

AUDIT & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne, on Tuesday, 29th November, 2022, at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Tom Munro in the Chair

Councillors: Chris Kane, Graham Parkin and Ruth Jaffray (Co-opted Member)

Also in attendance was Councillor Clive Moesby (Portfolio Holder for Finance) and Councillor Mark Hinman (Observer)

Officers: Theresa Fletcher (Section 151 Officer), Kath Drury (Information, Engagement and Performance Manager), Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer) and Lindsay Harshaw (Governance & Civic Officer)

The Chair welcomed Councillor Mark Hinman, recently elected for the Pinxton Ward, as an Observer.

ACO40-22/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Jane Bryson and Donna Hales.

ACO41-22/23 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Chair advised that discussions would be taking place over the next few months regarding the future of the Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee due to current CIPFA guidance recommending that Audit Committees should be stand alone committees. An update report would be submitted to a future meeting for consideration.

ACO42-22/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

ACO43-22/23 MINUTES – 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2022

Consideration of the Minutes of the Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30th September 2022, was deferred until the next meeting.

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ACO44-22/23 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.

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer highlighted that the Bolsover Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy would be considered by Executive at a meeting to be held on 5th December 2022.

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Chris Kane
RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document be noted.

ACO45-22/23 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Section 151 Officer referred to the Quarter 2 monitoring report and advised that a presentation had been prepared for the next item (see Minute ACO46-22/23) and she suggested that the Budget Monitoring Report be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan – Revised Budgets 2022/23 agenda item, as that report is in effect an update on the Quarter 2 one.

The Section 151 Officer gave a presentation updating the Committee on the position of the General Fund, as at the end of the second quarter as well as the position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Capital Programme and Treasury Management.

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Chris Kane
RESOLVED that (1) the monitoring position of the General Fund at the end of the second quarter, be noted,
(2) the position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Capital Programme and Treasury Management at the end of the second quarter, be noted,
(3) consideration be given to the presentation prepared for the Medium Term Financial Plan – Revised Budgets 2022/23 agenda item.

ACO46-22/23 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – REVISED BUDGETS 2022/23

The Section 151 Officer gave a presentation on current progress with the Revised Budgets for 2022/23 and copies of the presentation were circulated for information. It was noted that the General Fund revised budget position as at 31st March 2023, was £82,000. The salary budgets had been reviewed and savings that would not be used due to maternity leave and vacant posts had been identified. However, as a result of the recently agreed pay award for 2022/23, these savings had been added into the salary budgets. It was also noted that there had been an increase in interest receivable on investments due

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to the bank base rate increasing from 0.5% to 3% since the original budget was set in December 2021.

The Section 151 Officer highlighted that gas, electric and diesel budgets had been increased to take account of the inflated prices currently being charged.

The Section 151 Officer referred to the Housing Revenue Account and advised that as with the General Fund, the salary budgets had been reviewed and the savings identified added into these budgets to take account of the increase due to the pay award agreed for 2022/23. Budgets had also been adjusted as a result of the increased costs for gas, electric and stores costs. However, the budget for sub-contractors had been reduced as the painting contract was not required in 2022/23.

It was noted that the level of void properties remained higher than anticipated which had an effect on rental income and that there had been an increase in income on the Housing Related Support Schemes due to the Careline service contract being extended until March 2023.

The Section 151 Officer referred to the Capital Programme and advised that Appendix 4 provided a summary of the budget for information.

An update was also provided in relation to Reserves and Balances.

The Section 151 Officer reported that the Medium Term Financial Plan would be submitted to the Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in February 2023 for consideration and that this document would include estimates of the potential extra income from business rates, council tax and income generating schemes.

The Chair raised his concern at the number of void properties and the effect this had on the Housing Revenue Account, particularly in relation to the impact on general repairs to properties across the District. He queried whether anything could be done to assist the Housing Revenue Account in managing its finance in a more positive way. The Section 151 Officer advised that the Council had a legal duty to charge the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund for costs associated with Payroll, Legal, Finance etc. therefore the support service recharge that takes place between the two funds would have to stand and could not be reduced or postponed.

The Chair referred to Appendix 1, and queried whether the increase in Investment Interest was due to the significant increase in bank interest rates. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that this was the case.

The Chair queried the Business Rates deficit. The Section 151 Officer advised that the amount of business rates funding received from the Government was not known when the budget was set in January 2022 and that it had to be accounted for during 2022/23.

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The Chair referred to the significant increase in the cost of the Pest Control Service. The Section 151 Officer advised that the increase in cost was as a result of the pay award for 2022/23 and inflated fuel charges.

The Chair queried the revised budget for the Household Support Fund (G047). The Section 151 Officer advised that Derbyshire County Council allocated this funding from Government during 2022/23 and that the figure was not known beforehand when the budget was set.

The Chair referred to the increased costs for Housing Strategy (G143) and Enabling Housing (G144). The Section 151 Officer stated that these two budget codes were utilised for the joint work undertaken with North East Derbyshire District Council in relation to empty properties. However, it was intended to split this service in the near future and a Bolsover only service was now reflected in this cost centre.

The Chair referred to the increased costs for The Arc (G156). The Section 151 Officer advised that the increase was due to inflated charges for heating, lighting etc.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that although the Council's finances were looking positive for the next couple of years, it would be necessary to monitor costs in order to ensure that a balanced budget was maintained.

Moved by Councillor Chris Kane and seconded by Councillor Graham Parkin **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and any comments believed to be appropriate be given verbally at the Executive meeting on 5th December 2022.

ACO47-22/23 SETTING OF COUNCIL TAX

The Section 151 Officer gave a presentation which provided details in relation to options for setting of the Council Tax for 2023/24. Copies of the presentation were circulated for information.

The Chair queried whether recommendations would be considered by Executive. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that Executive would consider the options put forward and that it was anticipated that the proposed increase would remain at 2.99% as it was the Executive who had made the proposal informally.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that he would be recommending the maximum amount suggested by Government as the income was required in order to deliver services to residents of the district.

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Chris Kane **RESOLVED** that the comments be noted.

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ACO48-22/23 AMBITION PLAN TARGETS PERFORMANCE UPDATE – JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2022

Committee considered an update report that provided details of progress against the targets contained within the Ambition Plan.

A brief historic overview of the Council's overall vision was provided for information.

A summary of performance was provided as follows:-

- *Ambition Plan*

21 targets were on track
1 target had been withdrawn
1 target continued to be on alert
1 target had been amended
7 targets achieved previously

- *Service Plan Indicators*

47 service indicators
36 service indicators had a positive outturn
11 service indicators had a negative outturn

It was noted that most of the Council's Ambition Plan targets were on track.

A brief explanation of the Council plan targets achieved and by exception was provided and the following highlighted:-

- ENV.03 – Achieve a combined recycling and composting rate of 50% by March 2024

This target had been amended. The UK Resource & Waste Strategy was awaited.

The Chair raised his concern about the level of recycling being undertaken throughout the District. An article had been included on Bolsover TV to inform residents of the items that could be recycled. He suggested that other ways of publicising recycling information be explored, e.g. Intouch, and requested that a report be provided on the measures being taken to encourage residents to recycle.

Mrs. Ruth Jaffray suggested that links be made with schools. The Information, Engagement & Performance Officer advised that Officers had been visiting local schools.

- ENV.08 – Bring 5 empty properties back into use per year through assistance and enforcement measures

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It was reported that the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health & Licensing was considering another way of measuring this activity more effectively.

- CUS.07 – Reduce average re-let times for standard voids (Council properties) to 20 calendar days by March 2021 and maintain thereafter

The new Voids Officer was now in post and discussions were ongoing in relation to improving the void property process.

The Information, Engagement & Performance Manager referred to Appendix 2 and highlighted that the Service Manager was not overly concerned regarding LE 01 (Number of people participating in Council leisure, sport, recreational, health, physical and cultural activity each year), as he expected an increase in users due to the installation of the new 3G football pitch.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance referred to the collection of Council Tax and Rents and advised that residents were being encouraged to contact the Revenues and Benefits Section to make arrangements for payments.

The Chair thanked the Information, Engagement & Performance Manager for the report.

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

Councillor Clive Moesby left the meeting at 11:01 hours

ACO49-22/23 AUDIT & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Committee considered the Work Programme 2022/23.

Moved by Councillor Chris Kane and seconded by Councillor Tom Munro
RESOLVED that the Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022/23 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 11:04 hours.