

FINANCE, ASSETS & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 20th September, 2018

Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present:- Councillor Mike Stubbs – in the Chair

Councillors:

D. Harrison

T. Kearon

S. Pickup

P Waring

G White

Officers

Jayne Briscoe - Democratic Services
Officer, Partnerships Manager - Sarah
Moore and Executive Director
(Resources and Support Services) -
Kelvin Turner

Also in Attendance: Councillor M Holland
(Cabinet Member for Leisure and
Culture) and Councillor J Waring
(Cabinet Member for Community Safety
and Wellbeing).

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Burnett, Fear, and Proctor

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 June 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018/19 - UPDATE**

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which gave the opportunity for members of this Committee to scrutinise the report prior to consideration by Cabinet on 17 October.

The MTFS was in alignment with the Council Plan and would ensure that services and resources were delivered to the agreed priority areas and a value for money approach pursued against a severely challenging financial environment. The budgetary shortfalls, which would need to be addressed with robust financial and budget strategies, were outlined and the Efficiency Board under the auspices of the Cabinet would oversee all aspects of the budget process. The budget options developed would be available for the December meeting of this Committee.

Members of the Committee raised the following issues which were addressed by the Executive Director (Resources and Support):-

- Had the possible effects of Brexit been modelled? – Difficult to predict or to be certain on outcomes, guidance was anticipated alongside the possibility of assistance.
- Employee budgets appeared to be reducing, was this due to a reduction in the workforce? – The staffing budget was based on figures from the actuary in respect of superannuation, and assumed stability of staff numbers.
- What are the returns on the commercial property portfolio compared to the private sector - £947,200? - £12K down on previous year although more of the commercial properties were occupied, rental income may reflect the condition of some of the properties.
- Did the housing options reflect the preferred Local Plan? – Based on information from the department of Planning and Development which would need to be clarified to answer the question.
- Is there any recognition in the MTFs that the Ryecroft development may falter? In terms of not gaining a capital receipt, this had been taken into account.

5. **MODERN SLAVERY UPDATE REPORT**

The report on Modern Slavery was introduced by the Partnerships Manager who outlined Section 54 of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2018/19 that required organisations above a certain size, which supplied goods or services, to prepare and publish an annual Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement.

Continuing it was explained the Borough Councils 'Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2018 (approved by the Executive Management Team and the Portfolio Holder of Community Safety and Wellbeing in May 2018) set out actions to recognise all potential modern slavery risks related to its business and corporate activities and the steps in place to help ensure that there is no slavery or human trafficking in its own business or its supply chains. It has subsequently been incorporated as a statement of best practice.

The Borough Council, as part of its procurement, contracting and contract review processes would endeavour to ensure that all suppliers of strategic, high value, high risk agreements were monitored and supported by use of an ongoing monitoring process.

The Borough Council was committed to a zero tolerance of slavery and human trafficking and would also ensure that any tendering activity included statements to ensure compliance to this Act and aimed to reduce the risk of modern slavery in its supply chain by:-

- Where appropriate require key contractors to have safeguarding policies, procedures and training in place, in addition to providing compliance with the Modern Slavery Act
- Consider modern slavery factors when making procurement decisions
- Include modern slavery criteria in specification and tender documents where appropriate

- Consider modern slavery factors when evaluating specifications and tenders.

Any supplier or potential supplier who did not adhere to the values of the legislation or was found not to be compliant would be suspended and removed from the Council's supplier list and not considered for future supply unless they were able to demonstrate full adherence with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act.

There were also a number of policies considered key in meeting the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act including:-

Safeguarding
Recruitment
Agency Workers
Pay
Employee Code of Conduct
Whistleblowing

Members raised a number of questions in relation to the practical application and enforcement of the Statement which were addressed by the Partnerships Manager and included:-

- What method would the Borough Council use to determine if a supplier was in contravention of the policy – This was reliant on intelligence being received and professional curiosity and as such empowering employees to report suspicions and/or whistle blow
- Any changes to Council policy subsequent to the resolution being made? – Reference was included in the invitation to tender and subsequent commissioning documentation
- How is the Statement being promoted to staff? – It is included in safeguarding training and is highlighted to certain groups of employees such as Environmental Health Officers.

The Chair emphasised the many facets that modern day slavery may have, questioned the reporting mechanism and the need for effective controls within contracts.

In terms of Council Champions, the Chief Executive is considered to be the responsible officer with support from the Business Improvement and Partnerships Teams.

Councillor Holland, as Portfolio Holder confirmed that, under the scheme of delegation, for smaller companies, scrutiny of adherence to the Statement would be reported to the officer whilst it would be the Portfolio Holder for larger contracts.

Agreed: That the comments of members would be taken into account when the Statement was revised in 12 months' time.

6. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer referred to the work programme and clarified that at the December meeting members would consider:-

Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20
Revenue and Capital Budgets 2019/20 – Progress/Update
Scale of Fees and Charges 2019/20

The Scrutiny Officer suggested that members might wish to include refreshed performance indicators as a part of scrutiny work and in this respect it was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would contact members with a list of the indicators and members be asked to express a preference for closer scrutiny.

The Chair referred to the proposed joint meeting with members of the Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee concerning the Guild Hall and it was agreed that arrangements would be made for this to be held in January 2019.

7. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 17 December 2018.

COUNCILLOR MIKE STUBBS
Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.05 pm