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CABINET

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To: Councillors Bailey, Barkley (Deputy Leader), Bokor, Harper-Davies, Mercer, Morgan (Leader), Poland, Rattray, Rollings and Smidowicz (for attention)

All other members of the Council
(for information)

You are requested to attend the meeting of the Cabinet to be held in Virtual Meeting - Zoom on Thursday, 11th February 2021 at 6.00 pm for the following business.

Chief Executive

Southfields
Loughborough

29th January 2021

BACKGROUND PAPERS

7. 2021-22 GENERAL FUND AND HRA REVENUE BUDGETS AND COUNCIL TAX AND MTFS 2021-24

2 - 11

A report of the Head of Financial Services.

Key Decision

Are you responding as a:	Please leave your comment below.
Response	Open-Ended Response
Charnwood resident	I am disappointed with the plans laid out. The regeneration of wards end I feel is a vanity project that serves the friends of councillors and not the people of charnwood borough. I am outraged that it has been considered to essentially give the mayor a lovely electric vehicle from taxpayers money. Of this is normal i still find it bloody ridiculous. Not only is it a waste of money on an individual (not a collective), buying a new electric car to save the planet is retarded and the sort of plan that someone who hasn't done research would come up. The best thing for the planet, emissions wise, is to buy a small engine second hand petrol car. New electric cars are a bigger burden upon the environment than prebuilt petrol engine cars. A final note, as I was involved in the town deal process (indoor skatepark) I am appalled that £2.6million being spent on a new pavement. The rationale behind this is to draw visitors in. With nothing to draw people to Loughborough, this will do nothing but worsen the impact of Corona virus on already struggling businesses. When I threw a ballpark figure of less than half of this to create a world class indoor skatepark, I was laughed out. And yet that proposal would do more for this county than any pavement ever could. Very upset by the news on how to town deal fund has been allocated
Charnwood resident	I note the current list of potential savings, in several cases a matter of a few thousand pounds. Can I suggest that to avoid having to make these savings, the council looks again at the plan to remove/ respite/ reduce the size of the MUGA on the Nanoantan Soorts ground car park area. The cost is apparently 50- 60k. in order to create a few extra car parking spaces. This is a ridiculous waste of public money which has not been properly publicised to the general public. I would ask the council to look at this again. In times of hardship for the future re spending and cutbacks, I look forward to the Councils response.
Charnwood resident	We are currently in difficult times of hardship for many residents caused by the Covid problem. Charnwood need to reflect this in the budget and reduce it and then swing the axe at what is left. It is rude for the council to expect people who have lost income, jobs and loved ones, to have to pay an even larger percentage of their, limited income to support the Council.
Charnwood resident	I oppose the closing of Biggin St Public Convenience as we should encourage footfall to shopping areas, and we are a civilised nation. I would question the economics of changing the maoral car to electric. What is the payback time. Consider Hydrogen fuel via our own Intelligent Energy involvementbin some way.

Charnwood resident

As a resident of Birstall I cannot find any indication in the budget proposal as to how any part of my council tax will be used in my location, however I would like to comment as follows: While it may seem a simple matter to go an additional 250 yds to an alternative toilet, this would be sufficient to deter many users (including myself) from visiting the town centre and as usual would mean relying on commercial properties (cafes etc) to provide toilet facilities. Too great a reliance is placed on cctv to police areas when it is so difficult to identify culprits who are well aware of their location and how to avoid detection. The reduction in community grants can only be seen as a detrimental move when you should be encouraging integration and community cohesion for disadvantaged groups. The change of the mayor's car to electrically powered, while it may be marginally cheaper than the current vehicle, will most likely have a larger "whole life" carbon footprint than the exiting vehicle. I cannot understand why the Shelthorpe Golf Course is run at a loss - surely the course and academy fees should aim to recover all expenses. Likewise the allotments should be priced to be cost neutral rather than as a charge on the general population.

Charnwood resident

Agree all measures suggested apart from Closure of Biggin Street toilets, maybe conversion to charging a fee would be appropriate, also defer update to electric vehicle for official car, not essential at this time I feel? Thanks

Charnwood resident

I am angry and disappointed that despite spending 2.6 million pounds on the pointless redevelopment of Devonshire Square, you cannot keep all the public toilets open or make them free of charge. I know from attending your Loughborough area meetings that they cost about £80,000 to run. Making them free will cost about £40,000 per year but the £2.6 million would have paid for free toilets for 65 years! Secondly, we all know that the carrier bag charge of 10p has been very successful. People really hate irritating little charges. They go out of their way to avoid them. What makes you think that people will avoid buying carrier bags but will not avoid Loughborough town centre? I avoid spending time in the town centre. I go in, get what I need and get out again as fast as possible. I move as much of my shopping as possible to supermarkets or online. Thirdly, with an aging population, you need to realise that we feel the call of nature more often. Note that the cheapest incontinence products are about the same price as a visit to your wretched toilets. If people choose to use incontinence products instead, then you and we as taxpayers will pick up the bill in landfill tax instead. The toilet charges are a complete false economy.

Charnwood resident

Why do you charge heavy council rate for thurmaston and loughborough. do nothing for residence only your interest is in

Charnwood resident

Well done on your draft budget. In these unprecedented times it's inevitable that costs will rise

Charnwood resident	Why does the Mayor need his/her own car? Surely it would be more prudent for this person to use their own vehicle and be paid an allowance for doing so. We are all having to make sacrifices and the Council should lead by example and scrap this luxury. Electric vehicles are the way forward but the initial outlay, cost of running and upkeep is not justified. Presumably this car is only used for Mayoral duties so not sure how the Council can warrant such expense.
Charnwood resident	What car does the Mayor use now? What would the replacement cost? How long would it take to offset the cost? Batteries do not last long. How long would the car be kept? We already pay too much for garden waste removal. Lower this cost £5 per month. Close the public toilets - all of them. Reduce the Council Tax by 10%. We are already paying way too much. Cut middle and senior management. Let the people that know what they are doing do their jobs. I have never been to the museum, and never will. Close it.
Charnwood resident	-Reduction in grants agreed. -Public toilets at Biggin Street should remain open, there are never enough public toilets! - Standardise Charnwood Museum opening times agreed. -The Mayor should not have the use of a leased vehicle. Rent a vehicle as and when necessary or pay mileage for using own vehicle. - No increase in the garden waste collection should take place this year. This could lead to people dumping the waste similar to what is already happening with other waste because you cannot be bothered to collect it.
Charnwood resident	I disagree with replacing the Mayor's vehicle with an electric one. It would take years to balance out the capital cost of the outlay. All the other proposals are fine.
Charnwood resident	All these proposals sound good to me
Charnwood resident	I have no problem with most of the budget but I do think that closing toilets is not a good idea. There are a lot of elderly and disabled people who need these facilities and 20,000 is a minimum sum we should be spending on public facilities.
Charnwood resident	I approve of all the budget except the increase in the garden waste service. That service has been one of the 1st to be curtailed in the last year. Yes that is not unreasonable as it is less essential than some other things but I feel that it would be fairer to not increase the price to compensate us regular users for the inconvenience we have suffered. Perhaps you could charge New users the increase & let us have another year at the same price. or go onto a token system where we are only charged for each emptying.
Charnwood resident	Seems OK.
Charnwood resident	I support reducing community grants to £50,000 and increasing the garden waste service charge by £1 to £41 if paid by direct debit.

- Charnwood resident Community grants will be key for helping those who have been adversely affected by the pandemic so I don't believe that should be cut, perhaps the requirements to be eligible could be reviewed. Toilets at Market Place need to be open later than 5pm to allow for extended shopping times and need to be fully reopened once people start visiting the town centre again. It mentions a saving of £20,000 by combining the facilities but you'll lose £18,000 in income from the Biggin Street facilities, so is it worth it for £2,000? What do you propose happens to the Biggin Street facilities? If you do nothing but it remains in your portfolio you are still liable for maintenance costs and costs associated with ensuring compliance re legionella etc. You highlight the saving of £2000 on fuel by purchasing an electric mayoral car, why does this car need replacing? The cost of an electric car are higher than a non-electric car and they require infrastructure to enable the charging of the car so unless you are making use of existing infrastructure I wouldn't support this.
- Charnwood resident Do not reduce community grants . Simply because the organisations bid for the grants does not mean they are less important, a competitive bidding process where some will miss out could indicate that more funding is required, not less.
- Charnwood resident I'm happy with the proposals
Charnwood resident The cost of the garden waste scheme is high enough already. There have been significant increases to this over the years and it wasn't maintained (understandably) during lockdown. But asking for an increase again is heading towards the level people will stop using it. Aren't we supposed to be encouraging good garden maintenance and green recycling? Other council areas don't even charge for this service.
- Charnwood resident As per normal Charnwood are reducing or charging more for services they were unable to keep up through 2020. Closing Toilets puts pressure on the elderly and shops to provide a service that should be provided by Charnwood. Charging extra for garden waste is a joke considering the lost collections we have had to suffer in the past. It may well save money to get the mayor to ride around in an all electric car but how much is the car going to cost. Even more money being wasted on hairbrain ideas. I do not agree with any of the draft proposals. My personal thoughts are that come the day of pay rises, that they will go straight through.
- Charnwood resident I am not in agreement with the public toilets on Biggin Street being closed permanent. The ones in the market place are very small and at least one toilet is usually out of order. It is no use spending money on the Devonshire Square area of town and letting the rest of the amenities in the centre be almost nonexistent.
- Charnwood resident Scrap new car idea for the Mayor and keep, the one the Mayor has at the moment.

- Charnwood resident I support your proposed changes and have two points. [1] I plead with you to help protect and preserve this wonderful area by employing enough planning officers. They appear to be under siege all the time, and yet without them, we risk losing so much of what makes this area a special place. [2] is about investment. Rather than in commercial property I would urge you to invest in housing. Developers are not building enough, and not enough lower cost housing. Other DCs have set up building companies and this would generate income for you, and help to replace all the housing you have lost.
- Charnwood resident I agree with these proposals.
- Charnwood resident The government has set tree planting targets which are not being met. Charnwood should not reduce its budget allocation for this essential endeavour. Consider means to generate the proposed shortfall in funding by other means, an appeal, a one off levy on band E and above, etc. The importance of planting additional trees cannot be overstated for many reasons not least because Charnwood's ash trees are under attack from *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* (ash dieback).
- Charnwood resident Public toilets should not be closed. When you are a OAP or have a small child you cannot walk a distance quickly. You might consider its not far from the one remaining toilet but it is in your time of need. It is not fair that you have to use a toilet in a shop. If you want more people to shop in Loughborough don't consider closing any. toilets, if anything they should open every day not restricted hrs.
- Charnwood resident I am nervous about the plan to increase investment in Commercial Property. Sounds good whilst you can borrow at very low interest rates, but how long will that situation remain?
- Charnwood resident While recognising the current pressures faced by the council, I feel that it is short sighted to reduce Community Grants. Many Voluntary Organisations have been hit even harder than the Council and reducing grant aid could cause some to collapse, leaving the Council to provide the services lost, for many years into the future. Also, any staff declared redundant would claim jobseekers allowance and still be a cost to the public purse overall. As a partial offset, speaking as a keen gardener who uses the garden waste service, I would not object to an increase to say £45, for the garden waste collection, roughly in line with inflation since 2018.

Charnwood resident

Firstly, Mayor's vehicle, not required at all. Other authorities have removed this privilege. Their own vehicle can be used or if non driver then public transport or a staff member from the Member Services side of things. Community grants reduction should be accepted in these times but maybe provide more support to organisations to make their own applications for funding to the plethora of trusts, national charities, community foundation(s) etc. Agree to increase in garden waste charge, and would suggest increase to £45 annually. If toilets are to stay closed a little bit of targeted engagement work with local food and alcohol premises to openly allow the most vulnerable to use facilities they have. Place a charge in council car parks on disability spaces. As a blue badge holder myself, a £1 charge for up to 3 hours parking would be easily agreeable. If you vcan afford to run a vehicle you can afford a quid for parking. The charge is for the convenience and high number of spaces - excellent parking facilities better than any other Borough locally.

Charnwood resident

I'm particularly pleased to see the plan to change the Mayor's vehicle to electric. I hope that the budget overall will aim to address climate emergency issues ... we all want to ensure there is a planet for our grandchildren to live in.

Charnwood resident

I do not wish to pay for the mayor's car at all. He should pay for his own as do the rest of us.

The mayor should pay for his own car!

Charnwood resident

I feel let down that once again our council tax is increasing without any real reward to residents. Our street lights are turned off earlier yet we have had led lights fitted now. We have had reduces service with waste being collected. During covid. You dont provide us with any extra bags for recycling our rubbish. Yet a fancy machine can we used to 'straighten' the lamp posts. Sometimes I feel let down by this council. If you want to create more income. Why don't you reduce staff expense allowances. You are saving money on the mayors car. Why do they even have a company car?. Surely there work is in charnwood. How would there mileage justify to a company car. The same would go for any other staff who have company cars within the council. Why do we have to pay for our garden waste to be collected when other Leicestershire based authorities such as north west leicestershire do not pay. Hinckley do not pay. We have so many student housing in our town, which is seem to love granting planning permission for, these people should also have to pay towards living in our town and also the landlords when it comes to clearing up after them. Why do we have to pay all the time. Our income does not increase to support all your increases. The cost of living is hard enough.

Charnwood resident

Residents' Virtual Chat December 15

5 men / 2 women

6 white 1 BAME

Age range 45 +

All sourced via email alerts, hence some comms responses

Views have to be considered against the demographic of the group

COMMENTS

Do you have any initial views on the draft budget or Council's financial position?

You don't really seem to have much room to manoeuvre, if you're down to cutting toilets there can't be much more to reduce

Jobs must be protected and cutting them must be a last resort

You need to look at alternative ways to generate income and you are already doing this with your commercial interests. Hopefully we will be back into some sort of normal situation next year and your income through car parks etc will start to return

I'm absolutely stunned to learn that you only receive £126 a year (Band D) from Council Tax and deliver all that you do. I understand you are limited by how much you can increase CT so when you say you are planning to increase the fantastic brown bin service by a £1, part of me feels like saying make it a tenner.

I think we must look after the most vulnerable and that may mean those of us who are fortunate to be better off may have to pay a bit more

You need to generate more money, that's clear

Why can't you organise more events in Loughborough to bring people to the town from Leicester/Nottingham/Derby

Other view: Difficult, and expensive, to get people to leave the cities

Closing toilets can put some people off from coming into town centres
(later accepted facilities would still be in town)

Summary: Overall the group was positive towards the council's proposed budget and financial position. They recognised the challenges and understood the rationale for the proposed savings. They were positive about generating income through commercial investment but noted that some other councils had invested in retail properties and had lost money. They were understanding that some of those investments were more about supporting town centres and CBC has not investing in retail. They were concerned about the low level of reserves. They felt the vulnerable and jobs should be protected. They had positive experiences when dealing with the Council on issues including recycling and cleansing, planning, council tax and environmental health. The group were also positive about the Council's communications, in particular the email alerts. They felt the emails could be more engaging at times and the Council needed to engage with a younger audience as well. They were not supportive of using more printed materials such as leaflets/magazines.

Could businesses be encouraged to open up their toilets a bit more, we may have to collaborate more in the future. The town hall used to have their toilets open to people

Pleased to see the Mayor's car is going electric and sets an example

Mayor's car – no brainer

How much revenue does the Biggin Street toilet bring in, has that been factored in?

I never carry cash, if there was a contactless element would it be used more (*and generate more income was the inference I think*)

You don't have a lot of reserves

What do you think the Council's priorities should be?

Keep jobs going as much as you can until things return to something like normal

Services for the vulnerable

Look at what you can do for young people, youth clubs have been cut and a lot of normal things have been affected by the pandemic

Does the Council provide value for money

Difficult to say as I have not accessed all your services and this group may not be representative enough to comment on some services, but from the ones I have used, recycling and leisure facilities, I would say it does provide value for money. A guarded yes.

Difficult to say but from the services I have accessed in terms of planning and environmental health then yes it does offer value for money. My concern is the reserves, I am presuming your finance officers have a plan on how to eek out reserves for as long as possible.

I am not a fan of using organisations like Capita (*This may have been more about using consultants rather than contracts*)

I've used planning and recycling and the lady from recycling was incredibly helpful and made it really clear what can and can't be recycled, I don't understand why it's not clearer and may that's something you could communicate better.

The street cleaners and people who empty the bins are great and when I see them and say hello they are always really polite and friendly

I used to work at the university and I dealt with council tax officers. They were always very friendly and helpful, willing to meet and talk things through

Queen's Park is beautiful

What do you think of the Council's communications?

Very good x 7

The emails are great, plenty of topics and of interest

Emails - Sometimes you have to convey fairly mundane information but there are many things of interest

Emails - It makes it easy to follow what's happening

I have found the emails really useful during Covid and better than the national information as it's summarised well and localised

Covid information has been very quick on emails

I look at the website

The emails are very good but I would like them to be more engaging, maybe by asking for my opinion on things

Maybe they could tell us what's coming up in the next few months and ask what the priority should be

Can you engage more with younger people

Can you place more advertisement boards in places

I get my news from emails and the Echo

I don't know anyone who reads the Echo or Mercury anymore

Should the Council be using more printed materials?

I would want to opt out, I just put everything that comes through the door in the bin

More emails, less printed materials

If you do send something out, make it one page, bullet points, anything longer and people won't read

If you spent money on asking people if they wanted to opt out of printed materials, it would probably save money in the long term

My local councillors write something in the local magazine which is very good

Use the local magazines to get your message out, products in local shops
(instead of printing things)

Q from Mike: What about asking people to opt-in?

How would you do that

it would be better than sending something to all homes if they don't want it and won't read it

Other comments

I think the University owes the town an awful lot and the Council should look to build relationships, particularly as a new Vice Chancellor is due to be appointed.