

FINANCE, ASSETS & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 30th June, 2022
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present: Councillor Holland (Chair)

Councillors: Bryan Bettley-Smith Talbot
J Tagg Stubbs
P Waring Brockie

Apologies: Councillor Allport

Substitutes: Councillor Grocott (In place of Councillor Allport)

Officers: Denise French Democratic Services Team
Leader
Sarah Wilkes Head of Finance / S151 Officer

Also in attendance: Councillor Sweeney Portfolio Holder for Finance,
Town Centres and Growth

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

52. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March be agreed as a correct record.

53. UPDATE FROM CABINET

At the previous meeting the committee had asked for details about empty units in the town centre as a number rather than a percentage. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth circulated a document showing the details of each empty unit including address, type of property and any additional information including one for which a new lease was currently in progress.

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54. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT - FOURTH QUARTER (JANUARY - MARCH) 2021 - 22

The committee considered the financial and performance review report for the fourth quarter – January – March 2022.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth reported on the council's financial position at year end. A balanced outturn had been forecast but the recent

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draft Statement of Accounts showed a favourable variance of c£4k on the Revenue Budget. The Collection Fund had been expected to deliver a surplus but now showed a deficit which would be mostly funded from Section 31 funding. The council had carried forward £1.5m of funding towards the Capital Programme and some projects under Future High Streets funding and Town Deals would continue or commence this financial year. It was noted that the report before the committee was the position at quarter 4 whereas the council was now at the end of quarter 1; the information showed a snapshot of the financial position.

Members raised the following points:

- Was it possible to include a running total alongside the quarterly financial position as a comparison and to present a more real time scenario? This was agreed.
- How did the council address current issues including inflation which would add additional pressure to the finances? It was agreed that additional information could be added to future reports around mitigation measures and how to address any gaps. The budget setting process for 2023/24 was underway and would include consideration of issues including inflation.

The committee considered the performance review report. There was only one area that had scored red against target and this related to sickness absence. The Portfolio Holder explained various reasons for this including winter illnesses, the Omicron variant, increased mixing due to staff returning to the office.

Members suggested that the use of a 'tick' symbol where there was no target was misleading and asked whether this could be changed?

Resolved: that

- (a) The reports be received;
- (b) Future reports include the current financial position alongside the quarterly position and some narrative around how the council is managing changing financial circumstances; and
- (c) The relevant Portfolio Holders be requested to consider changing the symbols in the performance review report to more accurately reflect the targets/current position and provide an update to the next meeting. Members were welcome to email suggestions to officers or the Portfolio Holders.

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55. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the work programme. It was noted that the committee's remit had not changed since the previous council. Members were advised that the committee's officer scrutiny 'champion' was the Head of Neighbourhood Delivery; the role of the champion included coordinating and liaising between scrutiny members and officers, the scrutiny champions were Heads of Service which enabled them to have a council wide perspective.

Resolved: that the work programme be noted and any Member who has a suggestion for future work for the committee was invited to send an email to officers.

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56. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

57. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

58. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was on Thursday 8 September at 7.00pm.

**Councillor Mark Holland
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 7.17 pm