an update report on the current position with regard to the preparation of the Outline Budget for 2019-20. The report had covered the following areas:

- (a) Council Tax, tax base and collection fund
- (b) Capital expenditure and minimum revenue provision
- (c) Use of reserves and interest earnings
- (d) Draft outline budget for 2019-20

The Joint EAB Budget Task Group and the Joint EAB had considered the outline budget at their meetings held respectively on 8 and 21 November 2018, and a summary of their questions and comments had been circulated to the Executive on the Supplementary Information Sheet.

The report explained that government grant had been included at a level based on the 4-year local government finance settlement issued by the government in February 2016, but that the amount of grant would not be known for certain until central government released the draft local government finance settlement in December. Officers had assumed a £5 (3.0%) increase in Council Tax in line with the Budget assumptions report approved by the Executive on 17 July 2018.

The Council Tax base for 2019-20 was 56,795, which was 0.53% lower than 2018-19. This had reduced the resources available by approximately £52,200.

The financial monitoring report for the first six months of 2018-19, which would be reported to the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee on 29 November 2018, had covered the projected net expenditure on the General Fund for the current financial year. This was estimated to be £1.2 million less than the original estimate.

The current position on the 2019-20 outline budget had indicated that there was currently no shortfall between the likely resources and the proposed net expenditure. The Executive noted that no revenue growth bids had been received for 2019-20, although some capital bids might have revenue implications.

As it was still early in the budget process, the report had also set out the areas of uncertainty that would influence the final position.

Having considered the report, the Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the current position on the outline budget for 2019-20, as set out in the report submitted to the Executive, be noted.
- (2) That the proposal to use the Council's various earmarked reserves for specific projects, as set out in section 8 of the report, be approved.

Reason:

To assist the Executive in the preparation of the General Fund estimates for 2019-20.

EX61 SELECTION OF THE MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR 2019-20

The Executive considered a report on nominations received for election of Mayor and appointment of Deputy Mayor for the municipal year 2019-20. The constitutional changes adopted by the Council as part of the review of the Civic function in April 2014 in respect of the Mayoralty, provided that the Council would normally elect the Deputy Mayor appointed at the annual meeting of the Council as Mayor at the next succeeding annual meeting.

The Executive noted that, although political group leaders had been asked to submit nominations in respect of the Deputy Mayoralty for 2019-20, none had been received.

The Executive therefore

RECOMMEND: That, subject to the outcome of the Borough Council elections in May 2019, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Richard Billington be nominated for the Mayoralty of the Borough for the municipal year 2019-20.

The Executive further

RESOLVED: That, in the absence of any nominations for the Deputy Mayoralty for the municipal year 2019-20, further consideration be given to the matter at the Executive meeting on 22 January 2019, with a view to the submission of a nomination to the Council on 26 February 2019.

Reason:

To make early preparations, subject to the outcome of the Borough Council elections in May 2019, for the selection of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the municipal year 2019-20.

The meeting finished at 7.20 pm

Signed

Chairman

Date