

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber on Tuesday, 28th November 2023 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Jen Wilson in the Chair

Councillors: David Bennett, Rowan Clarke, Justin Gilbody, Tom Munro and Sally Renshaw.

Officers: Karen Hanson (Chief Executive), Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Theresa Fletcher (Section 151 Officer), Amar Bashir (Improvement Officer (to Minute No. FCOS33-23/24)) and Hannah Douthwaite (Governance & Civic Officer).

Also in attendance Councillor Clive Moesby (Portfolio Holder for Resources).

FCO26-23/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Chris Kane and Lucy King.

FCO27-23/24 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

FCO28-23/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

FCO29-23/24 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor David Bennett and seconded by Councillor Justin Gilbody
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Finance and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 7th September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

FCO30-23/24 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Committee considered the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document.

Moved by Councillor David Bennett and seconded by Councillor Justin Gilbody
RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document be noted.

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FCO31-23/24 NEW COUNCIL AMBITION 2024-2028 - SCRUTINY CONSULTATION

Committee considered the Council's New Ambition 2024-2028. This would be considered by the other three Scrutiny Committees before submission to Executive and Council for adoption.

Members were advised that since the publication of the agenda, a further aim had been added, titled 'Bolsover, our Future'.

For each of the five aims, the Improvement Officer provided an explanation of each priority and how these would be delivered.

Customer

The key points noted were:

- Modernising the service through innovation;
- Removing barriers to access information;
- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

Members welcomed the inclusion of a revised Complaints Procedure in line with the merged Complaints Code of the Housing and Local Government Ombudsman.

It was noted that the use of the Go Active Leisure facilities at The Arc had increased over the last year and there was scope for this to increase further and also more services to be provided.

Economy

The key points noted were:

- Improving sustainability;
- Working closely with partners to deliver the aims;
- Unlocking further regeneration.

Work had started on the new crematorium in Shirebrook and it was hoped that this project would be completed and up and running by 2025. This would bring more employment to the local area.

Members noted that as the Council did not have direct control over bus routes, more needed to be done to encourage transport companies to better serve the smaller areas of the District and provide a more frequent and reliable service.

Housing

As Dragonfly was a wholly owned company of the Council, one aim was for 200 new homes to be completed by Dragonfly Development Ltd by March 2028.

Section 106 agreements remained a priority and Members noted that they were keen for developers to stick to the minimum 10% for affordable housing on larger developments.

Further to this, a housing stock full condition survey would be undertaken by April 2025.

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Environment

The key points noted were:

- Crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Environmental cleanliness;
- Increasing recycling;
- Making sure residents were proud to live within the District.

One of the main targets within this aim was to increase combined recycling and composting rates to 65% to meet Government targets by 2035.

A Member queried what the Council was doing to reduce its diesel consumption as this had not been covered within the document. The Strategic Director of Services advised that this had been looked into but due to various factors would have proven more costly for the vehicles to be replaced early. The Council's vehicle fleet did not contribute significantly to the overall carbon percentage and was under 1%. The biggest issue was the M1 corridor that ran through the District which could not directly be controlled. It was also hoped that new cars for the Council's mobile wardens would be fully electric and in use by 2025.

The Strategic Director of Services advised Members that prior to Christmas, the Communications, Marketing and Design team would be sending out communication to residents, in a bid to help tackle food waste. The Council was also looking at introducing a 25 litre bin for residents, solely for food waste, and information would be circulated once further details were available.

Moved by Councillor Justin Gilbody and seconded by Councillor David Bennett
RESOLVED that the draft New Council Ambition 2024-28 be noted.

FCO32-23/24 AMBITION PLAN TARGETS PERFORMANCE UPDATE – JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2023

Committee considered performance outturns against the Ambition Plan Targets for the July 2023 to September 2023 period.

Out of the 25 targets 17 (68%) were on track and 8 (32%) had achieved their outturns previously. Out of the 48 performance indicators 37 (77%) had a positive outturn, 9 (19%) had a negative outturn and 2 (4%) were within target.

Appendix 1 to the report provided a more detailed breakdown of each target and the status it was at. For those shown as below target an explanation was provided within the appendix.

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Rowan Clarke
RESOLVED that the quarterly outturns against the Council Ambition 2020-2024 performance targets and the relevant performance indicators be noted.

The Improvement Officer left the meeting.

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FCO33-23/24 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Committee considered the Council's current financial position following the quarter 2 monitoring exercise. The report had previously been considered by Executive on 6th November.

Moved by Councillor David Bennett and seconded by Councillor Rowan Clarke

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the monitoring position of the General Fund at the end of the second quarter as detailed on Appendix 1 to the report (a net favourable variance of £1.579m against the profiled budget), and the key issues highlighted within the report be noted;
- (2) the position on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Capital Programme and Treasury Management, at the end of the second quarter as detailed at Appendices 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to the report, be noted.

FCO34-23/24 REVISED BUDGETS 2023/24

General Fund

As noted in the quarter 1 update a number of Council services had been transferred to Dragonfly. The Council would make payments to Dragonfly for the provision of these services in line with service level agreements which were in the final stages of preparation. Dragonfly would also make payment to the Council for the support services they received, such as legal, payroll, HR and finance. A service level agreement was also being prepared for this.

The revised budget at Appendix 1 to the report showed that the Net Cost of Services had increased to £15.854m which was £3.310m above the original budget figures. This movement in the Net Cost of Services reflected committee approvals during the year to fund new expenditure, predominantly funded from either earmarked reserves, new grant allocations or new income received, since the original budget was set.

The original budget showed a funding deficit of £0.018m. The current budget position before changes from the revised budget process were included was a surplus of £0.282m. This included the council tax increase of £0.130m and the quarter 1 vacancy savings of £0.123m.

Housing Revenue

Expenditure on the Housing Revenue account was showing a net decrease against current budgets of £0.216m. The approval during the year of new expenditure to be funded by earmarked Housing Revenue Account reserves related to £0.210m.

Income

Income was £0.222m lower than the current budget. Dwelling rents had been reduced by £0.270m since the original budget. The number of empty properties (voids) was higher than originally estimated, this year voids had been between 3.64% in quarter 1 and

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3.56% by quarter 2 which was higher than the original estimate of 3%. The revised budget had been set with an estimate for voids of 3.35% for the remainder of 2023/24.

The Chief Executive noted that compared to neighbouring authorities the Council was in a good position.

Moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor Tom Munro
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

FCO35-23/24 SETTING OF COUNCIL TAX 2024/25

The Section 151 Officer gave a brief presentation on the Setting of Council Tax for 2024/25. The presentation provided examples of how income would vary dependent on the percentage increase of Council Tax. When making the comparisons Council Tax Band D was used as a mid-point.

It was noted that income received from Council Tax payments went into the General Fund and the budget was balanced from the Growth Protection Fund.

Moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor Justin Gilbody
RESOLVED that the item be noted.

FCO36-23/24 FINANCE & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Committee considered their work programme 2023/24.

It was noted that the programme may be subject to change should additional reports/presentations be required, or if items needed to be rearranged for alternative dates.

Moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor Justin Gilbody
RESOLVED that the Finance and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 14:40 hours.