

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

6.10 P.M.

13TH SEPTEMBER 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors Dave Brookes (Chairman), Sam Armstrong, Andrew Gardiner, Janet Hall, Tim Hamilton-Cox, Roger Sherlock, Susan Sykes and Oscar Thynne

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillor Phillippa Williamson (Vice-Chairman)

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Eileen Blamire, Leader of the Council and Councillor Anne Whitehead, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Revenues and Benefits.

Officers in attendance:-

Susan Parsonage	Chief Executive
Mark Davies	Chief Officer (Environment)
Andrew Clarke	Financial Services Manager
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Sarah Moorghen	Democratic Support Officer

9 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2016 were signed as a correct record.

10 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

11 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

12 COMPLAINTS MONITORING FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2016

The Chief Officer (Environment) presented a report on complaints monitoring for the year ended 31st March 2016 to provide an overview of the performance of the Council during 2015-16 in responding to complaints submitted in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure and considered by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for the year ended 31st March 2016.

The report also outlined current monitoring arrangements and suggested that steps be taken to clarify and streamline these to make best use of analysis and feedback from complaints as part of the Council's programme of continuous improvement.

Members were advised that the report set out just the formal complaints dealt with under the Council's Complaints Policy. It was reported that the Council's Complaints Policy followed a two stage process during which the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) could be contacted by the complainant at any time, although the LGO would not normally investigate a complaint until it had been through both stages of the Council's Complaints Procedure.

Members asked a number of questions on complaints monitoring regarding the complaints categories, the Complaints Procedure and how this compared to other authorities, organisations and companies. The Panel also asked questions on customer services and the Customer Services Strategy and how performance was recorded and monitored as well as how compliments could be recorded and feedback given to members of staff. Questions were also raised about the role of the LGO and the types of complaints which went to that stage.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the next Complaints Monitoring Report includes detail on the complaints made against the Council and upheld by the LGO.
- (3) That a report on the Customer Services Strategy be added to the Panel's Work Programme.

13 CORPORATE FINANCIAL MONITORING 2016/17 - QUARTER 1

The Financial Services Manager gave a presentation and introduced a report to present the Corporate Financial Monitoring 2016/17 Quarter 1. A summary of the financial monitoring for quarter 1 of the 2016/17 performance monitoring cycle was attached for Members' consideration.

Members were advised that the focus for quarter 1 had been on financial monitoring, in particular the status of savings and growth approved as part of the 2016/17 budget process. Not all savings had progressed as originally planned in the year and there were lessons to be learnt from this, however, the financial consequences could be managed through the additional business rates coming through from renewable energy. It was reported that, in future years, savings were expected to get back on track as renewable energy income was set to continue at least for the medium term and financial prospects for 2018/19 onwards were better than previously forecast.

The Financial Services Manager advised that the headline variances and projections were as follows:-

- General Fund revenue budget had a current net underspending of £462K, which was projected to reduce to £3K by the year end.
- Allowing for the projected underspending, General Fund balances were currently forecast to be £4.519M by the year end (with £3.019M available above the £1.5M minimum level. This was £334K higher than budgeted, allowing for last year's underspend).

- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had a current net underspend of £20K, which was projected to increase to £23K by the year end.
- Allowing for that projected underspending, HRA balances were currently forecast to be £1.991M by year end (with £1.641M available above the £350K minimum level. This was £371K higher than budgeted, allowing for last year's underspend).

Members asked a number of questions on financial monitoring regarding staff salary savings, the Splash Park, green waste and impacts on recycling of charging for green waste collection, the Business Rate Retention Scheme and associated appeals. Members also asked questions regarding the Charter Market and empty shopping units in the city centre with particular reference to Council owned units on Cheapside, and litter enforcement.

Members requested that the updated Property Group Monitoring report focus on occupancy levels on commercial properties and income generated, and include spend on municipal buildings, be circulated to Panel Members as a briefing note.

Members also discussed the amended report lay out and commented that the addition of the s.151 comments throughout and the summary table at Annex A of the report were particularly helpful in providing clarity to the report.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Property Group Monitoring report be updated and circulated to the Panel separately as a briefing note.

14 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Principal Democratic Services Officer submitted a report to update Members on the Panel's Work Programme. Members were asked to consider whether they would like to include any further items on the Work Programme. It was noted that an update report on RMS, previously agreed, would be added.

Members had previously requested that an item on pensions be added to the Work Programme and that representatives of Lancashire County Council be invited to address the Panel. It was noted that "Your Pension Service" had been invited to attend a future meeting of the Panel. The Panel requested information on pensions be submitted to the Panel, if possible prior to the next meeting on the 8th November 2016.

Members also requested an update on the progress of the briefing note on expenditure, venues and facilities in Lancaster and Morecambe. The Financial Services Manager advised that this was complete in draft form and would be circulated to Members within the next week.

Members requested an update be provided regarding the current position of ICT – Bring Your Own Device, previously reported to the Panel at its meeting on the 23rd February 2016. Members requested a briefing note be circulated to the Panel prior to the next meeting.

Members requested that officers from Property Group be invited to the next meeting of the Panel to answer questions on the Capital Investment Programme.

Members agreed that there would be a meeting to consider performance management and in particular to involve the Panel on what it required to scrutinise information.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the Work Programme, detailed in Appendix A to the report, be noted.
- (2) That information on Pensions be provided for the next meeting.
- (3) That further reports on RMS (previously referred to on the Work Programme as the APSE Report) be added to the Panel's Work Programme and be reported to the Panel as appropriate.
- (4) That the briefing note on expenditure and venues and facilities in Lancaster and Morecambe be circulated to Panel Members as soon as practicable.
- (5) That the Panel be provided with a briefing note to update on the position of ICT – Bring Your Own Device.
- (6) That Property Group be invited to the next meeting of the Panel to discuss the briefing note on the Capital Investment Programme (briefing note to be circulated as per minute 13).

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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