

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee of Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber on Thursday, 28 November 2024 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor David Bennett in the Chair

Councillors Sally Renshaw (Vice-Chair), Rowan Clarke, Justin Gilbody, Janet Tait and Jane Yates.

Officers:- Theresa Fletcher (Section 151 Officer), Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer).

Also in attendance were Councillor Anne Clarke (Portfolio Holder - Environment), Councillor Donna Hales, Councillor Duncan Haywood, Councillor Cathy Jeffery, Councillor Tom Kirkham, Councillor Tom Munro (Chair of the Council), Councillor Jeanne Rospin, Councillor Catherine Tite, Councillor Rita Turner (Vice Chair of the Council) and Councillor Victoria Stella Waplington.

FCO16-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

FCO17-24/25 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to be considered.

FCO18-24/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

FCO19-24/25 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Jane Yates and seconded by Councillor Justin Gilbody **RESOLVED** that the minutes of a Local Growth Scrutiny Committee held on 5th September 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

FCO20-24/25 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. **RESOLVED** that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be considered in the Private document be noted.

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FCO21-24/25 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 2 - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2024/25

The Section 151 Officer stated that the details of the Budget Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 (July to September 2024/25) would be covered in the following agenda items so to avoid repeating the data the report should just be noted and will be discussed in detail later.

Moved by Councillor Sally Renshaw and seconded by Councillor Jane Yates **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

FCO22-24/25 REVISED BUDGETS 2024/25

The Section 151 Officer presented a report on the Revised Budgets for the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to provide an overview and update on the Council's approach to setting the Council Tax for the 2025/26 financial year and its connection to the broader MTFP.

The report began by reviewing the General Fund (GF) budget for 2024/25. In January 2024, the Council approved a balanced budget for the year, expecting neither a surplus nor a deficit. The March 2024 Council Tax increase resulted in a £136,000 surplus, with further adjustments, including a £420,000 reduction in salary budgets due to vacant posts and a lower-than-expected national pay award.

Planning fee income dropped by £58,000, but savings of £44,000 were made on ICT contracts. Diesel costs rose by £42,000, but interest income increased by £1 million, and the Council received an additional £601,000 from the business rates pool growth.

In the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), income fell by £373,000 due to more void properties, with a £212,000 drop in rental income. To balance the budget, £194,000 from the HRA Development Reserve was used.

Other changes included a £15,000 increase in the insurance reserve, a £162,000 reduction in energy costs and £43,000 savings on salaries. However, debt charges increased by £587,000 due to borrowing for capital projects, posing a long-term risk to HRA stability.

The 2024/25 Capital Programme was reviewed, with underspending projects moved to 2025/26 to avoid year-end underspends. At the end of 2024/25, the General Fund balance is expected to be £2.001 million and the HRA balance will rise to £2.007 million.

The National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) Growth Protection Reserve is expected to grow to £14.554 million. While both the General Fund and HRA are financially stable short-term, challenges remain with void properties and borrowing costs. Risks include potential changes to business rates income following the Government's December review.

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources noted that this report only includes data for Council Services, not for Dragonfly Development Limited.

Moved by Councillor David Bennett and seconded by Councillor Jane Yates

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

FCO23-24/25 SETTING OF COUNCIL TAX 2025/26

The Section 151 Officer presented a verbal report on Council Tax Options for Setting of 2025/26 Council Tax. The MTFP will be presented after Christmas, which will include updated figures for the 2025/26 Council Tax. This presentation served as a reminder that Council Tax contributes to the general fund budget, which helps fund essential services.

It was noted that the MTFP figures have not yet been updated this year and the data currently available is from the previous year, as included in the Q2 budget monitoring report.

It was highlighted that the Council Tax increase in recent years has been modest, with increases of 10-11p per week and noted that the Council Tax strategy typically aims to take the maximum increase allowed, as this is what the Government expects when calculating grant allocations.

The Section 151 Officer explained that the Council typically receives about 10% of the total council tax bill, with the County Council receiving the largest share at 73%, followed by the police at 13% and the fire authority at 4%.

The Section 151 Officer noted that the October budget provided little information on potential Council Tax increases. Historically, the Government has permitted the higher of 1.99% or £5 and more recently, the higher of 2.99% or £5. There is speculation that the Government might allow the higher of 2.99% or £10, particularly for councils with a low tax base, though it was expressed that it is unlikely the £10 option would be offered.

The Section 151 Officer also highlighted the upcoming Fair Funding Review, which could reset the local government finance system and lead to a potential £3 million annual loss due to changes in business rates. The Government assumes that the Council will increase its share of the Council tax bill by the maximum allowed when setting business rates limits and the Revenue Support Grant (RSG).

Finally, the officer provided projections showing the impact of a 2.99% Council Tax increase for 2025/26, with the additional revenue building each year. By 2028/29, this could generate an additional £500,000 in revenue, illustrating how regular increases compound over time.

This update was provided for Member's information.

FCO24-24/25 CORPORATE AMBITIONS PERFORMANCE UPDATE - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2024 (Q2 - 2024/25)

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager presented to Members the Quarter 2 outturns for the Council Plan targets for 2024-2028. The report detailed the progress of the Council's targets and performance indicators as of 30th September 2024.

Out of the 33 Council Plan targets, 32 (97%) are on track, while one (3%) target has

FINANCE AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

yet to start. In terms of performance indicators, 21 (62%) showed a positive outturn, 2 (5%) had a negative outturn and 11 (32%) were within the target. The Council Plan's progress was broken down across different focus areas:

- Our Environment: All 9 targets are on track. Of the 10 performance indicators, 5 (50%) had a positive outturn, 3 (30%) had a negative outturn and 2 (20%) were within target.
- Our Economy: All 7 targets are on track, with positive outcomes in key performance indicators.
- Our Housing: Of the 10 housing-related targets, 9 are on track and 1 has not yet started. In terms of performance indicators, 6 (66%) are showing a positive outturn, 2 (22%) have a negative outturn and 1 (11%) is within target.
- Dragonfly KPIs: Dragonfly, the Council-owned company, is responsible for a number of performance indicators contributing to the Council Plan. Out of 53 KPIs, 32 (60%) had a positive outturn, 7 (13%) had a negative outturn and 14 (26%) were within target.

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager emphasised that while the majority of targets and performance indicators are on track, there were areas requiring attention. These include some issues with arrears and response times for housing allocations, as well as the need for corrective action in facilities management, where new contractors have been engaged to address underperformance.

The report concluded with an overall positive outlook, with continued efforts to resolve any outstanding issues.

Moved by Councillor Rowan Clarke and seconded by Councillor Justin Gilbody **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

FCO25-24/25 WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Work Programme to the Committee.

There have been no recent alterations to the Work Programme, and it was noted that the Committee will meet again in the New Year on January 25th, 2025.

Moved by Councillor Tom Kirkham and seconded by Councillor Jane Yates

RESOLVED that Members review the Programme contact the Scrutiny Officer should they have any queries regarding future meetings.

The meeting concluded at 10:55 hours.