

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 28 January 2019

Attendance:

Councillors
Learney (Chairman)

Stallard
Clear
Cunningham
Gemmell
McLean

Thompson
Tod
Weston
Lumby

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Horrill (Leader) and Ashton (Portfolio Holder for Finance).

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Godfrey (Portfolio Holder for Professional Services) and Weir

Deputy Members:

Councillor Hiscock (Standing Deputy for Councillor Evans)

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Evans

1. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Hiscock, Stallard and Tod all declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in relation to various matters on the agenda due to their role as County Councillors having been involved in discussions thereon.

In addition, Councillor Tod declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of any discussions regarding health and equalities having attended the National Cardiovascular Disease Prevention System Leadership Forum.

Councillor Stallard also declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of any discussions regarding health and wellbeing due to her role as HCC Executive Member responsible for Public Health.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2018 and the minutes of the additional meeting held on 13 December 2018 (less exempt minute), be approved and adopted.

3. **TO NOTE THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19 AND THE FORWARD PLAN FOR FEBRUARY 2019**

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2018/19 and Forward Plan for February 2019, be noted

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No comments or questions were made during public participation.

5. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

(Report OS217 refers)

In advance of the Committee's consideration of agenda items below, Councillor Ashton gave presentation on the background to the Council's Financial Management arrangements for 2019/20, highlighting the financial context for the forthcoming year and going forward. The presentation is included as an **appendix** to the Minutes.

The Strategic Director: Resources introduced the Report and its appendices and together with the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ashton, they responded to detailed questions. In summary, the following matters were raised by the Committee:

- (i) In respect of questions in relation to Outcome Based Budgeting, the Strategic Director: Resources clarified that the outcomes would be incorporated as well as the efficiency planned measures, as set out in paragraph 11 of the report;
- (ii) Councillor Ashton reported that savings targets would be reviewed as the need arose with the view to continuing long term savings plans to meet the long term challenge. In addition, it was highlighted that the revenue grant was not in a negative position and that funds were more than sufficient to meet the deficits on paper;
- (iii) In response to questions regarding the certainty of the plan, it was reported that the plan was robust. In addition, it was noted that the new homes bonus was higher than forecast in 2019/20 and a full range of savings options would be explored including rent reviews, capital programme and the transformation programme in order to achieve a balanced position going forward;

- (iv) The Strategic Director: Resources reported that the asset challenge was underway with a further three months set in which to conclude the process;
- (v) Transformation Programme – it was reported that a customer smart process had been proposed whereby the Council would assess all its services over a period of the next two years. It was anticipated that this would be shaped and driven internally, with the support of IESE to achieve improved services; and
- (vi) Scenario Planning – The Strategic Director: Resources clarified that the plan incorporated the best expected cost estimations for the Environmental Services Waste Contract and the Winchester Sport and Leisure Centre Project, as indicated in the general fund and set out in Appendix C of Report OS218 (General Fund Budget 2019/20), also due for consideration at the meeting.

During discussion, several Members referred to the need to define spending on the Council Strategy and expressed views that the Council should have a clearer and more detailed plan going forward (at least the next four years) of its capital expenditure forecast, particularly looking at the bigger financial challenges the Council faces and the options available to be explored which should be given further consideration.

At the conclusion of questions and debate, the Committee welcomed clarification of the Council's financial position as presented by the Portfolio Holder and also the format of the Committee's report.

RESOLVED:

That the Portfolio Holder notes the comments of the Committee but that no items of significance to be drawn to the attention of Cabinet.

6. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2019/20**
(OS218)

(Report OS218 refers)

Councillor Ashton introduced the Report and its appendices which set out the detailed known income sources for 2019/20, ahead of the anticipated local government finance settlement and together with the other officers present, they responded to detailed questions. These included questions related to the freeze to the Council's Council Tax precept for 2019/20, the timescale for transformation programme savings, car parking income, the prudent management of reserves and current progress of the St Maurice's Covert project.

At the conclusion of questions and debate, the Committee welcomed the presentation of the report and agreed that there were no particular matters that it wished to raise for Cabinet to further consider.

RESOLVED:

That the General Fund Budget 2019/20 report be noted.

7. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2019/20 AND BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2049**

(Report OS219 refers)

Councillor Horrill introduced the Report and its appendices and together with the officers present, they responded to detailed questions. These included questions related to the turnover of void properties, opportunities that exist for housing and providing alternative storage to tenant's, housing issues in rural locations as well as urban areas and increases to the number of Council houses coming forward.

At the conclusion of questions and debate, the Committee thanked officers for their continued excellent management of the Council's Landlord service and the Housing Revenue Account. Members also welcomed the ongoing commitment to the new homes programme. The Committee agreed that land availability should be added to the Risk Register going forward but had no particular matters that it wished to raise for Cabinet to further consider.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2019/20 and Business Plan 2019/2049 report be noted.

8. **Q3 FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

(Report OS216 refers)

Councillor Horrill introduced the Report and together with the other members of Cabinet and officers present, they responded to detailed questions. The report set out an increase in underspend, an update on the aims and objectives of the Council Strategy and the Council's major projects, the financial position and corporate health performance indicators. In summary, the following matters were raised by the Committee:

- (i) The timetable for the Central Winchester Regeneration project;
- (ii) The Economic Strategy – dependant on what happens as a result of Brexit;
- (iii) Changes to measures within the Council Strategy for 2019/20;
- (iv) Revisions required to the recording of the Strategic Asset Purchase programme to reflect that this is not a negative indicator;

- (v) The timetable for the consideration of establishing a Housing Company – the intentions and challenges;
- (vi) Improving the health and happiness of the community – was it measuring and targeting support in areas of deprivation and for vulnerable groups; and
- (vii) The actions towards achieving a Lower Carbon Council – the Chief Executive clarified that this would be led by one of the Corporate Heads with the appointment of sustainability officer to focus on this matter going forward;

Following debate, the Committee continued to welcome the improvements to the Report's format as information was clear, concise and more readily reviewable.

In conclusion, the Committee agreed that the Council review how it records health outcomes in relation to inequalities.

RESOLVED:

That the Leader and other relevant Portfolio Holders notes the comments of the Committee and that, other than the matter set out above, no items of significance to be drawn to the attention of Cabinet.

9. **EXEMPT BUSINESS: TO CONSIDER WHETHER IN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE THE PUBLIC INTEREST IN MAINTAINING THE EXEMPTION OUTWEIGHS THE PUBLIC INTEREST IN DISCLOSING THE INFORMATION.**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
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