

AMENDMENTS AND WRITTEN QUESTIONS – FULL COUNCIL – 24 FEBRUARY 2016

AMENDMENTS

1. Cabinet – 28 January 2016

Minute No: 130

Heading: MASTERPLAN – CULLOMPTON NORTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION

Amendment submitted by Councillor: Mrs N Woollatt

The inclusion of item (d)

(d) That the 10,000 square metres allocated for employment floor space be increased to 40,000 square metres as originally proposed within the Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan adopted in 2010.

WORDING IF AMENDMENT APPROVED:

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- a. Subject to additional text, in respect of parking and shared surface requirements, the North West Cullompton Supplementary Planning document be adopted;
- b. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration to make any minor text changes;
- c. That concerns over parking and the flow of traffic on Swallow Way (Kingfisher Reach) be raised in writing with Devon County Council and that solutions be requested urgently.

(d) That the 10,000 square metres allocated for employment floor space be increased to 40,000 square metres as originally proposed within the Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan adopted in 2010.

2. Cabinet – 28 January 2016

Minute No: 130

Heading: MASTERPLAN – CULLOMPTON NORTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION

Amendment submitted by Councillor: Mrs N Woollatt

The inclusion of the following wording: at (d)/(e): That officers work with the owner of land allocated within the western side of the NW Cullompton urban extension to assist him masterplanning his land as an addendum to the existing masterplan document.

WORDING IF AMENDMENT APPROVED:

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- a. Subject to additional text, in respect of parking and shared surface requirements, the North West Cullompton Supplementary Planning document be adopted;
 - b. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration to make any minor text changes;
 - c. That concerns over parking and the flow of traffic on Swallow Way (Kingfisher Reach) be raised in writing with Devon County Council and that solutions be requested urgently.
- d/e. That officers work with the owner of land allocated within the western side of the NW Cullompton urban extension to assist him masterplanning his land as an addendum to the existing masterplan document.
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3. Cabinet - 11 February 2016

Minute No: 149

Heading: CORPORATE PLAN

Amendment submitted by Councillor: Mrs J Roach

To approve the Corporate Plan, subject to the removal of the informative note.

Given that the Scrutiny minute was incorrectly recorded (Cabinet page 88,d) that the Cabinet should reconsider their position in relation to the actual recommendation of Scrutiny. This was 'Examine the structure in the context of the corporate plan and the financial situation in the Council.'

WORDING IF AMENDMENT APPROVED:

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

The Corporate Plan for 2016-2020 be approved.

4. Cabinet - 11 February 2016

Minute No: 151

Heading: BUDGET

Amendment submitted by Councillor: N A Way

Council recognises cuts in funding from central government have placed a further tremendous burden on the people of Mid Devon and notes that services are being cut, while Council Tax is increasing to help meet the shortfall.

We welcome the unexpected increased level of rural services delivery grant and also the award of a transition grant improving our budget position by 383k in total.

Within our rural low waged area, justifiably concerns are being expressed by local residents, workers and traders regarding the proposed increase in car parking charges to obtain an additional sum of £142,758:

This amendment asks council to request that Cabinet reconsider its proposal to increase car parking charges in our three main market towns and to continue with the current level of charges.

This can be funded by: abolishing the posts of Tiverton Town Centre Manager and Market Manager saving £90k (including on costs). The remaining balance of circa £53k to be taken from general reserves. The Pannier Market operation should move to a trader self-regulated or co-operative model.

WORDING IF AMENDMENT APPROVED:

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- a) Council Tax be increased by 2.74% to £187.15 (in accordance with the revised referendum limit ability of £5.00) and,
- b) General Fund budget for 2016/17 be approved.
- c) The 2016/17 budget requires no transfer from the General Fund Balance.
- d) The General Fund Budget required a temporary transfer of £326k from New Homes Bonus reserve after the changes announced in the Grant Settlement on 9 February 2016.
- e) HRA budget for 2016/17 be approved – Appendix 3.
- f) HRA fees/charges are approved based on the attached schedule shown as Appendix 4.
- g) Work on strategic planning for delivering balanced budgets in the future be commenced with the new draft Corporate Plan.

Subject to the car parking charges in the three main towns continuing at the current level and that this be funded by abolishing the posts of Tiverton Town Centre Manager and Market Manager saving £90k (including on costs). The remaining balance of circa £43k to be taken from general reserves and that the Pannier Market operation should move to a trader self-regulated or co-operative model.

5. Cabinet - 11 February 2016

Minute No: 151

Heading: BUDGET

Amendment submitted by Councillor: N A Way

Council recognises the importance to the community at Crediton and its surrounding area of retaining the Market Street office and wishes it to continue to operate.

This can be funded by taking its operational costs of £81k from general reserves.

WORDING IF AMENDMENT APPROVED:

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- a) Council Tax be increased by 2.74% to £187.15 (in accordance with the revised referendum limit ability of £5.00) and,
- b) General Fund budget for 2016/17 be approved.
- c) The 2016/17 budget requires no transfer from the General Fund Balance.
- d) The General Fund Budget required a temporary transfer of £326k from New Homes Bonus reserve after the changes announced in the Grant Settlement on 9 February 2016.
- e) HRA budget for 2016/17 be approved – Appendix 3.
- f) HRA fees/charges are approved based on the attached schedule shown as Appendix 4.
- g) Work on strategic planning for delivering balanced budgets in the future be commenced with the new draft Corporate Plan.

Subject to the Market Street office in Cridton continuing to operate and funded by taking its operational costs of £81k from general reserves.

6. Standards Committee – 3 February 2016

Minute No: 13

Heading: CONSTITUTION – Article 10

Amendment submitted by Councillor: Mrs J Roach

Page 30 of the Constitution, Paragraph following point 10. Delete the whole paragraph commencing 'The caveat'

WORDING IF AMENDMENT APPROVED:

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

That the draft Constitution be approved subject to the removal of the last paragraph on page 30 commencing 'The caveat'.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

1. WRITTEN QUESTIONS (1) – PREVIOUS MEETING

Questions submitted by Councillor Mrs J Roach and the response of the Cabinet Member for the Environment

In my written question (page 55) I was assured that the council would publicise that discounted permits would be available/considered on request. The current car parking consultation does not show that such permits are available. The Council's auditor had also stated that this information should be made available to the public. Is this an oversight?

RESPONSE

Within the new Off-Street Parking Places Order 2016, section 7, under permits, note 4, it states that discounts for the bulk purchase of permits will be considered. Once the proposed permit values are finally agreed (after the consultation process has ended) we will ensure that we include reference to the ability for customers to have such a request considered.

2. CABINET – 14 JANUARY 2016

Min No 120 – CAR PARKING PROPOSALS

Question submitted by Councillor Mrs N Woollatt and the response of the Cabinet Member for the Environment

- a) The Cabinet's decision relating to car parking charges was called in to Scrutiny and the Cabinet subsequently asked to review their decision. One of the reasons for the call in was that there were inconsistencies in the charging structure.

I am dismayed therefore to see that The Schedule which has been published for public consultation still contains inconsistencies.

Bearing in mind that the 'Notes for the Schedule' state "If the required tariff overlaps between day and night charges the meter can be fed" ... please can it be explained how the day rate of £2 for up to 10 hours and the night rate of £1 for up to 14 hours equates to the £5 quoted in the schedule for 24 hours at High Street, Crediton and Station Road, Cullompton car parks?

RESPONSE

Within the Schedule we have included an example showing how a meter can be "fed" if a customer wants to purchase parking that spans both the daytime and night time periods (and was only intended to be available for short stay car parks). The 24 hr tariff available at High St, Crediton and Station Rd, Cullompton gives customers the choice of purchasing a precise amount of parking time – that will give them the maximum available stay – and they will not need to return to their vehicle until the end of that period.

- b) There is another inconsistency in The Schedule which appears not have been addressed. Please can it be explained how we can have a charge for up to 14 hours when the maximum stay is listed as 10 hours?

RESPONSE

Apologies this typo was not spotted until after the Schedule had been published – after the consultation process has been concluded we will ensure that the maximum stay periods for Market St and High St correctly show 14hrs – as per the 2 preceding columns of the Schedule.

3. CABINET – 28 JANUARY 2016

Min No 130 – MASTERPLAN – CULLOMPTON NORTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION

Question submitted by Councillor Mrs N Woollatt and the response of the Head of Finance

At the Cabinet meeting of 28th January, the Head of Finance was tasked to do some research and report back before the next meeting of full Council as to whether there were any schemes such as a reduction in council tax or any other compensation schemes which might be available to compensate the residents of St George's View for the inconvenience, disruption and negative effect on house prices that will result from using their currently quiet cul de sac as a temporary access route to open up part of the Cullompton NW Extension site for development.

Is the Head of Finance in a position to report back on his investigations?

RESPONSE

The Head of Finance agreed to report back to Full Council when the NW extension report would be considered.

Council Tax legislation has no provision for compensation. As Council Tax is based on property valuations assessed by the District Valuer, the residents could contact the District Valuation Office, based in Exeter, who may consider a temporary reduction in value of these properties, after full consideration of all the prevailing issues.

4. CABINET – 11 FEBRUARY 2016

Min No 138 – CLINICAL WASTE

Question submitted by Councillor Mrs J Roach and the response of the Cabinet Member for the Environment

Have the district/community nurses been consulted in relation to the changes in relation to clinical waste?

Have the healthcare providers been consulted to see if they would be prepared to contribute

directly to MDDC so that this excellent service for the collection of all clinical waste can continue? Surely this would be more cost effective than individual arrangements and more conducive in the long term of protecting public health?

RESPONSE

This will form part of the consultation process and was specifically referred to in part c of the recommendations. Any financial contributions will be discussed as part of this consultation process. This consultation is due to commence in the next few months.

5. CABINET – 11 FEBRUARY 2016

Min 149 – CORPORATE PLAN

Question submitted by Councillor Mrs J Roach and the response of the Leader

What was the cost of the consultation on the corporate plan?
Is the receipt of 150 responses perceived as a successful outcome?

The statement that the vision of Mid Devon is "Making the most of Mid Devon" could be seen to be negative and could imply that we are making the most of a bad job. Were any more positive statements considered?

RESPONSE

The cost to the Council in terms of money was zero (no cost other than what was already in the budget) but there was a small amount of officer time involved. Data from the survey was collected using Survey Monkey.

The Consultation was sent to:

Citizens Panel – this was scheduled correspondence with the citizens panel (we send three questionnaires to them a year and 60% online and 40% clean mail postage – included in the consultation budget)

Published on our website

Sent to all staff via the Link

Emails sent to all of our contact groups – business groups, Town and Parish Councils, voluntary and community groups and key partners.

In terms of responses, whilst 150 might not sound very many this is a marked improvement to the number that we received for the last Corporate Plan, which was approximately 40 responses

A number of statements were considered for the mission statement but they were felt to be too long and cumbersome. Therefore the decision was made to go for the succinct statement of "Making the most of Mid Devon". In terms of consultation more people liked it than disliked it and there were no suggestions for changing the mission statement that hadn't already been considered.

6. CABINET – 11 FEBRUARY 2016

Min 151 – BUDGET

Question submitted by Councillor Mrs J Roach and the response of the Leader

Does the Leader of the Council agree with me that the Council will not be able to continue in its present form without taking serious action to resolve the financial disaster predicted for 2020?

RESPONSE

The Council has successfully managed against a backdrop of substantial funding cuts delivered by Central Government of circa £2.5m from 2010/11 – 2015/16. It has continued to provide a wide range of services throughout this period – and has actually managed to improve outcomes/performance across a range of services during this period. This highlights our continued drive to “do more with less” and improve efficiency wherever possible (including looking into more commercial opportunities).

Now we are in receipt of a provisional 4 year Grant Settlement, which indicates the removal of £1.7m of Revenue Support Grant by 2020, the future will continue to be very challenging for the Council (even without the added complication of the current consultation on both New Homes Bonus and Business Rates) – but we have a demonstrable track record of managing with less Government funding – and yes we will have to explore more new opportunities that will include, greater risk coupled to more commercial activities, increased partnering, changes to service delivery, maximisation of income, etc. But this will be need to be carried out with sensitivity to local needs and we will continue to maintain an ongoing dialogue with residents and businesses to ensure we continue to provide quality services within the funds we have available.

7. CABINET – 11 FEBRUARY 2016

Min No 153 - ESTABLISHMENT

Question submitted by Councillor Mrs J Roach and the response of the Cabinet Member for the Working Environment and Support Services

a) What is the total number of fte staff on the establishment for this year and last year?

RESPONSE

As at 22 February 2015 = 361 FTE

As at 22 February 2016 = 406 FTE

b) How many hours of agency staff have been paid in relation to waste services, recycling services, customer first and housing? What was the total cost of agency staff in the last financial year and what is the cost to date?

RESPONSE

Total agency costs to date for 14-15 £197,948.00

Waste £53,234.00

Recycling £62,219.00

Customer First £5,518.00

Housing £15,440.00

Total Agency costs for 15-16 £260,572.00

Waste £56,376.00

Recycling £68,521.33

Customer First £5,976.00

Housing £11,493.00

Please note that £40k of the costs in Waste and Recycling above are in relation to the new waste scheme.

c) Hours worked by agency staff are kept within the service departments and not held centrally by Finance or HR. This information is not readily available within the timescale given but can be collated if required at a later date.

How many posts were made redundant in the last year?

RESPONSE

Between 22 Feb 2015 – 22 Feb 2016 = 9

d) The establishment shows a post of press and reputation manager. I was under the impression that the postholder was made redundant.

RESPONSE

The post of Communications and Reputations Manager was removed from the Establishment on 12 February 2016.

8. AGENDA ITEM 13 – DEVOLUTION

Question submitted by Councillor Mrs J Roach and the response of the Leader

What is the cost of the devolution bid? What is the predicted cost of the creation of and the subsequent running of a combined authority? The Government states that devolution has to be cost neutral. How can the creation of another tier be cost neutral? Has any local government or health reorganisation ever resulted in reducing costs? This appears to be an underlying principle of the devolution bid which cannot be upheld with valid evidence.

I believe that devolution is a backdoor way of bringing about local government reorganisation. What is the Leader's view on this comment?

When does the council intend to consult and inform the residents of Mid Devon to seek their views on this bid?

Is there any truth in the rumour that each devolved area will be having a directly elected Mayor?

RESPONSE

The cost of developing the bid has largely been manifested in officer and member time rather than as a cashable cost to Mid Devon, with the exception of an initial £5k contribution to the project team pulling the prospectus together. Much of the time spent in discussion on the devolution prospectus is time that could normally be expected to be spent on cross-border discussion with our strategic partners, therefore the cost to Mid Devon at this point is considered minimal.

Government statements around cost neutrality are part of the ongoing devolution debates; the starting point for central government is that they don't expect additional costs as a result of agreeing to devolve decision-making to local levels. This leads on to the query around Combined Authorities; rather than an extra tier of government, this is best thought of as a strategic entity, required for the localising of power/decision-making, bringing a focal point to the Heart of the South West 'conversation' - working on behalf of its constituent councils to face into central government as well as driving change, productivity and growth across a strategic geography.

On the question of reorganisation delivering savings, I think there is a case to say that while reorganisation can indeed deliver savings in and of itself, the greater prize is that of productivity gain. Whether this is in the case of procurement synergy, sector stimulation, or infrastructure investment, there are a number of areas in the devolution prospectus that will enhance our chances and opportunity in Mid Devon.

Local government reorganisation has repeatedly been denied as an 'on the table' issue by central government, and while they are keen to have the mayoral model in city regions as part of the pre-requisite for devolution, in shire areas this does not appear to be mandatory (witness the Cornwall 'deal'). Your comment 'that devolution is a backdoor way of bringing about local government reorganisation', is not a position that I agree with. I do not believe that central government has any appetite to force local government down a reorganisation route in this area, when there appears to be little support for it from the constituent authorities.

Finally, part of the reason for bringing this paper to full council was to ensure transparency around the prospectus submission. There is no formal opportunity to consult residents on the prospectus; as the report notes, this is the culmination of a substantial amount of inter-authority negotiation across the HotSW area over the last few months, and with amendments to legislation being promoted to ensure that such deals can be done even without the support of every individual authority, it is important to have the open and transparent debate at full council while recognising that no changes can be made to the prospectus submission at this stage.

9. – AGENDA ITEM 10 – SCRUTINY MINUTES 22 FEBRUARY

Councillor Mrs Roach has reserved the right to ask questions of the Scrutiny Minutes 22 February (the minutes had not been published in time for the close of written questions 12 noon Monday 22 February)