

Report to Full Council: Finance, Assets & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee met on 16th December.

The Chief Executive submitted a report and made a presentation which updated members on the recent statutory guidance, issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to help Councils carry out their Overview and Scrutiny functions effectively. This was supported by the launch of the recent Good Scrutiny Guide by the CfPS. Both papers were intended to ensure councils are aware of the purpose of Overview and Scrutiny, recognise effective Scrutiny and understand how to conduct it together with the benefits it can offer.

Members considered the nature of training and felt that a sequence of topic focussed sessions delivered in house and designed to foster a deeper knowledge of scrutiny subject areas within the finance arena would be a useful addition. In particular, members felt that focussed and concise training relevant to the specific needs of the Scrutiny Committee be programmed, throughout the year, to enable members to build on their current skills in undertaking effective scrutiny reviews.

Moving forward, it was also agreed that the Chief Executive would convene a meeting of the Group Leaders together with the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committee.

DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY:

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney introduced a report, for consultation, which set out the Draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25 approved by Cabinet (17/10/2018).

The Interim Director explained that the MTFs framework set out the Councils four-year spending and funding plans and provided the financial framework for the development of the detailed 2020/21 budget. A detailed draft budget for 2020/21 would be prepared for consideration by Cabinet and Council in February 2020. The strategy assumed income from commercial investments of 0.250m in 2021/22 rising to £1.000m in 2024/25, subject to approval of a commercial strategy and investment programme funded from capital receipts and prudential borrowing. In addition, the MTFs assumed efficiency savings of £0.15m in 2021 rising to £0.600m in 2024/25 from the digital delivery programme.

In respect to Kidsgrove Leisure Centre the Leader confirmed that the 10 year capital strategy assumed a new sports centre would be built and cautioned that there may be future revenue implications which had to be built into the budget.

2020/2021 DRAFT BUDGET SAVINGS PROPOSALS:

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency reported on the current proposals being considered to balance the 2020/21 revenue budget and the proposed capital programme for 2020/21 to 2022/23.

COMMERCIAL STRATEGY:

The Interim Director of Resources and Support Services submitted a report for consultation which presented the Commercial Strategy, a framework for identifying and managing commercial and income generation opportunities. A copy of the strategy was appended to the report.

In response to concern that the strategy did not give enough information to allow for meaningful scrutiny it was explained that the report to the January meeting of this Committee would provide more detail.

The Strategy was generally welcomed.

UPDATE CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL RESTRUCTURE:

The Leader, Councillor S Tagg updated the Committee on the progress made towards the Customer and Digital Services Restructure. The Interim Director of Resources and Support Services went on to outline how the changes would rebalance this section of the organisation.

In response to questions from members regarding the MARS scheme it was agreed that the policy would be recirculated, members would be invited to a presentation of the scheme and that the 16 January meeting of this Committee would receive details of the number of employees taking MARS.

QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT – REVIEW PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

The second quarter 2019-20 Financial and Performance Review report was presented for scrutiny. Members agreed that the report be noted.

Cllr Helena Maxfield

Chair; Finance, Assets & Performance Scrutiny Committee.