

SPECIAL FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

25th September 2013

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Wheeler (Chairman), Councillor Mrs. Watson (Vice Chairman), and Councillors Bale (substitute for Councillor Jones), Hall (substitute for Councillor Lemmon), Stanton (substitute for Councillor Smith), Murray and Watson.

Labour Group

Councillors Bell, Mulgrew (substitute for Councillor Richards), Southerd, Rhind, Taylor and Wilkins.

FM/41. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Jones, Lemmon, Smith and Richards.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

FM/42 **ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2012/13**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Services presenting the audited accounts for 2012/13.

The Director confirmed that External Audit has signed off the accounts as unqualified, with no errors or misstatements. He said that this demonstrated that the authority presents good value for money and is financially sound. There were no issues to be followed up and this was a good endorsement of the management of the Council and its assets.

The Director took members through the statement, referring to performance against budget, the level of reserves and the Council's balance sheet. He drew particular attention to the deficit in the pension fund which would need to be provided for over the next few years. He recommended the accounts for the Committee to sign-off.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the report be noted; and that***
- (2) The accounts and annual statements for 2012/13 are approved and the Chairman be authorised to sign them for publication.***

FM/43. **LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME-FINANCIAL UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Finance and Corporate Services which provided an update on the costs associated with the

Local Council tax Support and Discount Scheme since its implementation in April 2013. The report also dealt with the demand for Discretionary Housing Payments (“DHP”). This was the second report to members on the new scheme.

The Director took Members through some of the detail of the report and highlighted the performance against estimates showing a variance less than £300, 000 and a projected cost of £4.7 million.

He pointed out that approximately 2000 households (being working age claimants) in the District would be paying Council tax for the first time. The report showed that the current collection rate was approaching 40% and that an anticipated final rate of 78% was projected, which would represent a relatively good outturn.

The Director reported that demand for DHP had slowed and that it was expected to stay within budget. He also advised Members that the Government had announced extra funding to support DHP but that this would be based on a bidding process from local authorities. The officer undertook to present a further report on this later in the year.

The report also addressed the issue of the Lone Parents’ Support to Work Project. The Director stated that a considerable amount of work had been done on this with the CVS who had provided excellent support. Funding was being provided to lone parents to access training and information about the scheme.

The members discussed the report and sought clarification on a number of issues including the tapering of Council tax support from eight to four weeks, action regarding non-payment and information provided to those receiving a bill for the first time and the situation with empty properties. The members were informed that details on empty properties and the New Homes Bonus allocation for 2014/15 would be included in the forthcoming Budget Round.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted and agreed.

R. WHEELER

CHAIRMAN

The meeting ended at 6.30 p.m.