

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 12th February, 2015

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr J A L Balcombe, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr Mrs M F Heslop, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr Mrs S Murray and Cllr M R Rhodes

Councillors O C Baldock, M A C Balfour and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Access to Information Rule No 22.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CB 15/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N Heslop declared an Other Significant Interest in the item on Review of Fees and Charges in respect of the list of concessionary users of Tonbridge Castle Chamber on the grounds of being a member of the Board of the Bridge Trust. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this matter and the chair was taken by Councillor Coffin.

DECISIONS TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 4, PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

CB 15/22 LEISURE SERVICES - REVIEW OF CHARGES 2015/16

Item LAA 14/45 referred from Leisure and Arts Advisory Board Minutes of 8 December 2014

Decision Notice D150014CAB

CB 15/23 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2015/16

Item FIP 15/6 referred from Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board Minutes of 7 January 2015

Decision Notice D150015CAB

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

CB 15/24 SETTING THE BUDGET FOR 2015/16

The holding report of the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Transformation updated the Cabinet on issues relating to the setting of the Budget for 2015/16 together with the outcome of the examination of the draft Revenue Estimates and the Capital Plan review process undertaken by the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A more detailed supplementary report prepared in liaison with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property was circulated in advance of the meeting. It highlighted adjustments made to the Revenue Estimates presented to the Advisory Board and Committee in respect of the Business Rates Retention Scheme Reserve and the Capital Plan in respect of the need for greater evaluation of the tenders received for the Tonbridge Town Lock Scheme. The report examined the situation in relation to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and gave details of the necessary procedure to be followed in order to set the budget for 2015/16.

The Director of Finance and Transformation explained the components of the funding allocation in the final local government settlement published on 3 February 2015 and the position arising from the Government's offer of a council tax 'freeze' grant in 2015/16 (equivalent to a 1% increase in council tax).


Members were advised of the Secretary of State's announcement that the referendum threshold had been set at 2% for 2015/16. It was noted that the summary total for the 2015/16 estimates would be affected by the Council's decision on whether or not to accept the 'freeze' grant and thus the level of overall savings needing to be made.

Attention was drawn to recommendations from Advisory Boards and the decision of the Licensing and Appeals Committee regarding the levels of fees and charges to be implemented from 1 April 2015 which had been incorporated in the draft estimates. Members were reminded of the approach to preparation of the Capital Plan, an updated summary of which was set out at Annex 7 to the report.

The report then described the remaining procedure to be followed in setting the budget for 2015/16 and calculating the council tax. Consideration was given to the updated MTFS based on a council tax increase of 1.99% (the upper limit for referendum purposes) and a council tax freeze. The Cabinet also deliberated on the most appropriate guidance to offer the Council as to the way forward for updating the MTFS for the next ten year period and setting the council tax for 2015/16. Finally, the Director of Finance and Transformation explained the basis on which the statement as to the Robustness of the Estimates and Adequacy of the Reserves had been made.

Members recorded their thanks to the Director of Finance and Transformation and colleagues for their work in bringing forward the budget and to staff for their flexibility in the current challenging circumstances.

RECOMMENDED: That

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- (1) the fees and charges set out in Annex 2 to the report, as recommended by the appropriate Advisory Boards, be endorsed (see Decision Nos D150014CAB and D150015CAB);
 - (2) the Capital Plan be updated as set out in paragraph 1.5.13 to the report as follows and adopted accordingly:
 - (i) the position of the existing Capital Plan (List A) as summarised in Annex 3 to the report be approved;
 - (ii) the schemes as detailed in Annex 4 to the report be added to List C or deleted from List C;
 - (iii) the selection of those schemes listed in Annex 5 to the report for evaluation over the coming year be approved including one for fast-track evaluation;
 - (iv) the transfer of the schemes detailed in Annex 6 to the report be approved noting that:

the Tonbridge School Athletics Track Improvements scheme is expected to be progressed in the year 2018/19 subject to the identification of developer contributions / external grant sources;

in respect of the Larkfield Leisure Centre Health Suite Refurbishment scheme, this is an additional funding requirement of £60,000 to that currently reflected in the Capital Plan;
 - (v) the updated Capital Plan (List A) as summarised in Annex 7 to the report be approved;
 - (3) the Capital Strategy as presented to the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board on 7 January and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2015 be endorsed and adopted by the Council;
 - (4) the prudential indicators listed in paragraphs 1.6.4 and 1.6.8 of the report be endorsed and adopted;
 - (5) for the financial year 2015/16 the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision, as set out at paragraph 1.6.11 of the report, be endorsed as nil;
 - (6) the high level objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be reaffirmed, taking on board the amendment set out in paragraph 1.8.6 of the report, adding the words "Subject to there

being sufficient resources within the capital reserve” to the final objective;

- (7) the updates to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out at Annexes 11a and 11b to the report, based on a council tax increase of 1.99% and council tax freeze respectively be noted including the approach adopted in respect of New Homes Bonus, business rates income and further cuts to government grant funding;
- (8) the Council be recommended to approve a council tax increase of 1.99% (an increase of £3.66 per annum for a Band D property) as the best way forward in updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the next ten-year period and setting the council tax for 2015/16; and
- (9) the Statement provided by the Director of Finance and Transformation as to the Robustness of the Estimates and the Adequacy of the Reserves be noted and endorsed.
***Referred to Council**

CB 15/25 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX FOR 2015/16

The joint report of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Transformation, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property set out the requirements under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for a billing authority to set an amount of council tax for each category of dwelling in its area. Members were advised of the position concerning the determination of their respective precepts for 2015/16 by the major precepting authorities.

Consideration was given to a draft resolution identifying the processes to be undertaken in arriving at the levels of council tax applicable to each part of the Borough. Reference was made to the debate that needed to take place regarding the relative merits of a freeze in council tax as opposed to an increase. Accordingly, the resolution and further information regarding the precepts of the other authorities would be reported to the full Council on 17 February 2015.

RECOMMENDED: That the resolution be noted and the Council be recommended to approve a 1.99% increase in the Borough Council's element of the council tax for 2015/16, representing an annual charge at Band D of £187.51.

***Referred to Council**



CB 15/26 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.03 pm