

COUNCIL MEETING – 22 February 2023

67 RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE: MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-27

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the items recommended at Appendix A to the report.

Extract from the Minutes of the Corporate Policy Committee meeting on 9 February 2023

68 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-27

The Committee considered a report which presented the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for Cheshire East Council for the four years 2023/24 to 2026/27.

The Committee was asked to consider the feedback from the budget consultation and recommend an annual balanced budget to the full Council meeting on 22 February 2023.

The report summarised the resolutions that the Corporate Policy Committee was requested to recommend to Council at Appendix A. The report also provided the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Report (containing the Budget that would be part of the recommendations) for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27 at Appendix C.

Annex 2b, within Appendix C, provided information on the consultation responses, including the feedback from service committees. The feedback from the Environment and Communities Committee's meeting of 2nd February 2023 was circulated at the meeting.

The Chair thanked all those who had responded during the consultation period. He also thanked the officers for producing a balanced budget for the next four years in conditions of great uncertainty.

Some members felt that under the new committee system they should have been more involved with the development of the budget rather than simply being asked to comment on it. It was suggested that for the future, a member workshop approach be adopted to allow more member involvement at the formulation stage.

Councillor Clowes stressed the need for more innovative thinking and in this respect referred to a scheme operating in Sussex whereby the council had introduced levies on its busiest roads and charged a daily rent to utility companies, providing much-needed revenue and ensuring that lanes were re-opened more quickly.

Councillor Browne, as Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, undertook to discuss the matter with officers and to see if Cheshire East Council was already doing something similar.

He went on to say that service committees had provided an opportunity for members to make a greater contribution to the budget-setting process.

The Chair added that there had been two rounds of budget meetings through the committee system and that the earlier round had presented a 'blank page', with members being invited to make suggestions. He agreed that a workshop approach might be a way forward in future.

RESOLVED (by majority)

That

1. the Committee notes:
 - (a) the year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23 (Appendix C, Section 2);
 - (b) the summary results of the Budget Consultation and Engagement exercise undertaken by the Council, as set out in Appendix C, Annex 2a and 2b;
 - (c) the report of the Council's Section 151 Officer, contained within the MTFS Report, regarding the robustness of estimates and level of reserves held by the Council based on these budget proposals (Appendix C, Comment from the Section 151 Officer); and
 - (d) that the Council's Finance Procedure Rules remain unchanged and will always apply to ensure proper approval should any changes in spending requirements be identified (Appendix C, Annex 14); and
2. the Committee recommends to Council the items at Appendix A.