

DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT

BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2019

40 BUDGET PROPOSALS SCRUTINY WORKSHOP REPORT

A report from the Chair presented the findings of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop in relation to scrutinising the 2019/20 budget proposals. A workshop had been held on 11 December, 2018 for Members to explore in more detail the four budget proposals which the Chair and Party Spokespersons had prioritised for further scrutiny and which fell under the remit of this committee. These were:

- Benefits of Economic Regeneration
- Disposal of Marine Point Freehold
- Asset Management – Capital Receipts
- Treasury Management

The Committee was requested to acknowledge this report as its response to the 2019/209 budget proposals to be referred on to Cabinet as part of its considerations in developing any budget recommendation to Council.

The workshop report had noted the key points made by both Members and officers in attendance. No objections to the four proposals were raised at the workshop. Members of the Conservative Party in attendance reiterated their view that the scrutiny of the budget proposals should be held in public at a formal committee meeting and no opinion on those proposals presented at the workshop was given.

The Chair commented further that unfortunately the workshop didn't work too well as there was not enough time to discuss all of the information and that out of a number of budget proposals these had had to be whittled down to just four. A number of Members had not been able to make the workshop for a variety of reasons, including another workshop being held on the same evening and the workshop being called at very short notice.

Councillor Dave Mitchell asked for Councillor Allan Brame's name to be recorded in the Scrutiny Report as he understood that he had attended in place of himself.

Responding to Members' comments, Shaer Halewood agreed to provide a written response in respect of the question on Dominic House as to how long it had been empty, why the freehold and not the leasehold were proposed for sale and if there had been any expressions of interest from private or voluntary sectors for alternative uses for the building. With regard to a replacement Corporate Director for Economic and Housing Growth, she commented that the Corporate Director for Business Management was currently acting in this role and arrangements were being looked at as to how to replace this role.

A Member queried why the workshops did not appear in the diary and suggested that in future they should be full committee meetings. Another Member suggested that budget workshops should not be held in public.

It was then moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Jerry Williams, that –

“(1) Committee agrees to note the report but that the wording, ‘No objections to these four proposals were raised at the workshop’ be removed from the conclusions section.

(2) The Committee felt that they were not able to give due and proper consideration to the matters before them at the workshop because:

- More information needs to be forthcoming in advance.
- The timetable is too short and puts too much pressure on Members and officers to allow full and proper scrutiny.
- Due to Members’ other commitments it meant it was impossible to make a full and informed analysis of the proposals before them.

(3) Committee therefore asks Cabinet to take note of the comments of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee.”

Following advice from the Director of Governance and Assurance in respect of amendments and motions, it was then moved as an amendment by Councillor Chris Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Steve Williams, that –

“This Committee feels that the workshop was not able to give full and proper consideration to the matters before it because:

1. Not enough information was forthcoming.
2. The timetable is too short.
3. Committee does not believe a workshop held in private is right and proper and these important matters should be held in an open and transparent manner.

Committee therefore informs the Cabinet that it is unable to make any budget recommendations.”

The amendment was put and lost (4:8).

The motion was put and carried (7:4) (One abstention).

Resolved –

(1) Committee agrees to note the report but that the wording, ‘No objections to these four proposals were raised at the workshop’ be removed from the conclusions section.

(2) The Committee felt that they were not able to give due and proper consideration to the matters before them at the workshop because:

- **More information needs to be forthcoming in advance.**
- **The timetable is too short and puts too much pressure on Members and officers to allow full and proper scrutiny.**
- **Due to Members' other commitments it meant it was impossible to make a full and informed analysis of the proposals before them.**

(3) Committee therefore asks Cabinet to take note of the comments of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee.