

## **FINANCE, ASSETS & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 14th March, 2024  
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Mark Holland (Chair)		
Councillors:	Parker J Tagg	Stubbs Brockie	Allport Lewis
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Bryan, P Waring, Bettley-Smith and Lawley		
Substitutes:	Councillor David Grocott (In place of Councillor Annabel Lawley) Councillor Nicholas Crisp Councillor Rupert Adcock		
Officers:	Sarah Wilkes Simon McEneny Georgina Evans- Stadward	Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer Deputy Chief Executive Service Director - Strategy, People and Performance	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Stephen Sweeney	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	

1. **APOLOGIES**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 be agreed as accurate record.

4. **COMMERCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Deputy Leader introduced the updated Commercial Strategy.

It was requested that the item be brought back to the Committee six months later.

**Resolved:** That the updated Commercial Strategy and progress to date be noted.

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**5. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT**

The Deputy Leader introduced the Financial and Performance Review Report for the Third Quarter 2023-24.

The Chair then went through the Performance Indicators starting by the ones highlighted in red and the Deputy Leader commented as follows.

About sickness absences – the trend was actually going in the right direction with a reduction of sickness absences in January and February.

About staff turnover – the staff survey showed that people were generally happy and there was no negative feelings.

Cllr Lewis asked if feedback was received from people who were leaving. – People mainly referred to personal circumstances except for some of those who had been dismissed who felt understandingly less satisfied.

Cllr Stubbs challenged the impression that everybody was happy given the high level of turnover and suggested the situation be re-assessed six months later. The Chair endorsed the suggestion.

The Service Director for Strategy, People and Performance added that the aging workforce was to be taken into account along with long term sickness absences as people were often simply retiring.

Cllr Adcock asked what had been the rate of participation to the staff survey. – It was higher than the last one and officers would confirm the exact rate.

About waste and recycling – packaging producers were moving towards light weighting packaging and while there had been a lot of cardboard filling the bins during the Christmas period people were now getting less deliveries.

Cllr Stubbs wondered if the target might not be too high. – This was a good target to aim towards although this could be indeed re-evaluated later on. The borough's figures were relatively good in comparison with other authorities in the County.

The Director for Finance (section 151 Officer) added that the targets were reviewed on a yearly basis.

Cllr Parker commented that it was the first time those figures were in the red since the new graph template was used for the performance indicators.

Cllr Crisp asked what the percentage was in reference to. – The Director for Finance (section 151 Officer) clarified this was about the total amount of waste collected and took the opportunity to add that with the rise of the cost of living people were naturally spending less and therefore there was less to recycle.

Cllr Lewis asked if it included the recycling centre. – Indeed it did.

Cllr Brockie commented that the pandemic had changed households' habits with much more waste coming out and the targets may have to be adjusted accordingly.

The Chair suggested that the Service Director for Sustainable Environment joined at the next meeting to answer members' questions.

About food waste – there had been a drop in participation however the 3,000 flats apartments would soon be taking part which would make a difference. Less food waste also didn't necessarily mean a bad thing as people were perhaps throwing less food away.

About detritus – new equipment had been purchased which should help improve street sweeping and litter picking.

About the Jubilee 2 Customer satisfaction net promoter score – a new online booking system was now in place which should boost customer's satisfaction. The Chair commented that the Council's target was more ambitious than the national one and the current score was well above the latter.

Cllr Parker asked if the score was about the online platform or if it included what was happening inside the building. – The teaching staff were also more qualified than people realised and not being aware of it had impacted the score.

Cllr Stubbs challenged the relevance of the staff qualifications. – This was required by national standards.

Cllr Brockie asked about the contracts people would sign up for and the competition from other gym memberships. – The preceding performance indicator was showing that membership growth was good. The model offered was different, more community focussed and including services such as GP referral sessions.

Cllr Parker commented that different types of gyms were suitable for different people, with facilities to train different parts of the body. The J2 Jubilee would attract more of the older generation being perhaps less intimidating and offering both pay as you go and monthly membership.

**Resolved:** That the contents of the report and appendices be noted, and that members continue to monitor and challenge the Council's service and financial performance for this period.

[Watch the debate here](#)

## 6. **TOWN DEAL AND FUTURE HIGH STREET FUNDS UPDATE**

The Deputy Leader introduced the report on the delivery of the Town Deal and Future High Street Funds projects.

Cllr Lewis asked about the new stalls in relation to market improvements, paragraph 2.1.1, and if these could potentially be replaced again in a near future as they were already showing signs of wear. – Indeed this would be looked into.

Cllr Lewis also wondered if the nipper parking would be monitored to ensure people do not park longer than 20 minutes. – Indeed it would.

About paragraph 2.1.2 York Place, Cllr Lewis asked if there was any measure in place to address rough sleeping at the properties / retail units. – The team would have a chat with the individuals to see if how they could support them.

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Cllr Lewis wished to know if the regeneration plans would be presented to this committee once available. – Indeed it would as a standing item and then go through the Planning Committee.

The Chair asked what sort of information members would like to hear about. – Cllr Lewis was interested in milestones and where the money would be allocated within the project.

Cllr Brockie said that things did not always go according to plans and this project in particular felt not entirely predictable. Additional costs were likely to come up which the Council should keep an eye on. – The Deputy leader shared his enthusiasm and confidence about the project.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that Capital and Centric had now been officially appointed and were carrying out feasibility studies towards coming forward with a plan. The costs would be covered by them when they buy the building and it was in their interest to keep them as low as possible for they would be owning and operating the building. Would the costs rise those would therefore not be bared by the Council but by the developers.

Cllr Parker commented that similar projects had been successfully carried out in the past in the borough. Cllr Stubbs recalled times where contracts were broken in the past. – There were indeed always risks.

Cllr Allport asked about the Kidsgrove train station works and shared service hub referred to in paragraph 2.4.2 and 2.4.4 and whether the Council was aware of the difficulty related to the bridge when these were undertaken. – Indeed officers were aware although told back then that this would be dealt with and not interfere with the projects.

Cllr Grocott enquired about Knutton village hall. – The design hadn't been started yet, the focus being currently on finding who would run it. The allocation from the Town Deal would be a capital one and there would need to be a discussion about whether or not the group would have some support going in.

Cllr Grocott also asked about the new hotel. – The feasibility works had been started and would go on until September / October in readiness for the planning application. Capital and Centric would be operating the hotel.

Cllr Stubbs wondered if the bridge situation had been resolved. – Officers would check out the details and get back to members. Post minute note: the bridge repairs have been completed.

**Resolved:** That the report on the delivery of the Town Deal and Future High Street Funds projects be noted.

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### **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

The request for the Service Director for Sustainable Development to come and answer questions about waste and recycling was reiterated and it was suggested this could be scheduled for the June meeting.

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The Town Deal and Future High Street Funds Update would also come back then as a standing item.

**Resolved:** That the work programme be noted and suggestions be made by members.

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**8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**9. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Resolved:** That the next meeting be scheduled on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**Councillor Mark Holland  
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.07 pm