

EXTRACT of the MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 9 JANUARY 2019

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors R Ashman, T Eynon, J Geary (Substitute for Councillor N Clarke), G Hault, P Purver, V Richichi, A C Saffell, S Sheahan and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors R Adams, J Clarke, R Johnson and J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R Blunt and N J Rushton

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mrs T Bingham, Mr M Fiander, Mr G Jones, Mrs B Smith, Mrs R Wallace and Miss A Wright

40. DRAFT 2019/20 GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES REVENUE BUDGETS

The Head of Finance presented the report to Members.

Councillor N Smith congratulated the Portfolio Holder and the Finance Team for another strong budget with no increase in council tax, as well as the planned investment in recycling.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Council for attending the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor S Sheahan, the Head of Finance stated that the additional £5,000 contribution for Citizens Advice was put forward by the Team Manager following discussions with the Citizens Advice Bureaux. It was agreed for the Finance Team Manager to provide further information to Councillor S Sheahan outside of the meeting. The Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services commented that the HRA Budget Proposals contained an additional investment to fund a support worker to work with residents experiencing financial hardship.

Regarding the budget proposal for no increase in council tax, Councillor S Sheahan commented that there was no indication as to the amount of money that could be received if there was an increase. The Head of Finance explained that in line with legislation, the most the Council tax could be increased by (without a local referendum) is 2.99 percent and referred to paragraph 4.5 of the report where the impact of not increasing council tax is outlined.

Councillor A C Saffell asked why there had been an increase in staff numbers when the issue regarding the use of agency staff and the rising staffing costs had been raised in the last financial year. The Head of Finance explained that the figures detailed in the report were all committed costs for yearly progression through salary bands, pensions and cost of living increases. It was agreed for the Finance Team Manager to provide Councillor A C Saffell with further details regarding the committed staffing costs and an update on permanent / agency staff numbers. The Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services commented that staff numbers may increase in areas such as Housing Repairs where planned maintenance programmes have been taken back in-house.

Councillor T Eynon raised concerns that there had been no expenditure against the self-sufficiency fund since it was set up. The Portfolio Holder explained that as there was so much financial risk, it was prudent to save the funds for when it was needed. The Head of Finance added that a future deficit had been predicted and therefore she was reluctant to

utilise the fund until that time. The Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services commented that the Commercial Strategy had been approved by Cabinet in October 2018, and income generating proposals may come forward in the coming months which could be financed from this fund.

Councillor T Eynon expressed surprise that the Council was required to make a management fee payment to the leisure service provider in the early years of the project and was concerned about whether the predicted £100,000 saving with the project could be made. The Head of Finance explained that the saving was in relation to the corporate overheads and the management fee payments were something that had become known during the bidding process.

Councillor S Sheahan asked that the points raised by Councillor T Eynon regarding the leisure project be addressed and made clear to Members at the upcoming leisure project briefing. The Strategic Director of Place agreed.

Councillor R Ashman felt it was a good clear report and was pleased alternative ways were being sought to generate income.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor G Hault and

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments made by the Policy Development Group be provided to Cabinet when it meets on 5 February to consider the Draft 2019/20 General Fund and Special Expenses Revenue Budgets.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.15 pm