

## **BDC O&S Scrutiny of Budget Workshop**

### **Questions for Cabinet**

- (1) Is the budget adequate to support all the objectives regarding transitioning and fit in with the four-year plan?

The Broadland and South Norfolk Plan has been developed in conjunction with the Budgets. It is also being approved at the same time as the Budgets. This helps ensure that the Plan and the Budgets are aligned, and that all the Plan objectives are funded.

With regard to our One Team programme. The budgets for 2020/21 are set based on the one team structure, that was implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020. This includes funding for 4 full time generic Internal Consultancy posts and several service specific consultancy posts to help drive our programme of alignment of Practice, Process and Procedures, which will not only deliver a better service for the customer who will be at the centre of any review but also savings.

There is also a budget of c£60,000 across the two councils to fund additional external support if this is needed.

Major specific transformation projects will have their own business cases and budgets as appropriate.

- (2) Are you going to make more innovative use of the Council's usable reserves (e.g. Community Land Trusts)?

Cabinet will be proposing setting aside monies in the capital programme to support Broadland Growth Limited. Other innovative use of reserves, such as the Food Innovation Centre on the Food Enterprise Zone, will also be included within the capital programme. However, in both cases business cases will need to be produced prior to significant sums being invested.

- (3) What is the size of the Council's usable and unusable reserves and what are they committed to?

The usable reserves will be detailed in an appendix to the main Budget Report that will be presented to Cabinet on 11 February and O&S on 4 February as at 31 March 2019 they totalled £25,401K; split between the General Fund £14,299, Earmarked reserves of £8,248K, Capital Grants unapplied reserves £133K and Capital receipts reserve £2,721K.

The Final Accounts for the Council for 2018/19 provides a breakdown of the Council's unusable reserves which at the 31 March 2019 totalled a negative £23,174K.

<b>Reserve</b>	<b>31 March 2019 £000</b>
Pensions Reserve	31,121
Capital Adjustment Account	(6,950)
Revaluation Reserve	(2,217)
Collection Fund Adjustment Account	1,137
Deferred Capital Receipts	(60)
Financial Instruments Adjustments Account	143
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,174</b>

These reserves cannot be used to fund expenditure or reduce Council Tax. Please see the final accounts for further detail on each reserve.

- (4) Are you incorporating the Broadland Business Plan into the Medium-Term Financial Plan?

Please see the answer to question 1.

- (5) Has the Greater Norwich Local Plan been incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Plan?

The Council has a Spend Equalisation Reserve to smooth out fluctuations in revenue expenditure, incurred in irregular annual patterns. Funds are set aside into this reserve each year, and one of the main items funded from this reserve is the Greater Norwich Local Plan. As at 31 March 2019 the balance on this reserve was £560,000.

- (6) How are different budget allocations for the same service managed across both Councils by one officer team?

Although many costs are shared with South Norfolk, there remain separate budgets at each Authority for any activities that are specific to each Authority. For instance, leisure facility budgets only exist for South Norfolk. Where the one team delivers a common service for both Councils then the costs will be split 45% to Broadland and 55% to South Norfolk as per the Feasibility Study. This ratio has been revisited to ensure it remains valid and agreed with External Audit as a reasonable methodology to split the costs.

- (7) Is there a sufficient budget for IT and phones to ensure that the Council can deliver what is required?

The 2020/21 budget will be increasing both the revenue and capital budgets for IT.

Further details of the proposed IT budgets will be detailed in an appendix to the main Capital Budget Report that will be presented to Cabinet on 11 February and O&S on 4 February.

- (8) Is there sufficient budget available for advertising posts etc. and ensuring that we recruit the best staff to enable the council to progress?

The 2020/21 Broadland budget will include an allowance of £45,000 for advertising / recruitment costs.

The new Terms and Conditions, that were recently approved, also include provision to pay relocation expenses if required to attract the best staff.

- (9) Is there budget available for providing Councillors with the equipment that enables better functionality and allows Councillors to do their job in the best way?

All Councillor are provided with i-pads to facilitate their work in an efficient way. Councillors also have access to the Democratic Services and the IT teams to provide support.

We are always looking to improve the IT offering, provided this demonstrates value for money. The purchase of Office 365 will provide Councillors with the ability to access their Broadland emails on other devices.

- (10) Is there sufficient budget available to provide training for Members to enable them to undertake their role in the best way and ensure sufficient skills are in place?

An induction programme is provided to new members to help them when they start and updates / training sessions are carried out as required – For instance we have provided training on Local Government Finances, Overview and Scrutiny training and will be offering training later this year on Local Government Treasury Management.

Recognising that it's important to upskill Members as well as officers there is provision in the budget for training. Training requests will be assessed on a needs basis to ensure the right level of knowledge and skills to meet the terms of reference of the committees.

- (11) What is the plan for the Member Ward Grant? and is there a plan to (a) review the level and (b) look at providing a wider pot of money to allocate to a community grant scheme?

The draft 2020/21 Broadland budget retains provision for £500-member ward grants. Cabinet have requested that officers bring forward a paper on options during 2020/21. One of the options to be considered is setting up a local lottery in order to provide funding to local good causes. There remains the Community Infrastructure

Fund for those areas where development will result in future CIL receipts, to borrow in advance of receiving this funding.

- (12) In order for Overview & Scrutiny to be able to appropriately research topics, it is necessary for the Committee to be given appropriate officer support. Will Cabinet ensure that there is Budget provision to continue to employ a dedicated research officer; maintained on a part time basis of 15 hours per week, specified in the Members' Overview and Scrutiny hand book and previously supported with in the budget?

The draft 2020/21 budget retains provision for a Senior Governance Officer to provide support to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. As the work requested by the Committee will change according to its work programme, this will be a flexible resource.

The Members' Overview and Scrutiny hand book referred to is not a statutory document having been internally generated some years ago. As Norfolk is a two-tier County, it is Norfolk County Council who are designated as the Principle Authority which is recognised in legislation as requiring a Scrutiny Support Officer. As Broadland is a District Council this is not a statutory requirement.

In devising the work programme, the Committee need to utilise the experts within the One Team, and the Senior Governance Officer's role is therefore to support, co-ordinate and enable the work programme.