

THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7 February 2023

Attendance:

Councillors
Brook (Chairperson)

Horrill
Cramoysan
Craske

Cutler
Westwood
Godfrey

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Laming

Deputy Members:

Councillor Rutter (as deputy for Councillor Laming)

Other members in attendance:

Councillor(s) Becker, Ferguson, Learney, Porter, Power, Tod and Wallace

[Audio and video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Horrill declared an interest in agenda item 6, Community Safety Partnership Performance Review as her husband was a board member of Trinity Winchester.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements were made.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 23 NOVEMBER 2022**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 November 2022 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr David Light, on behalf of Tenants and Council Together (TACT), addressed the committee regarding agenda item 7, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2023/24. He advised that TACT had met to discuss the budget proposals and the majority of TACT members had supported a 7% rise in rents, they also welcomed that this would equally apply to shared ownership properties.

Councillor Malcolm Wallace addressed the committee regarding agenda item 6 (Community Safety Partnership Performance Review), agenda item 8 (General Fund Budget 2023/24) and agenda item 9 (Capital Investment Strategy 2022-2032) and raised the following matters:

Community Safety Partnership Performance Review

Councillor Wallace sought clarification regarding the source of funding for the city councils Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Team, which was responded to by Gillian Knight, Corporate Head of Housing.

General Fund Budget 2023/24

Councillor Wallace raised four points, as summarised below.

1. Regarding the proposal for a “Greener Faster” reserve, he advised that he supported the additional funding but had concerns that it focused on reducing the council's carbon footprint rather than applying the funding to district-wide initiatives which would have a bigger impact.
2. Regarding regeneration funding, he was concerned about the proposal to approve £300,000 for the Central Winchester Regeneration and Station Approach projects without a suitable business case. He felt it vital that before the release of any funds it was important to understand whether the project was on schedule, on budget and delivering as expected.
3. Regarding the proposal concerning council staff pay, Councillor Wallace questioned whether it was appropriate to uplift all grades or if it should be limited to lower-graded roles.
4. Regarding the funding of various council services and activities for the city area of the district, Councillor Wallace sought further clarification on how these were funded and how that compared to the funding of similar services or activities in parished areas.

These points were responded to by Councillor Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management, and Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value.

Capital Investment Strategy 2022-2032

Councillor Wallace raised two points as below.

1. Regarding Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funding, he questioned why £8.6m of CIL monies had been collected in the Southern Wards, but only £2.2m had been allocated to that area.
2. Regarding the General Fund Reserves, he advised that he had raised a question at the cabinet meeting in November 2022 regarding the reduction in the General Fund reserve from £38m in April 2022 to £25m in March 2024 and that he had not received a response and so wished to raise the matter again.

These points were responded to by Councillor Brook, Chairperson of Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management, and Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value, and Liz Keys, Corporate Head of Finance.

6. **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing introduced the report, reference SC081, [available here](#) and provided an overview of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), its priorities and the key areas of activity for the previous period.

Sandra Tuddenham, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Manager and Chief Inspector Jon Turton addressed the committee and invited questions on the report.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised:

1. The importance of the community safety partnership working effectively with the probation service with individuals released from prison.
2. Further information was sought regarding the processes adopted to understand what went had gone well and what had not gone well over the previous period.
3. Whether officers undertook school visits and the effectiveness of these?
4. Regarding the late-night economy, what the council could do to improve its operation.
5. Were there initiatives that the council could help with to improve the safety of the city?
6. Were there any specific measures that could be taken to reduce the number of assaults on emergency workers?
7. Had officers noticed any difference since the new accommodation had been taken on by Trinity Winchester?

These points were responded to by Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing, Chief Inspector Jon Turton, Sandra Tuddenham, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Manager, and Gillian Knight, Corporate Head of Housing accordingly and were noted by

Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing.

Members thanked officers and the Chief Inspector for their continued support.

RESOLVED

That the report was noted.

7. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET 2023/24**

Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing introduced the report, ref SC082 and CAB3387 which set out proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2023/24 which was available on the council's [website here](#).

The committee was recommended to comment on the proposals within the attached cabinet report, ref CAB3387 which was to be considered by the cabinet at its meeting on 9 February 2023.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report, in summary, the following matters were raised.

1. Further information was sought regarding the delivery of the new homes programme.
2. The issues and trade-offs around the setting of the rent cap and minimising additional hardship for tenants.
3. The number of residents needing to access the welfare support budget.
4. The availability of Government funding to support the council's retrofit programme.
5. The funding and capacity for nutrient mitigation & delivery of new homes.
6. Grant conditions for the provision of properties under the local authority housing fund.
7. Whether a rise in garage rents was anticipated.
8. The use of right to buy receipts.
9. Further clarification regarding the movement in the housing management special homelessness budget 2022/23 and 2023/24.
10. The need for additional communications regarding the availability of the welfare fund.
11. Clarification regarding the funding and future use of homes being used for displaced Ukrainian families.

These points were responded to by Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing, Gillian Knight, Corporate Head of Housing, Dick Johnson, Finance Manager: Housing, and Simon Hendey, Strategic Director accordingly and were noted by Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted
2. That officers note the two points of detail below:
 - That an amendment be made in paragraph 13.2, that it should read “E & D”
 - That an amendment be made to paragraph 12, that it should refer to paragraph 19.5
3. That the committee supported the proposal to maximise communications in newsletters etc to ensure tenants were aware of the support available.
4. That cabinet considers all the committee’s comments raised during the discussion of the item.

8. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2023/24**

Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value introduced the report, ref SC085 and CAB3388 which set out proposals for the General Fund Budget 2023/24, which was [available here](#).

The report recommended that the committee comment on the proposals within the cabinet report, ref, CAB3388 which was to be considered by the cabinet at its meeting on 9 February 2023.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report and in summary, questions relating to the following matters were raised.

1. The charging of staff time for the Winchester Town Forum account.
2. The ongoing support for the voluntary sector, currently drawn down from the homelessness reserve.
3. Further information was sought concerning carbon offsetting and the use of the Greener Faster fund.
4. Details of the regeneration investment profile.
5. Clarification regarding the proposed changes to staff pay scales.
6. The funding and implementation of improvements to the waste and recycling service
7. Understanding whether service contracts included the provision to lower charges.
8. The progress made in achieving the savings from the strategic budget review.
9. Further information regarding the proposals concerning regeneration project staff.
10. Further information to understand expected improvements as a result of the Greener Faster reserve.
11. Further details regarding the function and cost of the Bone store.

These points were responded to by Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value, Councillor Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management, Councillor Porter, Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan and Liz Keys, Corporate Head of Finance accordingly and were noted by Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted
2. That officers note the two points of detail below:
 - An amendment is required to page 102, paragraph 13.12 c, this should read "in" not "if".
 - An amendment is required in para 13.4, reference to appendix a should be appendix b.
3. That cabinet considers all the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

9. **CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2022-2032**

Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value; introduced the report, ref SC084 and CAB3389 which set out proposals for the Capital Investment Strategy 2022-2032, which was [available here](#).

The report recommended that the committee comment on the proposals within the attached cabinet report, ref CAB3389 which was to be considered by the cabinet at its meeting on 9 February 2023.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report in detail. In summary, questions relating to the following matters were raised.

1. The relationship between the raising of CIL monies and the resulting expenditure.
2. The reasons for the variance in general fund reserves.
3. The demolition costs related to the River Park Leisure Centre and the associated capital receipt.
4. The use and purpose of council assets as part of the Central Winchester Regeneration project and any implications to the council's revenue.
5. Clarification of the elements of the capital programme referred to in the chart on page 152 "General Fund Capital Programme Revenue Consequences"

These points were responded to by Councillor Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management, Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value, Liz Keys, Corporate Head of Finance, Laura Taylor, Chief Executive, and Neil Aitken, Service Lead – Finance accordingly and were noted by Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted
2. That cabinet considers all the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

10. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023/24**

Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value; introduced the report, ref SC083 and CAB3390 which set out the proposed treasury management strategy statement for 2023/24 and was available on the [council's website here](#).

The report recommended that the committee comment on the proposals within the attached cabinet report, ref CAB3390 which was to be considered by the cabinet at its meeting on 9 February 2023.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report in detail. In summary, questions relating to the following matters were raised.

1. Further information regarding the pooled property fund.
2. Clarification of the key principles of the investment strategy.
3. The benefit of members attending the annual Arlingclose briefing every year.

These points were responded to by Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value, Andrew Boutflower, Head of Borrowing and Investments, Hampshire County Council, and Neil Aitken, Service Lead – Finance accordingly and were noted by Councillor Power, Cabinet Member for Finance and Value.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted
2. That cabinet considers all the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

11. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23**

RESOLVED:

That the latest version of the work programme (which could be found here <https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/mgPlansHome.aspx?bcr=1>) be noted.

12. **TO NOTE THE LATEST FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The forward plan of key decisions for February 2023 was noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.20 pm

Chairperson