

FINANCE, RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 25th January, 2017
Time of Commencement: 6.30 pm

Present:- Councillor Joan Winfield – in the Chair

Councillors Fear, Frankish, T Hambleton, Loades, Pickup, Proctor, Spence, Waring, Wilkes and Wright

Officers Jayne Briscoe - Scrutiny Officer and Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) - Kelvin Turner

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2016 be agreed as a correct record.

4. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - 2017/18

The Executive Director Resources and Support Services presented the Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18. The report set out in line with CIPFA requirements the management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions.

Agreed: That the Committee approve the strategy for submission to the Full Council on 22 February 2017.

5. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2017/18

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) submitted this report which provided members with the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Budget and Council Tax proposals. The report had been approved by Cabinet on 18 January 2017 when they requested any comments from the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for them to consider at their meeting on 8 February 2017.

Comments from Scrutiny Members

A few members of the Committee considered that the Capital Programme was not aspirational and they were disappointed that it did not make best use of assets and failed to display confidence to encourage investment into the Borough.

Specifically concern was expressed that only £500k was included in the 2017/18 Capital Programme.

Members asked Cabinet to look again at the Capital Asset Management Strategy, which had been agreed some time ago, and to move forward with the sale of these assets.

Supporting this view, a member considered that a more imaginative capital asset programme should be drawn up in line with the agreed asset management strategy.

A specific area of land at Keele Golf Course was put forward as an asset that may be brought into play.

In response, the Executive Director Resources and Support Services agreed that the Capital Programme for 2017/18 was severely constrained by the availability of funding but he added that the alternative of borrowing had revenue consequences. The schemes included in the programme were those which were most urgently required to be carried out to ensure continued service delivery, to safeguard income or to ensure health and safety compliance.

Members suggested that in future it would be useful to see previous income levels, as a comparison, in respect of the budget items that were experiencing a decrease in revenue e.g. car parks and Kidsgrove Leisure Centre.

In respect of Kidsgrove Leisure Centre members requested a comparison of costs per head/per visit with J2. The Executive Director Resources and Support Services agreed to circulate this to all members of the Scrutiny Committee.

Notable Achievements in 2016/17

A number of members felt that this section should be renamed **Outcomes** with a reduction in the number of statements (max 12,) with demonstrable achievements and that the outcomes be highlighted. All efficiency measures should be grouped together under one heading.

Certain Members agreed that the document set out wishes together with a narrative of processes which should already be embedded within council.

Members congratulated the Council on its achievements in the Heart of England in Bloom competition. They also felt it was noteworthy that Clayton Sports Centre had been refurbished at a cost of approximately £350,000 with over 95% of external funding.

There were a number of suggestions in relation to the narrative which are set out below:-.

In relation to the recycling service and the redesigned integrated enquires system a member considered that an optimal service level had not been achieved as there was a 28 day delay in the response times.

With regard to the monitoring of contracts a member requested that a report be submitted to this Committee on any leakage of work.

A member asked that the report include the outcomes in relation to the delivery of the Local Police and Crime Plan.

With regard to the portfolio vacancy rate a member requested that national comparators be included in any future report to offer a clearer perspective of the Boroughs performance in this area.

In relation to the implementation of a land/property disposal programme members pointed out that forward motion on this had not yet been fully achieved.

A member requested information relating to the number of apprentices employed by the Borough.

A member asked for anticipated outcomes from the Northern Gateway to be listed.

The gratitude from the Parish Councils was extended in respect of the 4 year adjustment period for Section 136 Contributions.

A member suggested that the CCGs be encouraged to become a tenant of the Hub.

Agreed; That the comments of this Scrutiny Committee be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration prior to the final decision on the Revenue and Capital Budget 2017/18.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

7. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - MONDAY 13 MARCH 2017

COUNCILLOR JOAN WINFIELD
Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.30 pm