

BUDGET PANEL

24 FEBRUARY 2015

Present: Councillor A Khan (Chair)
Councillor A Joynes (Vice-Chair)
Councillors J Aron, K Collett, S Counter, G Derbyshire,
J Dhindsa, R Martins and P Taylor (For minute number 34)

Also present: Councillor Mark Watkin, Portfolio Holder for Shared Services
and Democracy and Governance (For minute number 34)

Officers: Finance Manager
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

There was a change of membership for this meeting: Councillor Collett replaced Councillor Greenslade.

32 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

There were no disclosures of interest.

33 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2015 were submitted and signed.

34 FINANCE DIGEST PERIOD 10 2014/15

The Panel received the latest edition of the Finance Digest 2014/2015 which set out the financial performance of the Council and the expected financial position at the end of the financial year.

The Finance Manager highlighted various sections of the report including the favourable and unfavourable variances. It was noted that the forecast outturn would be £482,000 less than the current budget.

Forecast Revenue Reserves Balances

Councillor Dhindsa requested further information on the Multi-Storey Car Park Repairs Reserve and the Car Parking Zones Reserve. He commented that the Panel had had several discussions about Controlled Parking Zone fees and whether or not they should be increased. Previously the Panel had been advised that the reserve would be depleted; however the balance had not reduced.

Councillor Derbyshire noted that the underspend from the revenue budget of £482,020 had been transferred to the Economic Impact Reserve. He asked for an explanation of this reserve.

The Finance Manager advised that he would report back to the Panel with further details.

Variances

Following a question from Councillor Joynes about the unfavourable variance in relation to Building Control, the Finance Manager advised that it had been proposed to outsource the service to an external company, which did not take place. The service was required to make efficiency savings. Some savings had been made; this would be an ongoing matter.

Councillor Taylor noted that there had been a saving of £19,000 in the members' allowances budget. He requested clarification on this saving.

The Finance Manager explained that allowances had not been reduced. Some Councillors had not claimed their full allowance.

In response to a question from Councillor Taylor about the unfavourable variance of £33,000 in respect of IT budget requirements, the Finance Manager advised that he would report back to the Panel.

Commercial Property Rents

Councillor Martins enquired whether the Council intended to review the rent charged to the BBC. He also requested further information about the income for Watford New Market, as he wondered whether it was dependent on the occupancy rates or it was a fixed figure.

The Finance Manager responded that he would seek further information from the service. The rental income from the BBC may be dependent on the agreement.

The Chair noted that the County Council had agreed to increase its share of Council Tax by 1.99%. This would avoid a requirement for a referendum. He asked whether officers had calculated the impact the increase would have on variances and collection rates.

The Finance Manager suggested that any increase could have an impact on the ability of some people to pay their Council Tax. However, the Head of Revenues and Benefits would be able to give a more informed response.

RESOLVED –

that the latest edition of the Finance Digest (period 10) be noted.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.25 pm