

BUDGET SCRUTINY

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Wednesday 30th May 2018 at 1400 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor S. Peake in the Chair

Councillors T. Alexander, A. Anderson, J.E. Bennett, R. Bowler, P.M. Bowmer, T. Cannon, J.A. Clifton, C.P. Cooper, P.A. Cooper, C.R. Moesby, K. Reid, J.E. Smith, P. Smith, R. Turner, K.F. Walker, D.S. Watson and J. Wilson

Officers:-

D. Clarke (Joint Head of Finance and Resources), J. Wilson (Scrutiny and Elections Officer) and A. Brownsword (Senior Governance Officer)

0039. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Barnes, G. Buxton, T. Connerton, M. Dixey, R.A. Heffer, A. Joesbury, S. Statter and E. Stevenson.

0040. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

0041. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

0042. MINUTES – 24TH JANUARY 2018

Moved by Councillor C.R. Moesby and seconded by Councillor R. Turner
RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Committee held on 24th January 2018 be approved as a true and correct record.

0043. UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS

1. Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee

The Chair of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee informed the meeting that the Committee would be continuing the work started last year and

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looking at elements of the Strategic Alliance and the Service Level Agreement for the Environmental Health section.

2. Healthy, Safe, Clean and Green Communities Scrutiny Committee

The Chair noted that the first meeting of the new Municipal Year had not yet taken place, but the possibilities for review included Mental Health Awareness, Open Water Safety and Perception of Young People.

3. Growth Scrutiny Committee

The Chair of the Growth Scrutiny Committee noted that it was hoped to concentrate on Income Generation and where income streams come from.

0044. BRIEFING ON THE SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer gave a presentation which gave Committee a briefing on the Select Committee Inquiry into the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The presentation gave details of:

- The Committee's Findings
- Government's Response
- Local Response

It was noted a total of 21 conclusions and recommendations had been approved by the Select Committee and the findings included:

- A suggestion for new guidance to be issued in relation to reporting arrangements; attendance by Executive Cllrs; access to information; parity with Cabinet; and involvement of the public
- Use of external expert advice
- Promoting the role of the public in Scrutiny
- Scrutinising all services to residents including those provided by public bodies and commercial organisations
- LEP Scrutiny
- Scrutiny of Combined Authorities e.g. Sheffield City Region
- Ensuring that existing resources and the role of the Scrutiny Officer are adequate

In their response the Government noted:

- Combined Authorities should consider the use of capacity building funding to support Scrutiny.
- Locally agreed solutions and structures were more appropriate than one standard approach mandated centrally.

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- New guidance would provide further clarity and this would be issued later in 2018.
- That the existing requirement for a Statutory Scrutiny Officer was sufficient and that local Councils were best placed to decide how best to resource the function.

Members noted that it was difficult to involve the public in scrutiny and that the Council needed to go out to the public, rather than the other way round. The Scrutiny and Elections Officer noted that involving the public needed to be more informal and the use of smaller rooms and the creation of witness guides should be considered.

Members also raised concerns regarding the attitude of officers to Scrutiny and the fact that it had been difficult to get certain officers to attend Scrutiny meetings in the past. The Scrutiny and Elections Officer noted that the Constitution required officers to attend if invited and to give Scrutiny equal weight to other Committees.

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer raised the issue of whether the reporting arrangements of Budget Scrutiny allowed enough information to be reported to Members. It was noted that this could be raised at the Constitution Working Group which had Scrutiny representation.

Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor J. Wilson

RESOLVED that (1) Members appraise themselves of the recommendations of the Select Committee and the subsequent Government Response,

(2) following the publication of new guidelines by the Government, Members commence a review of our existing Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules to ensure they remain fit for purpose in light of the recommendations of the Inquiry. Any amendments should then be submitted to Standards Committee for consideration prior to the review of the Constitution for 2019/20.

(Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

0045. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2017/18

The Joint Head of Finance and Resources presented the report which updated Committee on the Financial Outturn for 2017/18. It was noted that a contribution to the Transformation Reserve of £1.785m had been made for the year. There was already a surplus for 2018/19 to be transferred to the Transformation Reserve.

Members asked questions on individual budget codes which were answered by the Joint Head of Finance and Resources.

The Chair felt that it would be beneficial for Members to receive copies of the budget book which gave full details of all the budget codes, it was suggested that a copy could be placed in the Members Room.

Members felt that variances of £5,000 should be monitored.

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Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor P. Smith

RESOLVED that the outturn position in respect of the 2017/18 financial year be noted and variances of £5000 be monitored.

(Joint Head of Finance and Resources)

The meeting concluded at 1623 hours.