

EXTRACT of the MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 11 JANUARY 2017

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors N Clarke, J Cotterill, J Geary, D Harrison, G Hault, V Richichi, A C Saffell and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors R Johnson and S Sheahan

Officers: Mr S Bambrick, Mr C Brown, Mr P Collett, Mr A Hunkin, Mr G Jones, Outama, Mr P Padaniya, Mr J Richardson and Mrs R Wallace

Guests: Mr M Beckett (SLC Rail), Inspector H Bhakta (Leicestershire Constabulary), Mr B Hlland (SLC Rail) and Ms K Smith (SLC Rail)

22. DRAFT GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS AND CAPITAL PROGRAMMES 2017/18

The Financial Planning Manager presented appendix one of the report and updated Members that since the proposals were considered by Cabinet in December the Local Government Financial Settlement had been announced. The two key elements in relation to the announcement was that the four year settlement that was offered last year had been confirmed and the changes to the New Homes Bonus Payments meant that the Council would benefit in the short term.

In response to questions from Councillor N Clarke, the Financial Planning Manager stated the following:

- The one off cost increases in the waste service was due to the County Council's withdrawal of recycling payments from 1 April 2018; a temporary round consisting of extra staff was required.
- The additional funds for information management had made a noticeable difference as more information was now available online for people to view instead of submitting Freedom of Information Requests which was a lengthy and costly process. Some processes had also been streamlined so that information was only input once which would save money in the long term.
- The surplus was less than originally forecasted in the Medium Term Financial Strategy due to key factors such as delays in some areas of business rate income, employment costs and some income not as much as predicted. He added that the change in New Homes Bonus meant that the figure would now be slightly higher.

Councillor N Clarke commented that he was pleased that the Council Tax Support Benefit would remain at the same level as it helped many people within his Ward. Councillor N J Rushton commented that it was a tough decision but he felt it was a good one for the level to remain the same.

In response to a question relating to the additional costs as a result of staffing numbers from Councillor D Harrison, the Interim Director of Resources explained the importance of maintaining adequate staffing levels and in general there would not be a lot of growth in budgets or levels of staff. He added that any major changes would need to be investigated seriously before being implemented.

The Financial Planning Manager presented appendix two of the report.

In response to questions from Councillor N Clarke, the Financial Planning Manager stated that although reducing the number of refuse vehicles may have been mentioned in the past due to lower levels of recycling, this was not included in the proposals. Councillor N J Rushton added that recycling still needed to be collected even if the levels were lower. Also there had been an increase in households in the District and therefore the vehicles were required.

The Director of Housing presented the HRA Capital Programme section of the report to Members.

Councillor M Specht was pleased with the building of new council homes.

Councillor N J Rushton commented that he was very proud that new council homes were being built for the first time in 30 years.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor D Harrison and

RESOLVED THAT:

The comments made by the committee be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February before making its recommendations to Council.