

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Friday, 18 December 2020

Present: Councillor J Williamson (Chair)

Councillors A Leech Y Nolan
JE Green P Stuart
P Gilchrist T Anderson
P Cleary W Clements
M McLaughlin A Hodson
EA Grey L Rennie
J McManus C Carubia

Deputies: Councillors B Kenny (In place of C Spriggs)
J Robinson (In place of T Usher)

26 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

27 APOLOGIES

The Chair announced that apologies had been received from Councillors Christine Spriggs and Tom Usher and that Councillors Brian Kenny and Jean Robinson were deputising for them respectively.

28 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

29 MINUTES

The Committee were asked to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November, 2020.

In respect of minute 20, 'Establishment of a Local Plan Working Group', Vicki Shaw, Head of Legal Services, made a point of clarification in that at the end of the final sentence of the second paragraph of the preamble the following words should be added, '... in also being made up of one Member from each of the Council's political groups.'

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was –

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November, 2020, be approved and adopted as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

30 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Chair reported that one question had been received from a member of the public and invited Louise Stothard to put her question, which was:

“When will Wirral Borough Council stop felling trees, we’ve lost over 6,000 trees?”

The Chair responded that she would be referring the question to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee for when it next meets and that they could provide a much more detailed response.

Councillor Elizabeth Grey commented, as Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, that she was content for the question to be referred.

31 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

The Chair reported that no statements were to be received and that there were no petitions submitted, nor questions from Members.

32 **DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22 - PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION**

The Chair introduced the report on the budget proposals for consultation and spoke of the unprecedented challenges which Wirral along with Councils across the country was going through, in particularly financially. She referred to the impact Covid had had on service delivery and the ability to generate income, from Council services such as leisure centres. There were still areas outside of Covid which continued to present financial pressures on the budget and these were what formed the £10m of proposals to be consulted upon.

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation in the workshop meetings, at which a consensus had been reached on the proposals in the report for consultation.

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, spoke to the report, which was part of the Council’s formal budget process, as set out in the constitution and in accordance with the legal requirements to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2021/22. The report provided an update on the Budget process for 2021/22 previously reported to this Committee on 7 October 2020.

The Council had applied for a capitalisation directive to mitigate the specific, unfunded financial impact associated with Covid-19. At the time of writing the report, there had been no formal notification of the award of this directive, however, it had been assumed it would be successful for the purposes of budget consultation. As the capitalisation directive related only to Covid-19 pressures, it could not be used for other pressures and as such, other savings were required to ensure Wirral could deliver a balanced budget for 2021/22.

Each year the Council did have between £16m and £20m worth of pressures, which had to be mitigated in the form of savings. She highlighted some of the demand pressures such as from Adult Social Care and Children and Families Service. A draft funding settlement had been received from the government on 17 December which was subject to a consultation period running until 16 January, 2021, although until a final settlement figure was received after the consultation ended, potentially at the end of January, the final budget gap would not be known.

The Committee had to recommend a 2021/22 balanced Budget proposal to the Council for its meeting in March 2021, it was good practice for the residents of Wirral to have their say on budget proposals and so the purpose of this report was to agree the budget proposals that would go out for public consultation.

Shaer Halewood responded to a number of comments made by Members and elaborated on the process for issuing a Section 114 Notice.

The Chair thanked all the committees and their Chairs which had been involved in the process and emphasised that this was the start of the budget setting process with many variables yet to play out. She stressed the importance of as many residents as possible getting involved in the consultation.

Members expressed the view that this was an appropriate document to go out to public consultation and on a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart, it was -

Resolved (unanimously) – That the Policy and Resources Committee:

- (1) Approves the financial proposals for 2021/22 that will be subject to consultation and subsequent consideration by Policy and Resources Committee in February 2021.**
- (2) Agrees that this decision is urgent and therefore not subject to review.**