

Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Report to Full Council 25th February 2015

Since the last meeting there have been two meetings of the Committee and it has also held a Budget Scrutiny Cafe.

Meeting held 16th December 2014

The Constitution Review Working Group presented an updated version of Appendix 12 (Contract Procedural Rules) of the constitution and this was approved.

The Executive Director Resources and Support Services presented the Revenue Budget 20015/16 – First Draft Saving Plans. No additional information was requested.

Budget Scrutiny Cafe for Members held 13th January 2015

Attendance:

5 Officers

6 Cabinet Members

11 Members

Format:

5-minute slots in speed dating style.

This was relaxed on the night and where members wished to have more time, this was allowed as long as it did not unnecessarily delay any others who were waiting.

Questions:

It is difficult to be absolutely accurate about the numbers of questions asked, because many of the responses involved two-way discussions, but as a rough guide:

Finance and Resources

6 Questions related to the Council Tax freeze, S136 Grants and monitoring of Parish Council expenditure, LAPs /Streetscene, Income and Council-provided Ipads.

All were answered satisfactorily

Economic Development, Regeneration, Business and Town Centres

3 questions in relation to Asset Management, the Keele masterplan and the Local Plan which received a satisfactory answer.

There was a further question relating to “Squirrel control” for which an answer was provided later.

Leisure Culture and Localism/Environment and Recycling

4 questions about numbers of vehicles and recycling containers, the proposed recycling system and Public Conveniences were answered satisfactorily.

A question relating to proposed spending of £10k on Bateswood was answered later.

(General improvements to/replacements of seating, signage, fencing and paths)

The cost of the exercise was in the region of £200-250.

Meeting held 21st January 2015

The group reviewed the new proposed Elected Member/Officer Relations Protocol, and the Quarter Three Financial and Performance Review then moved on to the Treasury Management Strategy. There were no requests for further information in these areas.

Discussion followed in relation to the Budget Report with particular reference to the following areas:

- Minimum Revenue Provision
- Council Tax Freeze Grant
- The Council’s ability to create further efficiency savings
- Joint working with other local authorities
- The benefits associated with bringing the waste and recycling service in-house
- The purchase of and type of fuel used by the council
- Concurrent funding – the proposed reduction in the monies given to the town and parish councils, despite the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group, endorsed by FRAPS, that there should be no reduction.

Questions raised in relation to Scale of Fees and Charges report centred around the increases in fees for bereavement services and Jubilee 2 and whether concessions are available in respect of bereavement care services. There were also questions regarding the reasons for customers leaving Jubilee 2 and Kidsgrove Leisure centres. Further information was provided after the meeting.

Paul Waring

(Chair of Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee)