

Committee: Development Control and Licensing

Date: 13 January 2003

Agenda Item No: 7

Title: Budgets and Service Plans 2003-04

Author: John Dickson (01799) 510300
Nick Harris (01799 510313)

Summary

- 1 This report presents the draft revenue estimates for final consideration by this Committee. The detailed figures attached now include savings and growth items approved at the previous meeting on 13 November 2002, internal charges and developments since 13 November. The figures are subject to final checks for consistency and accuracy and do not include the implications of any new capital programme items or the impact on internal charges of any growth or savings. The Committee is asked to reconsider these estimates including identifying further savings before their inclusion in the overall budget report to the Resources Committee on 23 January 2003. Also included are the key points of the Service Plan for 2003-04

Background

- 2 At its meeting on 13 November 2002 this Committee considered its draft 2003-04 revenue estimates for the first time. The detailed figures provided at that stage included direct costs only i.e. excluding internal charges. The Committee was requested to consider its budgets in the light of the projected direct cost total that it approved at its meeting on 23 September 2002 together with a further savings target of £50,000 approved by Council on 22 October 2002.
- 3 The figures presented to the Committee on 13 November were less than the total projected (including the £50,000 savings target) in September by a margin of some £11,000.
- 4 After considering the report it was resolved that:

- The Committee notes that its agreed target position had been met

It was further RECOMMENDED

- That the Committee makes no changes with regard to the draft net direct cost budgets and the matters contained in paragraph 13 (a)-(c), and

- Officers be directed to prepare service plans for 2003-04 and full budgets, for consideration at the next cycle of committee meetings.

Developments Since 13 November

6. At its meeting on 21 November the Resources Committee recommended that further savings and additional income be sought from the Environment and Transport and Community and Leisure Committees in order to meet their cash savings targets agreed at the meeting of the Council on 22 October 2002, to help to achieve the Council's agreed priority of keeping the increase of Council Tax at a sustainable level. The Resources Committee also recommended that before the next Development Control and Licensing Committee officers continue to review the financial implications of the Planning Department restructuring. A report on this matter will be presented to the meeting of this Committee on 3 February unless Members consider that a special meeting might be beneficial. These decisions were endorsed by the Council meeting on 17 December following consideration of the Director of Resources report.
7. The Council's overall 2003-04 budget position reported to the Resources Committee on 21 November identified just £29,000 as room for manoeuvre in the Council Tax setting process subject to the Local Government grant settlement. On 5 December the provisional settlement was announced and increased the sum available for manoeuvre to £74,000. There is however, still a shortfall of £144,000 compared with the overall total target to achieve a Council Tax increase of 2.5% approved by Council on 22 October.
8. Provision of £7,880 in 2002-03 and £47,050 in 2003-04 is now included in respect of the additional travel costs and disturbance payments payable to staff relocating from Great Dunmow to Saffron Walden. These payments will be met from reserves and are not included for the purposes of comparison with the target.
9. A minor correction in respect of Development Control income in 2002-03 resulting in an addition to direct costs of £2,810 is now included.
10. A saving of £54,830 resulting from the early retirement of two staff has been included in the 2003/04 Estimates. The savings are included net of 'acting up' payments to remaining staff and the employment of a temporary resource.
11. No further savings, growth items or other changes for this Committee have been identified at this stage.

Summary of the Current 2003-04 Budget Position

12. This Committee's direct cost budget for comparison with the target purposes of £336,000 (£388,000 approved at the meeting on 13 November less savings arising from the early retirements plus the Development Control correction) is £63,000 below the target.

Service Plan

The main points are summarised as follows:

- Introducing document imaging
- Developing the Planning Website.
- Restarting the Planning Services Best Value Review
- Settling in after the move to Saffron Walden and maintaining a service from Great Dunmow.
- Responding to the Council requirement to restructure the Planning Department and to make savings of £50,000.
- Continuing to improve delegation arrangements.
- Improving performance

The Next Step

13. The budgets approved by this Committee will be summarised with the budgets of the other Committees in a report to the Resources Committee on 23 January. This report will include “below the line items” such as investment income and pension backdating costs. It will also make recommendations to the Council regarding the Council Tax.
14. This is the final opportunity for this Committee to consider its draft revenue estimates that now include everything identified to date. It is

RECOMMENDED that the Committee reconsider the draft revenue estimates before recommending them for inclusion in the overall budget to the Resources Committee on 23 January 2003.

Background Papers: None