

CORPORATE AND PUBLIC SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 November 2017 at 6.00pm at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor A. Andrew (Chair)
Councillor M. Bird
Councillor S. Craddock
Councillor M. Nazir
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor G. Sohal

Portfolio Holder

Councillor S. Coughlan	Leader of the Council
Councillor L. Jeavons	Deputy Leader
Councillor K. Chambers	Personnel and Business Support/Agenda for Change
Councillor D. Coughlan	Social Care
Councillor C. Jones	Clean and Green
Councillor I. Shires	Community, Leisure and Culture

Officers Present

Barbara Watt	Director of Public Health
Paul Gordon	Head of Business Change
Chris Holliday	Head of Leisure, Culture and Operations
Chris Knowles	E&E Finance Business Partner
Mark Lavender	Head of Programme Management
Simon Tranter	Head of Regeneration & Development
Steven Pretty	Head of Planning, Engineering & Transportation
Craig Goodall	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Matthew Powis	Democratic Services Officer

220/17 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Creaney, K. Phillips, S. Wade and M. Ward.

221/17 Substitution

There were no substitutions.

222/17 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

223/17 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

224/17 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2017 copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

225/17 Draft Revenue Budget and Efficiency Plan 2017/18 – 2020/21

The Committee considered the draft revenue budget and efficiency plan for 2017/18 and 2020/21. The Committee noted that policy savings had previously been consulted as part of the 2017/18 budget setting process.

The Chair invited each portfolio holder to present their savings to the Committee. The following summary of the discussion in regard to savings were discussed by the Committee, broken down by portfolio.

Personnel and Business Support

Proposed Investment in ICT function, infrastructure support and ICT Strategic & change delivery resources (supporting change)

Members were informed of the proposed investment in ICT across the Council. A Member highlighted potential compatibility issues between Windows and Apple and suggested that a comprehensive plan to ensure compatibility between the two systems was required. He further suggested that as the Council was looking to appoint a new Director for Resources and Transformation that it may be better to wait until an appointment had been made to the post before decisions were taken regarding ICT investment. He commented that the Council was falling behind with ICT investment and improved services were required.

The Committee were informed that the Blackberry based email software 'Good for Enterprise' would be coming to an end within the Council and further information on its replacement was requested.

A Member also highlighted the advantages of a single ICT platform across the Council but stressed the need to retrain existing employees and ensure the associated cost was covered for this.

Clean and Green

New Saving - Additional efficiencies in Clean & Green

A Member sought clarification regarding the proposed efficiencies in Clean and Green. The Committee were informed that a response would be provided in writing.

Saving 106 – 4 day working week over Monday to Friday Waste Collection Service

Members were informed of a proposed 4 day working week for waste collection service operatives and proposed to close waste collection depots over the Christmas period.

Deputy Leader and Regeneration

Proposed investment - Cost of Gullies

A Member highlighted that the Council had recently invested in a new gully cleaning system and clarification was sought in regard to additional expenditure. The Committee were informed that the new system had been working efficiently since installation and ensured gully systems were properly dealt with while achieving financial efficiencies for the Council. It was noted that without the new system the cost of the service to the Council would be higher.

Saving 136 – General efficiencies within Planning, Engineering and Transportation

A Member sought clarification regarding the proposed efficiencies within Planning, Engineering and Transportation. The Committee were informed that a response would be provided in writing.

Saving 63 – Introduction of a street & road works permit scheme

The Chair sought clarification on whether the introduction of a street and road works permit scheme could be introduced in year to benefit from additional income. The Head of Planning, Engineering & Transportation confirmed that other Black Country Local Authorities had been leading on the introduction of street & road work permits and that the Council would be looking to implement permits in spring/summer 2018.

Community, Leisure and Culture

Savings 35 – Removal of the Council's Revenue subsidy to the Forest Art Centre

It was noted that the Forest Arts Centre was placed to meet its planned revenue reduction of £100,000 in April 2018 with an additional reduction of £185,000 in 2019. It was noted that a proposed refurbishment of the A3 Arena could reduce financial pressures on the centre whilst improving the community offer.

Savings 125 – Staff savings within regulatory/enforcement

It was noted that staff savings within regulatory/enforcement department were still to be finalised.

Savings 34 – Relocate local history centre into Lichfield street central library

The Committee were informed that the relocation of the local history centre from Essex Street to the Lichfield Street Central Library building would commence once the renovation and restoration of the building was complete in November 2018. A Member sought clarification, which was provided, that regulations had been considered in regard to fire safety, construction materials and adequate safeguards. It was confirmed that the National Archive in Kew had been involved throughout the process of the development.

Saving 120 – Increase Crematoria fees further (6%)

The Committee were informed that research had identified that a new crematoria in Staffordshire would impact on the crematorium in Wolverhampton rather than Streetly. It was further noted that analysis of local demographic information meant it was anticipated that demand for Streetly Crematorium would be consistent until approximately 2050.

Social Care

Saving 76 – Reduction in grant to Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB)

The Committee were informed that discussions had been taking place with the Council and CAB to identify savings from the subsidy.

A Member expressed concern that as the lease for the Quasar building was coming to an end it would wise to budget for decommissioning costs to address dilapidations.

Leader of the Council

Election Function

A Member noted that savings could be made if the Council changed to a four yearly all out election cycle and asked for a report on the issue considered at a future meeting.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Budget Savings 2017/18 be noted;**
- 2. That, a report on the current progress of the Forest Art Centre grant reduction be presented to the next meeting of the Committee;**
- 3. That, a report outlining options for four year elections be presented to a future meeting of the Committee;**
- 4. In connection with (1) above, information on the proposed efficiencies within Clean and Green & Planning, Engineering and Transportation directorate be provided to Members in writing.**

226/17 Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn for 2017/18

The Committee considered a report on the forecast revenue and capital outturn position for 2017/18 for services within the remit of the Committee.

The position was a capital forecast underspend of £6.892m against the budget of £82.101m, which had been requested to be carried forward. The E&E Finance Business Partner confirmed that there had been a forecast revenue underspend of £227,000, which had been requested to be transferred to earmarked reserves and for implementation of action plans.

A Member enquired whether a contingency budget for planning application appeals had been considered as part of the Planning, Engineering & Transportation budget. The E&E Business Partner confirmed that contingency proposals would be taken into consideration.

Members requested a report on the Council's Capital Programme at a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

- 1. That, the revenue underspend of £227,000 be noted for the use of and transfer to earmarked reserves and implementation of action plans;**
- 2. That £6.892m of capital be carried forward;**
- 3. That, a report on the Council's Capital Programme be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.**

227/17 Areas of focus – 2017-18

The Committee considered its areas of focus and the forward plans of Walsall Council and the Black Country Joint Executive Committee.

Resolved:

That:

1. The areas of focus 2017/18 be noted;
2. The forward plans be noted.

228/17 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 23 November 2017.

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.56p.m.

Signed:

Date: