

APPENDIX C.1

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 30 NOVEMBER 2010

Title:

**BUDGET OBSERVATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEES**

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Mike Band]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

This report advises the Executive of the observations raised by the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees at their meetings in November 2010 and asks the Executive to take them into consideration during the forthcoming budget setting process.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Council could not deliver the Corporate Priorities without a robust budget setting process in place. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees were given the opportunity to comment on the Budget implications for the Corporate Priorities for the services within their remit.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no direct equality and diversity implications as a result of the recommendations of this report.

Climate Change Implications:

There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

Resource/Value for Money Implications:

All decisions made with regard to the Budget will impact on Waverley's resources

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

Background

1. At their meetings in November 2010, each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees received a report outlining the financial background to producing the Council's four-year Financial Strategy and the proposed approach to be taken to the 2011-2012 Budget. The report included key financial and topical

issues; reporting dates to Members; a forecast of the expected Budget position; and details of the proposed 'Star Chamber' process to examine budgets closely in order to identify potential savings.

2. Members were reminded of the extent of the likely budget shortfall and the need to achieve savings as indicated within the Financial Strategy. The Committees were invited to comment on issues that fall within their remit to help determine the budget priorities in the coming months. Their observations are set out below.

Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3. The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 8 November and made the following observations to the Executive:-
 - i. the Committee considered that the areas within its remit were key services and any further reductions would detrimentally affect Waverley residents;
 - ii. the only area the Committee considered that might sustain a reduction in discretionary spending was Community Transport; and
 - iii. Day Centres and Welfare Grants were high priority services that should only be reduced as a last resort.

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4. The Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the following observations at its meeting on 9 November 2010:-
 - i. The Committee did not feel that the Council should equally reduce funding to all services but priority be given to frontline and essential services and supporting vulnerable people.
 - ii. The Committee noted that statutory services could be delivered differently to achieve savings and were supportive of taking this forward. It was suggested by a Member that the delivery of the waste service could be revisited to achieve savings as, around £120K be saved by reverting to the system in place before 'same-day' collections were introduced.
 - iii. The Committee discussed the possibility of transferring the responsibility of maintaining public conveniences to the community but noted that local shops and pubs were not open 24hours, in some locations, entrance by young people would not be appropriate and consideration would need to be given to disabled access. Members felt it would be preferable if public conveniences could be managed and maintained by Town and Parish Councils. Whilst members felt it would be preferable if public conveniences could be managed and maintained by Town and Parish Councils, with a further reduction in Compensatory Grants to those Parish Councils providing their own recreational

facilities; it was essential that those Town or Parish Councils which agree to assume responsibility for services such as public conveniences, do not still have to pay for those same services being provided by Waverley to towns and parishes whose councils were unwilling to take them on. Members felt that if the Town/Parish declined the offer to transfer conveniences, they should be closed.

- iv. The Committee commented that the Council could not expect towns and parishes to take on additional responsibility for services without some resources being passed on to it as well.
- v. The Committee felt that along with public conveniences there were a number of discretionary services that could be transferred to town and parish councils, such as museums and art activities which could achieve significant savings for the Council. Furthermore, by working in partnership with community organisations, Towns and Parish Councils, areas such as flood risk management, recreational open space and parks and countryside could be delivered more effectively jointly to achieve savings. Although, Members felt that they had to look very carefully at how this was achieved to ensure that council tax payers were paying fairly for this provision.
- vi. The Committee discussed funding for museums and felt that considering this was discretionary and not an essential service, whether its funding should be reduced in favour of others. However, noting that museums relied on volunteers it was felt that this might not be something that should be implemented this year.
- vii. The Committee felt that there were some savings to achieve from the discretionary aspects of Sustainability and Climate Change but agreed that street cleaning was essential and funding should not be reduced.
- viii. The Committee asked for assurance that the efficiency savings proposed in the report were achievable, as they needed to be certain on the budget position to make decisions on how it should be spent.
- ix. Members were concerned about the high costs allocated to emergency and contingency planning and the Chief Executive agreed to send more information about this spending following the meeting.
- x. The Committee agreed that there were some areas that could achieve grant funding more easily than others and Members should look at those areas which would have more difficulty in continuing to run if they were no longer to receive funding.
- xi. The Committee agreed that further discussion needed to take place on what services would be best placed to be delivered by other groups, Town and Parishes and what were better placed to be maintained by the Borough as a whole.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5. At its meeting on 15 November, the Committee made the following observations to the Executive:-
- i. Support for the Don't Lose Your Home or Business project should be retained as there was no indication that demand for help was decreasing.
 - ii. Scope for further reductions in costs for electoral registration should be explored, although members appreciate officers' reluctance to let the high standard of accuracy decline.
 - iii. The Committee felt that there was still capacity to reduce the number of hard copies of committee papers circulated and to increase the amount of electronic distribution, in order to make savings in democratic representation.
 - iv. Generally, members were content to rely on the scrutiny of the Star Chamber process to identify savings.

Recommendation

The Executive is invited to take the observations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees into account during the forthcoming budget-setting process.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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