

Cabinet referrals

19 May 2020

CA/046/20 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2019/20

Decision

That the report be noted and:

1. The movement on earmarked reserves as set out in section 9 of the report be approved
2. The capital slippage into financial year 2020/21 as set out in Appendix C of the report be reviewed and approved

Resolved to recommend:

- 3. The approval of a supplementary capital budget of £300k in 2020/21 to complete works to the Berkhamsted multi-storey car park**

Corporate objectives

Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery.

Deputy Section 151 Officer

This is a Deputy S.151 Officer report

Monitoring Officer

No comments to add to the report

Advice

Councillor Elliot introduced the report to members. The report summarises the financial performance in 2019-20 and details other minor accounting changes. The final audited accounts will be presented to the Audit Committee for scrutiny and approval in September prior to final publication. The General Fund shows an overall balanced budget with small variances in different services areas as outlined in the report. The Housing Revenue Account has an in year surplus of £884k and the Capital Programme is broadly on track and there is a projected rephrasing of £0.4 million into the 2020/21 General Fund. Due to the current crisis with Covid-19, next year may show a very different set of accounts with many challenges up ahead.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 11, paragraph 4.2 and asked for further details about the £115k of additional insurance costs relating to uninsured losses.

N Howcutt explained that the council undertakes its own insurance provision for minor claims and for significant claims, the council has external insurance. For the small claims, this is covered from reserves which is far more cost effective than having external insurance for all eventualities because of the large premiums.

Councillor Birnie asked if the £115k was multiple small claims or one claim.

N Howcutt confirmed that this total was made up of all insurance claims under £10k.

Councillor Birnie then referred to page 31, paragraph 5.1 relating to the vacancy pressure within the Clean, Safe and Green team. He asked if it would be better to increase the budget for staff vacancies in this team.

J Deane said the vacancy factor comes from balancing budgeting experience with what experience has shown in the past. The council budgets on a post by post basis and experience shows that at the end of the financial year, the council comes in at 5% under budget. This process gives an easy way to show what is a realistic saving over the year when taking all vacancies across the council into account.

Councillor Birnie asked if the external auditors were comfortable with this approach.

N Howcutt confirmed they were comfortable with this approach because it is part of the budget setting process and uses sound reasoning to justify. It is also reviewed every year.

Recommendations agreed.

23 June 2020

CA/059/20 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Decision

1. That the approach to the development and delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action plan as set out in the report be approved.
2. That the Climate Emergency Statement in Appendix 4 be approved

Resolved to recommend:

3. **The creation of a budget for the Climate Emergency of £75,000 in 2020/21 and authority be delegated for its expenditure be made to the Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration and the Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services in consultation with the Leader be approved**
4. That an annual review of the progress of the Strategy and Action Plan be made to Cabinet each year and an update be provided to Cabinet in September 2020 on initial progress
5. That a training and development programme for both staff and Members be delivered in 2020/21
6. That a 'Climate Emergency impact statement' be incorporated into Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny reports

Corporate objectives

The Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will help to support all 5 corporate objectives:

- *Safe and clean environment*: e.g. contains actions relating to the quality of existing environments and design and layout of new development that promote security and safe access;
- *Community Capacity*: e.g. provide a framework for local communities to be better informed and involved in climate emergency mitigation.;
- *New and Affordable housing*: through both direct delivery and setting improved sustainability requirements in new homes would help to reduce both the cost of energy and water and the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions the homes would produce;
- *Dacorum delivers*: fulfilling the zero carbon pledge will make a huge contribution to local sustainability and assist in the national target to reach zero carbon as a nation by 2050;
- *Regeneration*: the strategy and action plan will provide improvements to air quality, biodiversity, opportunities for cycling and walking as well as major economic potential for 'green' businesses.

Monitoring Officer comments

The Strategy and Action Plan will require continual review against the baseline data in order to measure the effectiveness of the agreed actions.

S151 Officer comments

The recommended £75k budget can be funded through draw down from the Climate Change and Sustainability Reserve.

Whilst the Council remains ambitious in the delivery of its Climate Change Action Plan, it should be acknowledged that there may be occasions when financial restrictions prevent the implementation of desirable service changes in the future.

Future recommendations to Members will need to be presented within the context of the Council's broader financial position in order to support evidence-based decision-making.

Advice

Councillor Williams introduced the report and asked for feedback from cabinet members about the comments from overview and scrutiny about their service areas.

Councillor Griffiths said she had concerns over the recommendation from SPAE OSC about increasing rents. This recommendation has not been discussed by H&C OSC and was not happy with the suggestion. The council needs to bring people along and some tenants are already in fuel poverty so increasing rents or forcing them to go all electric in their homes which is often more expensive than gas is not the right thing to do. There are government guidelines on rent increase, there has been a 1% decrease in the last four years which has now finished so the new guideline is the CPI plus 1%. She would not be supporting that recommendation.

Councillor Birnie said that he had some sympathy with what Councillor Griffiths said but said he was guided by the members on his committee. He said he would like to make the point that was brought up Councillor Timmis who is the borough's representative on the London Luton Airport Committee. There is no reference in the strategy about the massive expansion planned at the airport. 70% of western bound flights fly over Dacorum and there would be an increase in road pollution, noise pollution and fuel pollution from aircraft.

Councillor Elliot agreed with the comments made by Councillor Griffiths. He referred to the points about electric charging points and said it was quite costly to install these and the technology is always changing.

Councillor Anderson also agreed with the comments made by Councillor Griffiths. He stated that the council shouldn't get hung up on detail in this strategy or rule ideas either in or out. It is important to look at ideas where possible and the measures the council implements as part of this policy should be realistic, effective, proportionate and cost effective. He said he did not feel that a full on approach to installing electric charging vehicles fit in to that criteria. The council needs to have a flexible strategy to respond to emerging technology. It is important to consult the public but must avoid the mistakes of other authorities whereby people begin to passionately raise ideas that are not realistic. The report as a whole is excellent, and contains generalities under which the council can move forward.

Councillor Banks added support to comments made by the Cabinet and on a well-produced strategy and action plan. She noted that air quality was part of the plan but not specifically London Luton airport. She accepted that communication with residents and empowering them to take steps themselves is a critical part to delivering this strategy.

Councillor Timmis added to Councillor Birnie's point about London Luton airport. The airport's intention is to continue with applying for an expansion which would double its current passenger numbers and generate a significant amount of traffic. Luton airport continue to say that people will travel by train but at the same time, have built massive car parks. This will have a major impact on climate change and hopes that the council will raise its objections against the current application.

Councillor Sutton agreed with previous comments about rent and the electric charging points which he also believed was too early to make a decision on at this stage as the motor industry are working on different options for power. He also raised concerns that if every vehicle was electric whether there would be enough lithium to supply them. The council are using the Local Plan to include ways of making new homes and developments carbon neutral.

M Gaynor said London Luton airport did not feature in the strategy because the council already has a position of opposing the airport expansion. The strategy can be used to look at external factors which may have an effect on climate change inside the borough. There may be an impact from Covid-19 affecting the appetite for the air industry to expand. The electric charging points is not for the borough council to decide on its expansion, the technology falls to the county council and mainly relies on a push from the private sector. There is a requirement in the Local Plan that future developments must provide electric charging points.

Councillor Williams said that the airport had paused their application but didn't doubt that it would be paused forever but Dacorum and Herts County Council have objections against it. He said there was a huge difference between using electricity at home and electricity to power a car. For example, a house uses 7000kwh a year to power and driving 20,000 miles in a car would use 6000kwh so approximately 80% of electricity used in a house would have to be generated again. In some properties, it would be impractical to own an electric vehicle like in flat developments. He said some ideas like more tree planting and solar panels are more realistic.

Recommendations agreed.

