

56/08 (7) - **Information Technology and Development Business Unit:** The Cabinet Member (Finance and Resources) was invited to present the budget. The Cabinet Member outlined the approach taken to the budget and advised that there were no growth items. He advised that major variations for 2009/10 included a reduction in Development Fund spending of £183,000 and a reduction in the transfer from reserves (mainly for staff costs) of £36,000. There was a £153,000 net reduction to rechargeable accounts mainly due to reduced Development spend and several minor changes in controllable and additional expenditure. Cash efficiency savings of £19,000 had been achieved through the reduction in the annual contribution to the ITD Development reserve and the Cabinet Member concluded by explaining in detail the main risks to the budget, as listed in section 11 of the report.

Questions were then invited and the Head of Information Technology and Development (ITD) responded to comments over the risks to the budget and, in particular, the current level of reserves which would fund essential developments in the short and medium term and upgrades to fundamental systems such as the Windows Operating System and Microsoft Office. He emphasised that the ITD Reserve was used to support a network of approximately 1,000 users, 35 separate sites and in excess of 200 different operations. He added that a healthy reserve was vital to fund necessary upgrades and replacements, improvements and the necessity to meet increasingly stringent government requirements.

Members also commented upon the need for basic Member IT training and general support offered to them in that area and it was **agreed** that this would be progressed. The high turnover of staff was also discussed and the Head of ITD advised that there were currently two vacant posts and stated that high staff turnover had been a problem for a number of years due to the competition in this field, in particular with the development of Leeds as a major IT centre. However, he was hoping that the current economic situation would help the Council to attract new staff due to the job security provided by a local authority.

The Head of ITD responded to a number of questions concerning the use of alternative Office software packages, the skill levels of staff and apprentice schemes, access to the internet in rural areas, computers/laptops within the Council and the policy for replacement. It was also **agreed** that Councillor Willoughby would be invited to visit the ITD section.

RESOLVED:

That Members noted the budget.

(Six Members voted for the motion and there were three abstentions)

(7.05 pm - 7.40 pm)