

## Worthing Borough Council

### Record of the Decisions taken by the Executive at its meeting held on 2 February 2015

Councillor Daniel Humphreys (Leader)  
Councillor Bryan Turner (Deputy Leader)

Councillor Mary Lermite  
Councillor Clive Roberts

Councillor Val Turner

\*= absent

*Also present: Councillors K Jenkins, L Murphy and K Sunderland.*

#### **W EX/001/14-15    Declarations of interest**

Councillor Bryan Turner declared his interest as a member of West Sussex County Council.

#### **W EX/002/14-15    Questions by the public**

There were no questions by the public.

#### **W EX/003/14-15    Items raised under Urgency Provisions**

None.

#### **W EX/004/14-15    Worthing Overall Budget Estimates 2014/15 and Setting of 2014/15 Council Tax**

The Executive had before it a report by the Director for Digital and Resources, copies of which had been circulated prior to the meeting and a copy of which is attached to the signed record of these decisions as item 4.

The report represented the culmination of the annual budget exercise and asked the Executive to consider the following:

- The final revenue estimates for 2015/16;
- An updated outline 5-year forecast; and
- The provisional level of Council Tax for 2015/16, prior to its submission to the Council for approval on 17 February 2015. Details in the report were subject to any proposals to change the draft revenue budget following the consideration at the meeting.

The budgets in the report reflected the decisions taken by Members to date in relation to agreed savings proposals. The report also updated the Executive about the impact of the draft 2015/16 settlement.

The major points raised within the report included:

- A full update on the impact of settlement. The Council should prepare itself for a continuation of the austerity measures for another 2-5 years (paragraph 3.7 in the report);
- The Executive was advised to consider whether to increase Council Tax by 1.5% or to freeze Council Tax for the fifth successive year and accept the Council Tax freeze grant (paragraph 5.12 in the report); and, finally
- The Executive needed to consider the new growth items in Appendix 3.

The budget is analysed and presented by Executive Member portfolio. In addition, the draft estimates for 2015/16 had been prepared, as always, in accordance with the requirements of the Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities 2015/16 (except in relation to pension costs adjustments that do not impact either on the Budget Requirement or the Council Tax Requirement).

The Executive was further advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner has consulted on an increase to the Council Tax for 2015/16 of 1.98% and the proposed 2015/16 budget was due to be considered by the Sussex Police and Crime Panel (PCP) on 23 January 2015. If the proposals are vetoed by the PCP, revised proposals will be considered by the Panel on the 20 February 2015 at which point the Commissioner would then be in a position to confirm the Council Tax for 2015/16. If the proposals for the PCC's share of the Council Tax were not confirmed until 21 February, then the planned Council date of 17 February will be rearranged to the 24 February 2015.

The precept for West Sussex County Council had not yet been finalised and would not be confirmed until 13 February 2015. Therefore the formal detailed resolution setting the overall Council Tax for next year will be presented direct to the Council Meeting on 17 February 2015.

The Head of Finance introduced the report making reference to the information in the report on the Council Tax reduction scheme, lower interest rates and a healthy balance in the business rates account of £52K - this was due to a number of appeals being settled at a lower rate than expected. The Executive had two decisions to make; what Council tax rate would be recommended to the Council meeting – either increase by 1.5% or freeze the rate and to determine the growth items at Appendix 3.

The Leader mentioned the role played by the Council in achieving, via local spending reductions, the targets set by Central Government (the Department for Communities and Local Government) to reduce the national deficit. He commended the work of officers in continuing to find savings and efficiencies in the Borough's budgets.

Members of the Executive questioned the Head of Finance on the inflation figure used to make the budget calculations; how negotiations on the Business rate pooling was progressing and the use of the surplus in the car parks budget.

The Head of Finance responded that the rate used was 2% for goods and services; that the business rate pooling was progressing although there was always a risk of unexpected

appeals being received; the car parks surplus was being used for maintenance in the 2015/16.

Regarding the growth bids on Appendix 3, the legal services bid was not approved whilst all the other submitted items were approved for inclusion in the budget.

The Executive pointed out that the budget as proposed contained limits for expenditure rather than targets to spend and there was a high expectation that officers would underspend on their budgets.

### **Decision the Executive**

- i. Considered which of the growth items detailed at appendix 3 should be included within the revenue budget in 2015/16, with the exception of the legal services bid which was not supported, all other bids were approved for inclusion in the budget;
- ii. Recommend to Council the draft budgets for 2015/16 at Appendix 7 as submitted in Executive Member Portfolio order, and the transfer to Reserves leading to a net budget requirement of £13,824,240, subject to the adjustments required in (i) above;
- iii. Approved the rationalisation of the reserves as outlined in paragraph 7.7 of the report;
- iv. Considered which band D Council Tax to recommend to Council for Worthing Borough Council's requirements in 2015/16 as set out in paragraph 12.3; this was determined as 0% increase therefore the band D as recommended for 2015/16 was £216.00.

### **Reason for Decision**

Statutory requirement to set a budget

### **Alternative Options considered**

As detailed in the report; growth bids were considered, increasing the Council Tax was considered against the availability of the Council Tax support Grant.

### **Call-in**

There is no call-in for this decision as it is a recommendation to Council.

The meeting ended at 6.44 pm having commenced at 6.30pm.

Leader