

FINANCE, RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 1st September, 2014

Present:- Councillor Paul Waring – in the Chair

Councillors Fear, Huckfield, Jones, Mrs Peers, Stringer, Sweeney, Taylor.J and Wallace

Leader of the Council – Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communications, Policy and Partnerships

Officers Executive Director Resources and Support Services
Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships
Head of Environmental Health Services
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies Councillors Mrs Rout and Mrs Shenton

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 17th June 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

3. **FORMER KEELE GOLF COURSE**

There were no further developments in this area of work since Cabinet met on Wednesday 23rd July 2014.

The following questions were submitted by Members and responded to by the Leader:-

Q1. Could the eight week consultation period be extended?

A1. If there were no initial expressions of interest received after the eight week community consultation exercise it would not be extended. If expressions of interest were received then the time scales could be extended. The interim use of the golf course had been set for three years.

Q2. Parish Councils had raised the issue that they had not been consulted.

A2. It was an open, public consultation and every person had been invited.

4. **UPDATE ON PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS - REVIEW OF CONCURRENT FUNDING TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

A Task and Finish Group had been formed to look at concurrent funding of the ten Town/Parish Councils in the Borough under Section 136 of the Local Government

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Act 1972. This process was explained to representatives of the Parish Councils at the Town and Parish Partnership Forum held on Tuesday 22nd July 2014.

Meetings were held with each of the Town and Parish Councils, except the Betley, Balterley and Wrinehill Parish Council (due to family illness).

In these meetings, the Councils were asked:-

1. How was the S136 money spent?
2. From where is other income derived?
3. What effect would a cut in S136 money have?
4. What are the priority areas for expenditure?
5. What is kept in reserve?

They were also asked to produce their Annual Audit of Accounts for 2013/2014.

A preliminary report would be submitted to the next Town and Parish Council Partnership Forum to be held on Tuesday 14th October 2014.

RECOMMENDED:- That recommendations are presented to Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 5th November 2014 with a report submitted to Cabinet on Wednesday 10th December 2014.

5. **FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT TO END OF QUARTER ONE (APRIL - JUNE) 2014**

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) gave an update on the finance aspects of the Financial and Performance Review report – first quarter 2014/15. The position at the end of the first quarter showed a favourable variance of £5,000.

There were, however, a number of both favourable and adverse variances:-

- Jubilee 2 had been operating at a net overspend as at 30th June 2014, primarily due to income shortfall. A report had been requested from relevant officers giving the reasons for the overspend, together with actions that were being taken to mitigate the situation.
- Kidsgrove Sports Centre had also been operating at a net overspend as at 30th June 2014.
- Commercial rents continue to yield less than expected.
- The overtime budget had been overspent as no changes had been implemented to deliver the 2014/15 savings target of £100k.
- Additionally a number of service under spends had occurred.

In respect of capital expenditure, £1,015,450 of the revised budget had been expected to be spent by the 30th June 2014; the actual amount spent was £905,061 resulting in a variance as at the end of Quarter 1 of £110,389.

A member raised concern regarding overtime. The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) advised that discussions were ongoing with the Trade Unions in respect of options to deliver the savings.

In terms of the performance part of the report, the Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships advised that performance was generally going well, with the majority of targets being met, but the position was being tightly monitored.

There had been various changes to the layout of the Corporate Performance Scorecard, mainly by a reduction in size and the use of symbols. The “Good is” column denoted whether ‘low’ or ‘high’ figures were good and allowed the reader to analyse the results in detail. There were two columns showing comparative quarterly performance for 2013-14 and 2014-15. The fourth column showed the target for 2014-15 and one set of symbols (icons) showing whether performance was on target or not at the present time.

A small number of performance figures for Quarter 1 were not on target but the direction of travel remained positive.

Appendix ‘C’ was a new addition “Delivering our Outcomes” and gave information, in the form of a case study, on the work presently being undertaken to reduce and resolve incidences in communities. Members were advised that they may wish to use this case study to ask further questions about the service featured.

A Member commented that the wording of the case study needed to be reviewed and presented in a clearer way at future meetings.

A Member advised that, overall, the performance data produced was very good and asked, in reference to 1.7 (the amount of residual waste per household) what were “the residents’ behavioural changes”? The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships advised he would report back with the information.

The Head of Environmental Health Services advised that the wording of the food hygiene “Broadly Compliant” was a national indicator and the Food Standards Agency were not obliged to display the food rating sign. All food hygiene scores were available on the website.

The Chair thanked the Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships for presenting the report.

RECOMMENDED

- (a) That Members agree to the recommendations that the Council continues to monitor and scrutinise performance alongside the latest financial information for the same period.
- (b) That the Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships report back on reference 1.7

6. **UPDATE - RESPONSES TO COMMENTS FROM SCRUTINY ON THE QUARTER 4 (2013/14) PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships presented a report on responses to the questions and comments with regard to the Quarter 4 Performance Report and its content raised by Members at the 17th June 2014 meeting.

RECOMMENDED:-

That Members receive the responses to comments as contained within this report.

7. **UPDATE REPORT - AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

The Head of Environmental Health Services presented a report on information that was requested by Members at the previous Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 17th June 2014 regarding the management of air quality.

The Council had been carrying out reviews of air quality since December 1997; these involved measuring air pollution and trying to predict how it would change over the next few years.

In 2013 a detailed assessment and further assessment of air quality was undertaken of four areas of the Borough where exceedances of the pollutant nitrogen dioxide were identified.

The four identified exceedance areas were:-

- Madeley – an area encompassing one property, Collingwood, Newcastle Road close to the M6 motorway.
- Kidsgrove – one area along Liverpool Road and Hardingswood Road from the junction with Heathcote Street and Gloucester Road.
- Town Centre – areas within the ring road, namely London Road, Barracks Road and King Street.
- Porthill/May Bank – adjacent to the southern approach from the Queensway to Porthill Bank and the High Street up to the junction with Basford Park Road.

There was a need to consult with members of the public, residents and other stakeholders, on the geographical extent of the air quality management areas being declared. The consultation period was due to commence from 1st September 2014 to 12th October 2014.

Alternatives to traffic flow, traffic light sequences and green travel initiative would also be looked into.

A Member pointed out that air quality is not just due to vehicles. Issues with air quality were increasing generally and monitoring was required within these areas.

The Head of Environmental Health Services advised that when updating the screening assessment, consideration was given to all pollution sources, for example industrial emissions.

A Member asked if Liverpool Road, Newcastle could be included into the town centre air quality management area. The Head of Environmental Health Services advised it would be looked into.

RECOMMENDED:- That Members receive the report.

8. **UPDATE REPORT - CASE STUDY OF ACTIONS TAKEN WHERE A FOOD BUSINESS RECEIVE A POOR HYGIENE RATING**

Further information was requested at the last meeting held on the 17th June 2014 by Members of actions taken where a premise was rated 'Zero – Urgent Improvement Necessary' as a result of inspections by the Environmental Health Service of the Council.

A presentation was given by the Head of Environmental Health Services describing the powers that were available to Environmental Health Officers when they find hygiene conditions that risk public health.

There was a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to undertake food hygiene inspections, the Foods Standards Agency directs Local Authorities as to the frequency, nature and extent of food hygiene inspections.

There were 1075 registered food premises each had a food hygiene rating of 0 – Urgent Improvement Necessary to 5 – Very Good. There was a rating scheme on the Council's website.

A Member thought it was a good idea placing stickers in windows of food premises.

There was dual role to supporting businesses, with regular visits over a period time.

The following questions were raised and answered by the Head of Environmental Health Services:-

Q1. Was there any way of measuring footfall, as this would encourage more custom to the business?

A1. Footfall was not monitored but it had been found that people do visit premises more with a rating of 5.

Q2. Were there any mechanisms to close down repeat offenders?

A2. If public health was at risk, with very high risk of activity in particular from pests or unfit food, processes would be put in place to close the business voluntarily, through enforcement.

Q3. Are there many inspections carried out due to reports by the public?

A3. Yes, averaging 500 complaints per year regarding food or food premises.

RECOMMENDED:-

(a) That the Committee gain a better understanding of the work carried out by Environmental Health Officers and appropriate action was taken when a food business received a poor Food Hygiene Rating.

9. **PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) QUESTION TIME**

The Chair asked if Members had any questions for the Portfolio Holder for Communications, Policy and Partnership (the Leader of the Council).

No questions were raised.

RECOMMENDED:- To hold the next Portfolio Holder Question Time on 16th March 2015.

10. **COUNCIL PLAN 2014-16**

The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships presented the proposed new Council Plan covering the period 2014-16.

Following this meeting the Plan would be presented to Council on the 17th September 2014.

The Council Plan for 2014-16 builds on the previous version of the Council Plan and had two main sections. The second section detailed the measures and activities set out in order to monitor the Plan's progress.

The first section of the Plan covers the Council's vision/corporate priorities. These remained unchanged and are:-

- To create a Borough that is prosperous, clean, healthy and safe (the vision);
- A Clean, Safe and Sustainable Borough;
- A Borough of opportunity;
- A healthy and active community, and
- Becoming a co-operative Council delivering high quality, community driven services (the corporate priorities)

The previous version of the Council Plan identified seventeen outcomes which had now been reduced to twelve.

The contents of the Council Plan were discussed. No questions were raised by Members on the structure of the report, although a few amendments were suggested to the content of the Plan.

RECOMMENDED:- That the Council Plan be adopted by Full Council in September 2014, subject to suggested changes.

11. **WORK PLAN**

It was agreed the following items be included on the Work Plan:-

- Budget Scrutiny Café 13th January 2015
- Joint meeting with Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee to discuss the Ryecroft project
- Former Keele Golf Course – when a report was available

12. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions had been received from the public

13. **URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent business was raised.

14. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 5th November 2014, 7.00pm in Committee Room 1.

COUNCILLOR PAUL WARING
Chair