

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 24th January, 2017

Present: Cllr A K Sullivan (Chairman), Cllr Mrs A S Oakley (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ms S V Spence (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr M C Base, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr Mrs S M Hall, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr P J Montague, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr T C Walker and Mr D Still (Co-opted Member)

Councillors O C Baldock, M A Coffin, D A S Davis, N J Heslop, D Lettington, D Markham and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P F Bolt, J L Botten, S R J Jessel, Mrs F A Kemp, F G Tombolis and Mr P J Drury (Co-opted Member)

PART 1 - PUBLIC

OS 17/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

OS 17/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 September 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

OS 17/3 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2017/18

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation referred to the responsibility of the Cabinet under the Constitution for formulating initial draft proposals in respect of the Budget. Reference was made to the role of the Committee in assisting the Cabinet and the Council in preparation of the Budget.

Careful consideration was given to both the Revised Estimates for 2016/17 and the Estimates for 2017/18 within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's priorities.

Attention was drawn to the key messages arising from the provisional local government settlement for 2017/18 announced by the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government on 15 December 2016 and to the outcome of the consultation on New Homes Bonus (NHB). The report provided illustrative figures for the Government's projected allocation of grant under the New Homes Bonus scheme and it was noted that this represented a cash decrease of £1,291,456 or 33.6% by 2019/20 when compared to £3,847,880 in 2016/17. It was reported that the Total Grant Funding in 2019/20 was projected to be £3,855,735 which represented a cash decrease of £2,888,541 or 42.8% when compared to the equivalent figure of £6,744,276 in 2016/17.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the draft Revenue Estimates contained in the Booklet be endorsed and commended to Cabinet; and
- (2) the Savings and Transformation Strategy be updated to reflect the latest projected 'funding gap' as part of the budget setting process.

OS 17/4 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2016/17

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation which set out progress on the 2016/17 Capital Plan Review.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the recommendations of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board held on 4 January 2017 be endorsed; and
- (2) the Capital Plan Strategy, as set out at Annex 5 to the report, be endorsed for adoption and publication on the Council's website.

**OS 17/5 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND HANGING BASKETS -
RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY PANEL**

Members considered the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Panel review of the Borough Council's current level of support for Christmas lighting displays in some parished areas and how Christmas lighting displays and High Street Flower displays were currently provided and funded in Tonbridge. The Review Panel had been advised of the instruction from Cabinet arising from the 'Fairer Charging' consultation to consider whether opportunities existed to secure alternative external funding when it had met on 22 November 2016 and it was noted that a representative on Tonbridge Town Team had attended that meeting.

The Committee supported the opinion of the Panel that no changes should be made to the support provided in the parished areas and that alternative funding options should be explored for provision of Christmas Lights and hanging baskets in Tonbridge.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) no change be made to the current arrangements for Christmas lighting grant support in the parished areas but these be reviewed again when necessary;
- (2) alternative funding options for Tonbridge Christmas lights and hanging baskets be explored for 2017/18. If these options are found not to be viable, Council, as a last resort, be recommended to review the listed functions within the Council's adopted Special Expenses Scheme with a view to including the functions within that scheme from 2018/19;
- (3) a range of potential funding options be explored, including seeking direct support from local traders and achieving additional income generation from new events, markets, advertising and street trading concessions. This funding to be additional to any existing income already generated or planned for in the town centre;
- (4) the target income figure for 2017/18 be set at £17,000, being 50% of the annual costs of both the Christmas lights and hanging baskets; and
- (5) a review of the progress achieved with the above initiatives be undertaken in the third quarter of 2017/18.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

OS 17/6 SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRAMME UPDATE

The report of the Chief Executive set out proposals for future reviews to be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, together with details of the membership of the review groups. It was noted that Councillors Base and Bolt would be invited to serve, respectively, on the Review of the Gibson Building and the Review of the Constitution and that the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee could attend the meetings of the Panel to which they had not been appointed.

RESOLVED: That the review topics and panel membership be noted.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

OS 17/7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.31 pm