

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL held via Microsoft Teams on 22 February 2022 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Convener), S. Aitchison, A. Anderson, H. Anderson, J. Brown, S. Bell, C. Cochrane, G. Edgar, J. A. Fullarton, J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, S. Hamilton, S. Haslam, E. Jardine, H. Laing, J. Linehan, S. Marshall, W. McAteer, T. Miers, D. Moffat, S. Mountford, D. Paterson, C. Ramage, N. Richards, E. Robson, M. Rowley, H. Scott, S. Scott, E. Small, R. Tatler, E. Thornton-Nicol, G. Turnbull, T. Weatherston

Apology:- Councillor C. Cochrane.

Absent:- Councillor Chapman

In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Director Education and Lifelong Learning, Director Finance and Corporate Governance, Director Infrastructure and Environment, Director Resilient Communities, Director Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships, Chief Legal Officer, Employee Relations Manager, Clerk to the Council.

1. CONVENER'S REMARKS

The Convener Paid tribute to staff working in Social Work and Social Care services, not just in the Council but also across the Private, Third and Voluntary sectors. He advised that they truly had been tireless in their efforts, every day going above and beyond to make sure some of the Scottish Borders most vulnerable residents got the support they needed. The sector had been impacted significantly by the pandemic over the two years, and of course most recently by the impact of the latest variant, but not only had staff continued to deliver this vital service, there had also been staff from other areas of the Council volunteer to take on additional hours. There had also been students from Borders College and staff from other organisations in the Community Planning Partnership coming forward offering to get trained so they could help out. An example that highlighted the breadth of the support was that of David Bell (Convener with Unite the Union) who recently took on additional hours at Waverley Care Home in Galashiels, having previously helped out at Saltgreens in Eyemouth during the first wave. The Convener asked Members to join him in a vote of thanks to not only our existing Social Work and Social Care staff teams, but also to each one of the volunteers, like David, for going above and beyond at this critical time.

DECISION

AGREED to applaud the work of the staff concerned.

2. COMMUNITY CHOICES – PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

With reference to paragraph 7 of the Minute of 19 March 2021, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Resilient Communities providing an update on the Council's approach to Participatory Budgeting (PB), including the national position, and outlining the next steps to build on the current mainstreaming objective. The report explained that on 29 October 2017, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) announced that Council Leaders had agreed that at least 1% of local government budgets would be subject to Participatory Budgeting by the end of the financial year (2020/21) with the aim of giving communities more influence over decisions on how funding is spent in their local area. Nationally, whilst some work on PB had continued, the majority of local PB activity (planning or delivery) had stopped while the Council was responding to the ongoing pandemic. As a result, CoSLA and Scottish Government had recognised the exceptional circumstances brought about by the pandemic and had revised the Framework Agreement timescales and

ambition accordingly to give further flexibility to Local Authorities which were yet to achieve the 1% target. At the same time, council officers working alongside colleagues in CoSLA, had been developing the Council's mainstreaming approach to Participatory Budgeting. The Council was currently forecasting to spend £3.970m on Participatory Budgeting activity, as summarised in the report, for the financial year 2021/22 with a minimum target of £2.332m required. Training on PB was to be provided by way of a webinar and an e-learning module and details of these were appended to the report. Councillor Tatler confirmed that progress had not been as good as he had hoped but all Councils were in a similar position as a result of the pandemic and he proposed approval of the report subject to more regular reporting. Councillor Bell expressed concern at the lack of progress and suggested that if the proposals made by his Group as part of the budget in 2021 had been accepted more would have been achieved and proposed that the word "inadequate" should be added before progress in recommendation (a).

VOTE

Councillor Tatler, seconded by Councillor Fullarton, moved approval of the recommendations in the report subject to reporting being more frequent than annually.

Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor H. Anderson, moved as an amendment that the word "inadequate" should be added before progress in recommendation (a).

Motion - 23 votes
Amendment - 9 votes

The Motion was accordingly carried.

DECISION

DECIDED to:-

- (a) note the progress to date in achieving the current 1% target;**
- (b) endorse the mainstreaming approach being taken to Participatory Budgeting and the next steps outlined in the report; and**
- (c) to receive a regular update report in line with the financial planning process from the Director of Resilient Communities on Participatory Budgeting activity within Scottish Borders Council and meeting the targets agreed by CoSLA.**

3. SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL PLAN 2022-2023

With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 17 June 2021, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Executive seeking approval of the 'Scottish Borders Council Plan 2022-2023'; in principle support an annual review of the Council Plan; and endorse a review of the Council's performance management approach. The report explained that Scottish Borders Council agreed its present Corporate Plan in February 2018. Following Council approval of the Corporate Plan Refresh on 17 June 2021, Council was now asked to agree the 'Scottish Borders Council Plan 1 April 2022-31 March 2023', as set out in draft at Appendix A to the report. The draft Plan consolidated and articulated the Council's strategic ambition beginning with the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 but incorporating strategic commitments made since 2018. In so doing, the draft Plan sought both to provide a bridge from the existing Corporate Plan 2018-2023 to future Council Plans and to lay a template for Council Plans going forward. To ensure that future Council Plans kept pace with the developing strategic context and member ambition, it was proposed, in principle, that Council supported annual reviews of the Council Plan. Furthermore, to ensure that the Council was effectively measuring strategic priorities which emerged from its Council Plan, Council was also asked to endorse a review of the Council's performance management approach. Members welcomed the report and the ambition to closely align the Plan with the budget in future years and looked forward to the refreshed version following the elections in May.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) the Scottish Borders Council Plan 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023, as contained in Appendix A to the report;**
- (b) the development of a digital version of the Plan on the Council website, building on the desk top version presented in Appendix A to the report;**
- (c) in principle, that the Council Plan should be reviewed and updated annually; and**
- (d) to a review of the Council's performance management approach to ensure consistency with the Council Plan.**

4. UPDATED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Finance and Corporate Governance seeking approval for an updated version of the Council's Financial Regulations. The report explained that the Financial Regulations were a key element in the governance arrangements for the Council. They focused primarily on the financial control, management and administration of the Council's financial affairs. The Regulations were last reviewed in 2018/19 and the updates reflected the new corporate structure, services and job titles. Pronouns used throughout the document had also been updated from he/his to they/their. Generally the Regulations had been brought up to date to reflect changes in management responsibilities and procedures but there were no substantial changes in terms of the principles behind the Regulations or the control arrangements currently in place. Members supported the changes.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the revised Financial Regulations, as contained in Appendix 1 to the report, for immediate implementation.

5. BUDGET COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2022/23

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Finance and Corporate Governance outlining the steps taken to engage with stakeholders as part of a consultation exercise on the budget. The report detailed the budget Communication Strategy used and provided feedback gathered from the recent survey. This feedback had been considered as part of the 2022/23 Financial Planning process. As part of the budget consultation exercise on the Council's updated Financial Plan, a survey was made available to members of the public on the Council website from early December 2021 to 6 February 2022. Members of the public were asked to help the Council understand the priorities of Borderers and gave local people the opportunity to influence the next Council budget and a range of other important service areas for the future. As at the 6 February 2022, 765 members of the public had given their views on how they thought resources should be prioritised to address the high-level challenges the Council was facing. A summary of the feedback and a 'you said – we did' analysis were included in Appendices A and B to the report. In response to a question about the truncated detail included in Appendix A, the Director confirmed he would arrange for the publication of the full text of the feedback received. Members thanked the public for their input and highlighted the importance of listening to all views.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) note the budget Communication Strategy used; and**
- (b) consider the feedback provided by respondents to the survey in setting the Council's budget for 2022/23 and subsequent financial years..**

6. **LONG TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (REVENUE) 2022/23**

With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of 16 December 2021, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Finance and Corporate Governance providing Council with a final Long Term Financial Strategy document including detailed financial modelling to supplement the 2022/23 Financial Plan. The report explained that the Council first adopted a five year planning period for revenue in 2013/14. This strategy now adopted a ten year look forward, aligning the time frame for revenue planning with the ten year period already adopted for planning the capital investment programme. The approach to longer term financial planning was advocated as good practice by Audit Scotland. This approach had allowed the Council to deliver balanced budgets in each year since 2013/14 and to plan effectively for the financial consequences of multi-year transformational change across the Council. Since adopting a longer term planning horizon the Council had successfully delivered £63m of savings on a permanent basis, assisting significantly with financial sustainability. Adopting a consistent 10 year revenue planning horizon would further assist the Council to plan service and strategic change appropriately and ensure the financial implications of the Corporate Plan were properly considered, affordable and reflected in future budgets. Members supported this good practice resulting in balanced budgets.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the long term financial strategy, as contained in Appendix 1 to the report, to assist revenue financial planning over a 10 year period from 2022/23.

7. **FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND RESOURCES 2022/23 – 2026/27**

- 7.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Finance and Corporate Governance advising Council of the estimated revenue and capital resources available for financial year 2022/23 following publication of the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) on 20 December 2021 and the subsequent announcement of further one off funding of £120m for Local Government on 27 January 2022. The report recommended the financial strategy to be followed by the Council next financial year and identified the financial constraints and major risks to be addressed. It also outlined the process supporting the construction of the draft revenue and capital Financial Plans for 2022/23 as well as draft plans for future years.
- 7.2 The report explained that the Strategic Leadership Team had supported Members to set a corporate revenue and capital budget, meeting identified pressures facing the Council. These pressures had arisen from a variety of factors. The principal pressures identified were due to the anticipated continuing constraints on external revenue and capital funding from central government, the uncertainty around national pay negotiations, the increasing pressures from demographics, particularly the increasing numbers of older people requiring care services, as well as general inflation. The budget development process had been conducted to ensure that the financial plans of the Council were aligned with its business and people planning objectives and the level of resources available. The report highlighted that total revenue resources of £324.871m were available to Elected Members assuming the Council accepted the 2022/23 settlement offer from Scottish Government. The settlement gave Councils full flexibility to set the Council Tax rate that was appropriate for their local authority area for 2022/23. The impact of other potential variations in the Council Tax were detailed in the report. The benefits, in terms of financial stability and effective change management, derived from adopting a longer term corporate approach to the revenue and capital planning process were widely accepted. This approach had been developed for financial year 2022/23 with a 10 year revenue financial strategy being included for approval elsewhere on this agenda. This brought the long term planning horizon for both revenue and capital in line at 10 years.
- 7.3 Financial year 2022/23 represented the fifth year of the revenue 5 year financial plan for the Council first agreed in February 2018. It was anticipated Members would continue to adopt a longer term approach to financial planning. Estimates would continue to be updated annually as the detail of the financial settlement from Scottish Government became known. The Council had approved a revised approach to organisational change under the banner of 'Fit

for 2024' when the budget was set for 2019/20 in February 2019. This approach continued to reshape the transformation programme ensuring individual projects were more cross-cutting and focused on joined up business process review. The Fit for 2024 programme had been a strong driver in developing financial plan proposals for the 5 year period of the plan.

- 7.4 The report also sought approval of the financial strategy for the Council covering the period 2022/23 – 2026/27. The strategy provided the overall framework for the financial management of the Council and covered the revenue budget, capital investment plan, the Council's treasury management arrangements and the recommended policy on reserves. The 2022/23 budget had once again been prepared against a background of significant financial uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 on wider society had been profound. This in turn had had significant implications for the Council's finances and its service delivery model. It was anticipated that these impacts would continue to be felt for some time to come. It was anticipated that the COVID-19 reserve would continue to be deployed in 2022/23 to support the Council during the COVID-19 recovery period. The Council's financial strategy had been adapted accordingly using the best information available at the time. A risk based approach had once again been used to set the level of recommended balances to be held in contingency recognising the uncertainty caused by the Pandemic.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **note the estimated revenue resources for 2022/23 to 2026/27;**
 - (b) **note the estimated capital resources for 2022/23 to 2031/32 and the requirement to adhere to the prudential code for capital borrowing;**
 - (c) **note the flexibility provided through the LGFS process giving Councils full flexibility to set the Council Tax rate that was appropriate for their local authority area for 2022/23,;**
 - (d) **approve the financial strategy set out in the report, including the recommendation to maintain unallocated reserves at £8.421m for 2022/23, having considered the risk register highlighted in appendix 1 to the report; and**
 - (e) **proceed to consider the proposed Financial Plan for 2022/23.**
8. **CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2022/23**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Finance and Corporate Governance presenting Scottish Borders Council's updated Capital Investment Strategy (CIS) supporting the 2022/23 financial planning process. The report explained that the requirements of the Prudential Code were updated in December 2017 including the recommendation that Councils publish a Capital Investment Strategy to support their Capital Plan. This strategy therefore supported the strategic investment priorities of Scottish Borders Council through the Capital Plan. The Capital Investment Strategy was designed to highlight the capital investment priorities and explained how these priorities would assist with the delivery of the Council's Strategic Corporate Plan 2018 -2023 and the new Council Plan 2022-23, which was considered at paragraph 3 above. As such, the CIS was structured to reflect the themes of this Council Plan. The Strategy document appended to the report was to be read in conjunction with the Council's 10 year capital investment plan 2022 – 2032 and the Treasury Strategy which provided detail of the Council's Prudential Indicators and set out how the Capital Investment plans of the Council would be financed. Members welcomed the report and commented on the ambitious programme of capital expenditure.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Capital Investment Strategy as part of the suite of 2022/23 budget papers on the Council agenda.

9. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022/23**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Finance and Corporate Governance proposing approval of the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23. The report explained that the Treasury Management Strategy was the framework which ensured that the Council operated within prudent, affordable limits in compliance with the CIPFA Code. The Strategy for 2022/23, a copy of which was appended to the report, reflected the impact of the Administration's Financial Plans for 2022/23 onwards on the prudential and treasury indicators for the Council. Councillor Bell advised that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee had reviewed this report and had drawn attention to the narrowing of gap in terms of the Council's borrowing limit which fell from 36% to 1% in future years. He asked that Councillors, following the elections in May, review this operational boundary and the Director confirmed he would bring it to the attention of the new Administration.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;**
- (b) **note that the draft Treasury Management Strategy was considered by Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 14 February March 2022, where it noted the narrowing of the gap between Capital Financing Requirements and Authorised Limit for External Debt;**
- (c) **review the capital expenditure plans going forward to ensure they remained realistic, affordable and sustainable; and**
- (d) **ensure that the revenue consequences of all capital projects be fully reviewed in all investment decisions.**

10. **FINANCIAL PLAN INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IIA)**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director People, Performance and Change seeking to provide assurance to Members that any potential equality impacts of the proposals contained within the Council's Financial Plan from 2022/23 had been identified and would be managed accordingly. The Council had a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010, when exercising functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This was known as the Public Sector Equality Duty. Carrying out and considering the findings of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) as part of the decision making process was the method of ensuring "due regard" was paid to the effect of the relevant policy or practice on the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council also had an obligation under the Fairer Scotland Duty to consider how socio- economic inequalities could be reduced through strategic decisions that it made. The Council accordingly subjected prospective policies and practices to assessment through an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). This addressed potential impacts, both positive and negative, on the Council's duties under the Equalities and Fairer Scotland legislation. Initial Integrated Impact Assessments on the 2022/23 Financial Plan proposals had been undertaken as an integral part of the revenue and capital budget planning processes in order to fully inform decisions proposed by

officers and approved by Members. Some of the revenue proposals had been carried forward from previous years and so had already been subject to an impact assessment. Where that was the case they had been re-assessed where appropriate. The small number which had not been re-assessed could be as the detailed proposals developed. The capital proposals had all been carried forward from previous years and had not been re-assessed. While some of the assessed proposals indicated no impact, it was recommended that any potential impact continue to be monitored, given the nature of the proposals. Those 40 proposals may potentially impact in a positive or negative way on one or more of the Protected Characteristics or Socio- Economic Factors and any potential negative impact would require ongoing management through their implementation stage, in terms of mitigating and alleviating these impacts. Any positive impacts identified at this stage should be maximised during the planning and implementation stage of the proposals. Members welcomed the report.

DECISION AGREED:-

- (a) to note the summary outcomes of the 40 Initial Integrated Impact Assessments undertaken in respect of the 2022/23 Financial Plan proposals as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;**
- (b) that officers undertake further and ongoing Impact Assessment work, as necessary, in respect of those proposals with specific reference to the equality or socio- economic groups on whom there may be a possible impact:**
 - (i) that where there was an identified relevance to the Council’s statutory duty and there was a possible positive impact on one or more equality characteristic or socio- economic groups, actions to maximise this impact should be identified and implemented as part of the project planning and delivery of each proposal or project; and**
 - (ii) that where there was an identified relevance to the Council’s statutory duty and where there was a possible negative impact on one or more equality characteristic or socio- economic group, actions to mitigate and alleviate this impact should be identified and implemented as part of the project planning and delivery of each proposal or project.**

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm for a short break and reconvened at 12.25 p.m.

11. DRAFT 5 YEAR REVENUE AND 10 YEAR CAPITAL FINANCIAL PLAN

11.1 Councillor Haslam, seconded by Councillor Rowley, moved approval of the following Motion which had been circulated with the agenda:-

“This Administration delivers for the Borders. Since 2017 we have worked with our community planning partners to deliver new schools, new community infrastructure, delivered the award winning Inspire learning programme, which provided every child in the their 4th year of primary schooling to their sixth year in our secondary schools, with an iPad, enabling home schooling during lock down and transforming the delivery of Education. We have supported the Borders effectively during one of the most difficult periods in our history, sustaining services such as care for our vulnerable and waste collections throughout the pandemic. But we have also assisted in the protection of our economy by supporting key suppliers in the transport, early years and social care sectors with their cash flow, providing over £70m of grants to local businesses affected by COVID-19, and supporting vulnerable families through our 5 Community Assistance Hubs.

We have delivered on tackling poverty and agreed a new anti-poverty strategy, sustaining local jobs through our contracts with local businesses, become a living wage employer. We have delivered on protecting and prioritising our environment commitment, declaring a climate emergency, developing a climate change route map to guide our transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2045. We have already diverted all our household waste from landfill, increased recycling rates, improved the energy efficiency of many of our buildings, and invested heavily in major infrastructure projects such as the Hawick Flood protection scheme and the associated active travel network.

We have delivered new community infrastructure through our play areas and outdoor community spaces programme in Peebles, Galashiels, Newtown St Boswells and Kelso and at Harestanes, opened the new Jedburgh Grammar school and supported community groups to deliver their own projects including the hugely successful Hawick Pump Track.

We have opened new tourist attractions in Duns through the extended Jim Clark Museum and in Galashiels through the new Great Tapestry Centre bringing visitors to the Borders and creating new jobs.

We have delivered on the commitment to offer 1,140 hours of annual free childcare to every two to five year old in the Borders.

With regards to partnerships, we have signed not one but two City Deals through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Deal and the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Both these major initiatives will bring additional jobs and prosperity to the Region, including a new Mountain bike innovation centre in Innerleithen and delivery of the Destination Tweed project.

We have achieved all this at a time of ongoing constraint in public finances and balanced the books, having to make £63.4m of savings over the last 5 years (including a projected £9.3m in the current year) since we took office. Our Council tax remains one of the lowest in mainland Scotland.

Our plans for next years' budget have been shaped by an extensive public consultation which generated 765 responses from local people. We have listened to their feedback and tried to address their priorities which include:- more money for roads and pavements, rural transport, our town centres, investment in education, social care, supporting health and wellbeing, sustainability, protecting the environment and the commitment to net zero.

Feedback also highlighted how we can best engage with local people in the future with a clear preference for electronic means of communication while ensuring face to face contact remains an option for those who need it.

Specifically this Administration's budget brought to Council for approval today delivers on the following priorities:-

- A £325m overall revenue budget for 2022/23;
- A £0.5m increase in funding to culture and sport trusts;
- A £103m capital budget for 2022/23 and a capital plan which totals £547m over the next 10 years;
- Additional, permanent investment to improve roads, bridges and pavements with an additional expenditure of £95.1m over the next 10 years. Increased focus on first and final fixes and piloting alternative technologies to reduce temporary patching and build resilience;
- A £1.350m increase to target high profile/high priority identified local road schemes in 2022/23;
- Spend to save investments in a range of energy efficiency measures designed to reduce our Carbon Footprint and make cashable savings;
- £4m capital investment over next 3 years on energy efficiency alone;
- £1.6m in 22/23 on play areas and outdoor community spaces including new facilities, committed in Duns, Jedburgh, Peebles, Reston, Earlston and Eyemouth with more to follow;
- A New Eyemouth Primary School, a new Earlston Primary Schools and new secondary schools in Galashiels, Hawick and Peebles by end of 2026/27, funded by £130.4m capital investment over the next 3 years in Education & Lifelong Learning;
- An increase of £30k in the core grant payable to BREST – Duns swimming Pool;
- Working with NHS Borders to ensure best value by facilitating the construction of a new GP surgery in tandem with the new primary school for Earlston;

- £2.9m to fund 49 additional teachers and 26 support staff in schools
- Delivery of two residential care facilities in Tweedbank and Hawick and upgrades to other existing facilities;
- £50,000 to fund Mobile CCTV to support the two Community Action Police Teams funded by the Council;
- £0.5m to support a new Borders Events Strategy and smaller local events,
- £250k to bring a major International Cycling event to the Borders;
- Opening Reston Railway Station on the East Coast Mainline,
- £320,000 to fund a new Demand Responsive transport scheme for Rural areas providing connectivity to the new Reston station;
- £0.2m for a new neighbourhood support fund, for area partnerships to target local priorities;
- £0.4m to support increasing work around sustainability and the transition to net zero;
- £0.2m so members can promote civic pride and address accessibility works in our towns;
- An £8.61m increase in funding Social Work and Social Care funding;
- £30,000 to extend the Respite Care pilot for a further year doubling the previous short breaks budget;
- Opening a further Extra Care Housing development in the old Kelso High school during 2022/23;
- Funding of Real Living Wage increase to Social Care staff;
- And working with CGI to further develop digital solutions and deliver service improvements and efficiencies Council wide;
- A net increase of 64 in the jobs provided by the Council, mainly in Education.

On Council tax the Administration is proposing a 3% increase in Council tax for 2022/23, with a band D equivalent rate of £1,291.53.

The Council tax increase proposed from April is significantly below the rate of inflation and will result in an increase in the average annual Band D bill of £37.62, equivalent to £3.13 a month, £0.72 per week.”

11.2 The Convener explained how the debate and any amendments would be dealt with.

11.3 Councillor Haslam spoke in support of her Motion and highlighted the main points within the Administration’s budget which was a budget for recovery that looked to the future beyond the pandemic. Councillor Bell spoke on behalf of the SNP and Liberal Democrat Groups and advised that rather than submit an alternative budget he and his fellow Councillors would be submitting a series of amendments to address issues they had with the Administration’s proposals.

11.4 The following amendments were submitted:-

- (a) Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Thornton-Nicol, moved the following as an amendment:

“On p.282 of the agenda pack (Capital Investment Proposals), under Land and Property Infrastructure, to insert a new budget line with the title ‘Increase tree cover on SBC estate’, with an amount of £56k for 2022/23 only. This will be for a programme of successional compensatory planting of amenity trees that fail/are felled within the urban environment.

On that same page, under block allocation for ‘Energy Efficiency Works’ to reduce the amount of £1,878k in 2022/23 by £56k.

The potential revenue costs of up to £20k each year for the maintenance of new trees and addressing the ongoing problem of encroachment can be met from the Small Schemes budget in each Area.”

- (b) Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor H. Anderson, moved the following as an amendment:

“Purchase two new EV Precinct Sweepers as a trial of change with a report to Council after a year. The budget cost of £340k will be met from the Plant and Vehicle Replacement Fund, which will be compensated to fund a depreciation period of 10 years for these replacement assets.

To fund the above, and in light of the shrinking Property estate and improvements in the condition of the estate, on p.265 (Revenue) of the agenda pack under Infrastructure and Environment, to reduce the ‘Property Maintenance Fund Inflation’ budget by £34k to £51k in 2022/23. All other years to remain the same.”

- (c) Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor H. Anderson, moved the following as an amendment:

“On p.265 of the agenda pack (Revenue), under Infrastructure & Environment budget pressures, to insert a new line with the title ‘Expand Food Waste collection’ and for 2022/23 add in £155k to extend the current Food Waste Collection for up to 9,174 more households to improve recycling rates and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Put £620k into earmarked reserves to provide for the ongoing revenue cost of this expanded service.

Remove £600k from the ‘Increased Roads Investment in 2022/23’
Remove £175k from Resilient Communities budget pressures for the one-off “Borders Events Strategy” (p.275 of the agenda pack).”

On p.282 of the agenda pack (Capital Investment Proposals), under Waste Management, insert a new line with the title ‘Expand Food Waste collection’ and for 2022/23 add in £274k.

On that same page (Capital Investment Proposals), remove £274k from the budget line ‘Block provision for Energy Efficiency Works’ in 2022/23.”

- (d) Councillor Robson, seconded by Councillor Moffat

“on p.268 of the electronic agenda pack, in Social work revenue, under Foster, Kinship and Through Care Fees & Allowances uplift, to replace the figures in 2022/23 (£51k) with £76k, in 2023/24 (£52k) with £77k, in 2024/25 (£53k) with £78k, in 2025/26 (£54k) with £79k, and in 2026/27 (£55k) with £80k; and to subsequently on p. 275 of the electronic agenda pack, in Resilient Communities, under Borders Events Strategy, to reduce the amount in 2022/23 from £500k to £375k, and to reduce the amount in 2023/24 from (£500k) to (£375k)”

- 11.5 Members spoke in support and against the budget proposals and the amendments detailed above. Councillor Haslam asked Councillor Robson if he would withdraw his amendment on the basis that the Administration would find the funding to implement his request. Councillor Robson accepted that undertaking and withdrew his amendment. Following a lengthy discussion, votes were taken on the amendments detailed above as follows:-.

VOTES

Amendment (a) – Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Thornton Nicol:-
Budget - 22
Amendment - 10

The amendment accordingly fell.

Amendment (b) – Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor H. Anderson:-

Budget - 21
Amendment - 10
Abstention - 1

The amendment accordingly fell.

Amendment (c) – Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor H. Anderson:-

Budget - 22
Amendment - 10

The amendment accordingly fell.

DECISION

DECIDED:-

- (a) to approve the Administrations financial plans from 2022/23 for revenue and capital set out in the Motion above and in Appendix 1 to this Minute in the Minute Book;**
- (b) the Council Tax charges to be paid in financial year 2022/23, from 1 April 2022 in respect of all chargeable dwellings in the Scottish Borders for Council Tax Bands A – H, as set out in the table below, with a Band D equivalent of £1,291.53;**

Scottish Borders Council Tax applicable Charges from April 1 2022:

Council Tax Band	Applicable Annual Charge Per property £
A	861.02
B	1,004.52
C	1,148.03
D	1,291.53
E	1,696.93
F	2,098.74
G	2,529.25
H	3,164.25

- (c) to note a one off reduction of £150 to be applied to each household Council tax bill in bands A-D utilising funding made available by the Scottish Government through the Barnett Formula, more than offsetting the 3% increase for those bands;**
- (d) to note that a one off reduction of £150 would also be also applied to all those households eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to help with the cost of living, when confirmation of scheme eligibility was provided by the Scottish Government;**
- (e) to approve the Fees and Charges for Council services applicable from 1 April 2022 set out in the papers accompanying the Motion; and**
- (f) to request that the Chief Executive bring forward a report to Members within 6 months setting out the next phase of the Inspire learning programme including the potential for developing eSports provision in all secondary schools.**

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Weatherston took the Chair to allow Councillor Parker to join the debate on the following item of business.

12. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/29 INVESTMENT IN PLAY AREAS AND OUTDOOR COMMUNITY SPACES**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Infrastructure and Environment setting out proposed priorities for delivery of investment in play areas and outdoor community spaces across the Borders for 2022-2029, building on the strategic investment programme approved in 2018. This report also proposed the establishment of an Elected Members Reference Group to oversee delivery. The 2022/23 Capital Investment Plan, which had been approved as part of Item 11 above, included funding of £4.048m into Play Areas and Outdoor Community Spaces. This investment aimed to improve community wellbeing and enhance outdoor activity opportunities for all ages. With the programme of original commitments nearing completion, a further programme of prioritisation for investment was now required. On that basis Officers had met with Ward Members to review future priorities for investment and, taking this into account, had prepared a proposed programme for investment over the next seven years. Parks & Environment would work with colleagues in the Communities and Partnerships Team to undertake local community engagement at the development stage throughout the investment programme in relation to the Council's Participatory Budgeting commitment. Councillor Parker, seconded by Councillor Fullarton, moved the recommendations with an amendment that Area Partnerships appoint representatives to the Members Reference Group. Councillor H. Anderson, seconded by Councillor Thornton-Nicol, moved as an amendment to add a recommendation "Agrees to delegate authority to each Area Partnership to support the delivery and ongoing review of the proposed programme for their area. It is proposed that local area members and officers work closely with Area Partnerships on the development and oversight of these programmes." Councillor Parker asked if Councillor Anderson would withdraw her amendment if he gave an undertaking that the Working Group would engage with Area Partnerships and she agreed. Members welcomed the report and highlighted the importance of outdoor play for children.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to approve the proposed programme of work set out in Appendix A to the report;
- (b) to approve the establishment of a Members Reference Group to support the delivery and ongoing review of the proposed programme and that each Area Partnership would appoint a Members to that Group;
- (c) that the Members Reference Group would engage with all Area Partnerships; and
- (d) that recommendations on future changes to this programme would be highlighted as part of the established Financial Monitoring process to the Executive Committee.

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Parker resumed as Chair of the meeting.

MEMBERS

Councillor Marshall and McAteer left the meeting.

13. **URGENT BUSINESS**

Under Section 50B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Chairman was of the opinion that the item dealt with in the following paragraph should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, in view of the need to make an early decision or to keep Members informed.

14. **PRIVATE BUSINESS**

DECISION

AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in

the Appendix to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

15. MOTION BY COUNCILLOR ROWLEY

Council approved a motion by Councillor Rowley relating to Member appointments.

The meeting concluded at 3.45 p.m.

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
22 FEBRUARY 2022
APPENDIX
BUSINESS CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

15. MOTION BY COUNCILLOR ROWLEY

15.1 The Convener advised that he had allowed this Motion to be considered as urgent and in private as Councillor Rowley had a new job which caused a conflict with his current role. However, this appointment had not yet been announced by his new employer.

15.2 Councillor Rowley, seconded by Councillor Haslam, moved the following Motion:-

“That Scottish Borders Council agrees –

- (a) To transfer Economic Regeneration from the Leader’s portfolio to a new Executive Portfolio for Economic Regeneration and appoint Councillor Scott Hamilton to that post. That new portfolio shall include responsibility for Economic Development, Regeneration, Tourism, Inward Investment and Broadband & Digital Connectivity;
- (b) That the Executive Portfolio for Transformation & Service Improvement is discontinued and the transformation & service improvement responsibilities are moved to the Leader’s portfolio;
- (c) That Councillor Scott Hamilton is appointed to the Regional Economic Partnership in place of Councillor Rowley; and
- (d) Authority is given to the Leader to nominate substitute Councillors to represent the Council at the Convention of the South of Scotland, should the Leader or the Executive Member for Finance & Budget Oversight be unavailable to attend.”

15.3 Councillor Rowley spoke in support of his Motion. A number of Members expressed concern that they had not been made aware of this matter in advance of the meeting and Councillor Edgar, seconded by Councillor Paterson, moved that no action be taken. Following further discussion it was agreed that there be a short adjournment to allow each Group to discuss the matter out-with the meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3.10 p.m. and reconvened at 3.25 p.m.

MEMBER

Councillor Aitchison did not re-join the meeting.

15.4 The Chief Legal Officer explained the implications of each part of the Motion and the resultant difficulties for Councillor Rowley if it was not approved. Councillor Haslam highlighted the fact that if the Motion was not approved the Council would not be represented at the Convention of South of Scotland meeting on Monday which was not a position that the Council should be in. Councillor Edgar agreed to withdraw his amendment and it was agreed that the Motion would be approved.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Motion by Councillor Rowley as detailed in paragraph 15.2 above.