

COUNCIL MEETING 24 February 2022

QUESTIONS RECEIVED From the Public:

Christine Strudwick to ask:

To the Portfolio Holder for Place:

“What is the view of the Portfolio Holder for Place on the Levelling Up white paper published this month and the potential impact of Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 on Hart District Council planning policy?”

Dr Angela McFarlane to ask:

To the Portfolio Holder for Environment:

“In 2021, Hart DC imposed a new schedule of tariffs for off street parking in Odiham. This was to bring all rural car parks under the same tariffs. Comparing income from 2019 and 2021 (pre and post Covid) there has been a significant drop in income from parking - approximately 30% across Hart. Analysis of the figures for Odiham shows that there has been a significant drop in users of the car parks for extended stays which has led to a drop in footfall on the High St and reduced revenue overall for Hart. We note that the Hart budget for 22/23 allows for an anticipated reduction of 22% in parking revenue due to Covid. We suggest this is likely to be more due to the additional impact of higher pricing for parking longer than 2 hours - the all-day charge has risen from £2 to £4. My question is therefore this:

Will Hart consider reverting to the previous pricing point of £2 for more than two hours which attracted more customers to our High St and raised more revenue for Hart? Asking Odiham Parish Council to subsidise a less productive tariff is not the answer.”

Mr David Turver to ask: (Questions forwarded from Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

To the Portfolio Holder for Finance:

- 1) The outturn report refers to the original budget of £10,794K approved in February 2021. However, the budget approval included a contingency of £610K for "pressures" (see below):

13.4 The contingency sum of £610k shown in the budget for pressures has been assigned as follows:

Activity	£ 000
COVID-19 loss of income	220
Recycling credits no longer reimbursed	250
Finance function insourced from Capita	140
Assigned contingency – Specific activity	£ 610K

Total Pressures £610K

To what extent has this contingency been utilised and how will the use of the contingency impact the forecast full year deficit of £488K?

- 2) The August O&S was told there was £6.8m of reserves in the General Fund at the end of FY20/21. The same paper recommended a minimum level of reserves of £5.3m, leaving a headroom of ~£1.5m.

- 6.2 The Section 151 Officer recommends that the above balance is increased in Hart's case to take account of specific risk arising being loan repayments, New Homes Bonus, and Income from Garden Waste. The Section 151 Officer also recommends a temporary increase in General Fund due to risk of underperformance in income on the Leisure Contract.

The calculation of our recommended minimum level of reserves is therefore shown below:

	2022-23 £'000
10% of Net Expenditure	1,170
Garden waste income	900
New Homes Bonus	1,847
Leisure Contract	1,400
Total	5,317

At the end of 2020/21 General Fund reserves were over £6.8m, more than the minimum level required, however, there are undoubtedly significant financial pressures to come in future years.

With the current forecast deficit and the reserve transfer to cover the Leisure Centre shortfall, what is the current expectation of the reserve level, the minimum reserve and therefore the anticipated headroom at year end?

Moreover, with the current level of forecast deficits into the future, can officers explain when they anticipate reserves falling below the recommended minimum level?

What would be the consequences if that should occur and what further actions might be required to avoid reserves falling below the minimum level?

Additional questions Mr David Turver to ask:

To the Portfolio Holder for Place:

- 1) Can you explain the massive "contract inflation" uplifts in the IT Contract (£164.1K/£356.4K = 46%); Grounds Maintenance (£86.3K/£356.7K = 24%); Street Cleaning (£138K/£604.2K = 23%); Waste (£181K/£1,775K = 10%) and the 5 Council Contract (£219.7K/£2,497K = 9%), all of which have increases far in excess of CPI (5.5%)?

To the Portfolio Holder for Finance:

- 2) Notwithstanding the stated £498K FY21/22 budget does not match the FY21/22 budget book, how can you justify the massive £394K or 79% total increase (£892K - £498K) in the cost of the Finance Department?

To the Portfolio Holder for Place:

- 3) What specific deliverables will be produced from the new £250K climate change budget?

To the Portfolio Holder for Finance:

- 4) The staff costs for Small SANG sites, Edenbrook, Commons (incl. Odiham), Bramshot, Fleet Pond and Elvetham Heath have gone up by around £187K in total. How many more people are going to be employed and what additional services can we expect from them?
- 5) FY21/22's budget included a contingency of £610K. The budget for FY22/23 contains no contingency at all, so when unforeseen problems inevitably arise, how will they be funded?
- 6) I note the reduction in minimum reserve requirement to £4.1m. However, can you explain why you consider it prudent to hold no reserve to cover the possibility of reduced income due to voids or other non-collection of rent from the property portfolio.