

OPEN

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

16th OCTOBER 2014

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Mrs Watson (Chairman), Councillor Jones (Vice Chairman) together with Councillors Murray, Roberts, Mrs Hall, Watson and Wheeler

Labour Group

Bell, Richards, Rhind, Southerd, Taylor, Wilkins

In Attendance

Councillor Atkin

FM/42 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that apologies had been received from Councillors Smith and Hewlett. Councillors Mrs Hall and Roberts substituted for them.

FM/43 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The Committee was informed that no declarations of Interest had been received from elected members of the Committee.

FM/44 **MINUTES**

The Open minutes of the meetings held on the 26th June and 4th September were approved as a true record. It was noted that Councillor Wheeler had attended the meeting on 26th June. It was also noted that Councillor Dunn had attended as an observer at the meeting on the 4th September and that his position as a substitute member of the committee had since been clarified. It was agreed that these clarifications be recorded in the minutes.

FM/45 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO.10**

The Committee was informed that no questions had been received from the public.

FM/46 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO.11**

The Committee was informed that no questions had been received from elected members of the Council.

FM/47 **REPORTS OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were no reports of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider.

FM/48 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION**

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Medium Term Financial Position to 2020. This gave a general overview of the financial position. The various projections, it was explained, had been updated in order to take into account the savings that had been made since the start of the current financial year. The balance in 2014/15, it was stated, had increased from £4.1M to £5.7M, due to the better outturn position

The report made it clear that the Council was expected to face a shortfall on its base budget from 2017/18 onwards. Reserves could be used to help bridge this shortfall; although it was pointed out that if the shortfall was to continue, then savings would have to be made in order to rebalance the budget.

Members discussed the report. During this discussion it was made clear that the projections were based on the assumption that the authority would increase the Council Tax by 2% per annum; although this would be determined by the members. The projections for Council Tax income also assumed a 1% growth over the next five years. The continued growth of the district would, it was explained, increase demand for services, which could have an impact on the Council's financial position – by, for example, having to institute additional refuse collection rounds etc.

The Committee discussed how the authority uses its reserves and what level it needs to retain in order to remain safe. Members noted that the Council has a process for a sub-committee of the Finance & Management Committee to allocate funds from the reserves for community and other projects. It was felt that this process ought to continue and that a report setting out the overall amounts to be allocated from the reserves ought to be prepared for this sub-committee to consider.

Resolved:-

That the updated financial projection on the General Fund to 2020 be approved;

That the financial projection provides the basis for planning purposes and setting the General Fund Budget for 2015/16

That a report be provided at the next Committee setting out the minimum reserves required, together with identifying any resources for investment and the process for allocating funding for community and other projects

FM/49 **ICT UPDATE AND WORK PLAN**

Members then considered an update report on the Information Communication Technology (ICT) Work Plan. The key areas of activity were highlighted in the report and the progress made against them was explained.

The report proposed that an options appraisal ought to be conducted on moving the core IT infrastructure into a managed Data Centre. This would, it was explained, help to greatly improve the Council's corporate resilience, especially in terms of disaster recovery. The Committee supported this and agreed that the options appraisal now take place.

The report also suggested that cash machines ought to be introduced in the Civic Offices. This would, it was explained, help to improve the service for customers, especially those who simply wish to make payments. It would also free up staff time, so that they had more capacity to deal with queries and to provide advice and assistance to members of the public.

There was an extensive discussion about this and how the machines would work. Although it was accepted that the introduction of cash machines might be a part of the answer, other improvements were also required. It was agreed that a wider review into the Council's customer services was required. The Committee considered how best to carry out this review. It was felt that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) should undertake it. Given the importance of making progress, it was agreed that OSC should be asked to carry out this review as soon as possible. The Vice Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Atkin, made it clear that he supported this approach.

Resolved:-

That progress on the ICT Work Plan (2013 to 2016) is noted

That an options appraisal is undertaken on moving the core IT infrastructure into a managed data centre, with a report back later in the financial year

That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be requested to carry out a review of the Council's customer services operations, including the potential benefits of introducing cash payment machines in the Civic Offices.

FM/50 **BUSINESS RATE POOLING**

The Committee was informed that South Derbyshire, in conjunction with Derbyshire County Council and the other Derbyshire district councils, had been formally requested to join a Business Rate 'pool'. This pool, it was explained, would enable the authorities to collectively retain more of the additional income from the growth of their business rates beyond a certain level and so not have to transfer the funds to the central government. The agreement to participate in the pool would last in the first instance, for one

year. The Committee heard that similar business rate pools had been established in other areas parts of the country and had worked well.

Members discussed the proposed pool and made it clear that they supported it and welcomed the likely financial benefits to the Council of participation. It was also seen as a practical way in which authorities in the County could work together towards securing greater devolution of funds from the centre.

Resolved:-

That subject to final governance proposals being agreed with fellow authorities, the Council enters into a County-wide Business Rates Pool from 2015/16

That delegated authority is granted to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, in liaison with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, to sign a joint submission for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the 31st October 2014.

FM/51 **GRADUATE PLANNING OFFICER**

The Committee was asked to agree the appointment of a Graduate Planning Officer for a period of three years. The appointment would help to provide additional capacity to the planning service and ensure its long term resilience, especially in terms of 'succession planning' as existing staff retire.

Members welcomed the proposed appointment and the fact that there would be career development for the officer, who would be supported in obtaining professional planning qualifications.

Resolved:-

To approve the recruitment of a Graduate Planning Officer to the Council's Planning Service on a three year contract

FM/52 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its revised work programme for the year.

Resolved:-

To approve the updated work programme

FM/53 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Resolved:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be

transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

FM/54 **EXEMPT QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE No 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions had been received.

FM/55 **TO RECEIVE THE EXEMPT MINUTES**

The Exempt minutes of the meetings held on the 26th June and 4th September were approved as a true record.

FM/56 **CARELINE SERVICES – PARTNERSHIP PROJECT**

Members then considered a report on the 'Careline Services Partnership Project'. It was noted that this project to deliver these services across the county had been considered during the summer by the Housing & Community Services Committee and had been supported.

Members thanked the Director of Housing & Environmental Services, Bob Ledger, in his work on this project.

Resolved:-

To agree further expenditure from the Housing Revenue Account as specified in the report.

FM/57 **GROVE HALL EXTREME ZONE**

The Committee received a report on the proposed 'Extreme Zone' project at Grove Hall. This would involve the refurbishment and development of the hall, and the neighbouring Green Bank leisure centre, as well as the provision of skateboard facilities in the community. Members considered the proposals and supported them.

Resolved

To approve the recommendations

FM/58 **LAND AT SWADLINCOTE**

The Committee considered a report asking to revise the terms for granting vehicular right of way and easement across land owned by the Council.

Resolved

To approve the recommendations

CLLR ANN WATSON

CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7;20p.m.