

**CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
4TH MARCH 2020**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Parsons)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Baines)
Councillors Boldrin, Gerrard, Goddard and
Shepherd

Councillors Barkley (Deputy Leader of the Council
and Cabinet Lead Member for Finance and
Property Services) and Rollings (Cabinet Lead
Member for Transformation)

Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Head of Customer Experience
Head of Finance and Property Services
Head of Strategic Support
Democratic Services Officer (LS)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Paling and Radford

This meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

27. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

28. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

29. DECLARATIONS - THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

30. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

31. PERFORMANCE MONITORING (PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 3)

Considered, a report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Services providing performance information in respect of the Corporate Plan objectives and key performance indicators within the Committee's remit (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the report: Cabinet Lead Member for Transformation, Strategic Director of Corporate Services, Head of Customer Experience, Head of Strategic Support.

The Cabinet Lead Member for Equalities, Member and Strategic Services had sent an apology.

Summary, key points of discussion (focus on red indicators):

- (i) Corporate Performance Objectives Quarter 3 2019/20 (second paragraph, agenda page 14): Noted that significant volume were red or amber.
- (ii) SLE1 – FP (1) (agenda page 17): Chair referred to importance of effective scrutiny of Market Risk Premium (MRP) for commercial property investment moving forward (rate of return).
- (iii) ERM1 – SS (agenda page 18): Committee discussed Emergency Centre Volunteers (Council staff volunteers who had been trained to undertake role, if needed), including that the basis for the target number (50) was unknown due to changes in personnel. Also discussed, difficulties in securing additional Flood Wardens, some areas not covered despite efforts made. Councillors best placed to assist this, had been asked to promote, details of which outlined, together with support/training provided to Flood Wardens. Suggestion that Loughborough University geography students may wish to participate, recognised transient/local knowledge needed. Further request for assistance from councillors could be made.
- (iv) ERM5 – CIS (2) (agenda page 19): New Customer Promise. Awaiting Senior Management approval on new method of collecting customer satisfaction feedback, report programmed for consideration by Senior Management within next 2-4 weeks.
- (v) DES2 – CIS (1) (agenda page 20): Webchat tied in with telephony update, delayed due to significant difficulties with supplier. Update programmed to go live beginning April 2020, webchat pilot to follow. Delayed upgrade payment to supplier. Brief discussion regarding online customer satisfaction, factors influencing, recent performance, plans to possibly measure differently.
- (vi) DES2 = CIS (2) (agenda page 21): Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system included self-service portal, not live. Number of technical issues, increasingly cost prohibitive, Council may go out to market for better value. Confirmed that more meaningful measure for increase of services online in Corporate Delivery Plan 2020/21.
- (vii) DES3 – CIS (2) (agenda page 21): Confirmed that amber status due to telephony update delay.
- (viii) DES3 – SS (agenda page 22): Delay due to ongoing discussions with neighbouring districts over possible shared software solution for staff personal reviews, other options being explored. Also, possible move towards capability-based performance system being considered. Reference to relationship between people and culture.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Lead Member and officers for attending to assist with consideration of the report.

RESOLVED that the report providing performance information in respect of the Corporate Plan objectives and key performance indicators within the Committee's remit (Quarter 3 2019/20) be noted.

Reason

The Committee's remit included receiving regular performance monitoring reports so that it could ensure that targets and objectives were being met and identify areas where performance might be improved. Having noted the discussion at this meeting and made specific resolution where it so wished, the Committee was content to note the performance information report.

32. REVENUE MONITORING (GENERAL FUND AND HRA) PERIOD 9

Considered, a report of the Head of Finance and Property Services to assist the Committee in monitoring the General Fund and HRA revenue position (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the report: Cabinet Lead Member for Finance and Property Services, Head of Finance and Property Services, Head of Customer Experience.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Reference to major impact of Planning and Regeneration shortfall (£265k) and Supported Living Housing Benefit costs above subsidy allowance (£584k). Also, £228k of £300k Nonspecific Savings full year target not found, would be offset by salary underspend, outlined in report. £574k underspend on Housing Revenue Account, difficulties in getting contractor to carry out work.
- (ii) Challenging position faced in respect of Supported Living Housing Benefit costs discussed. Demand-led. Two large providers in Borough. National issue. Currently difficult to control. Linked to Universal Credit, Council could claim back less of the cost, further explanation of which provided. Representations being made to address issue. Providers registering as Social Landlords would assist, progress made with Carpenters Arms in that respect. Committee was very sympathetic to the Council's position and recognised that all possible action was being taken.
- (iii) Several of the overspends set out in Appendix 1 to the report had been addressed in the 2020/21 budget, these were outlined. Others had not been notified and, therefore, had not yet been addressed and would need looking at.
- (iv) Reference to Planning and Regeneration restructure agreed in April 2018, that had expanded costs by over £200k, forecasting additional fee income to offset those. Had been challenged by scrutiny at the time. Ongoing assurances had been given that there would be additional fee income, including during the current year. That income not realised, position warranted challenge, reasons for outcome needed.
- (v) Brief discussion regarding cost of Building Control service, service being reviewed.
- (vi) Council was in uncertain and reducing funding environment, every effort being made to mitigate that, focus on income generation. £7m in balances forecast by

end of next year. Close and continued monitoring being undertaken. Reference to work being undertaken to obtain additional revenue within capital schemes.

- (vii) Focus of Committee at this meeting was the revenue position at end Period 9 2019/20.
- (viii) Reference to Nonspecific Savings targets in current and 2020/21 budget, also amount referenced in Corporate Delivery Plan 2020/21. Concern that savings needed but had not identified those well so far. Brief explanation of work being undertaken to identify moving forward. Useful if monitoring reports could list identified savings.
- (ix) Concern that underspend on HRA was affecting Council's tenants in that required work was not being done. Area that may warrant inclusion on scrutiny work programme. Brief explanation of work being undertaken to address matter, improvements had been seen. Work was only signed off once Council was completely happy with it.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Lead Member and officers for attending to assist with consideration of the report.

RESOLVED

1. that the Head of Planning and Regeneration be asked to attend the next scheduled meeting of the Committee to discuss the issue raised in (iv) above, given the revenue impact of the matter and the Committee's role in scrutinising the Council's revenue position;
2. that, further to the issue raised in (viii) above, a schedule of the Nonspecific Savings that have been identified against target be included in future revenue monitoring reports submitted to the Committee;
3. that the report setting out the General Fund and HRA revenue position at Period 9 2019/20 be noted.

Reasons

1. The Committee wished to understand the reasons for the shortfall, that being contrary to previous assurances on the matter and the rationale of the Planning and Regeneration restructure agreed in April 2018.
2. The Committee was concerned that this target had not been achieved in the current year and providing this information would enable it to effectively monitor progress.
3. The Committee's remit included receiving regular financial monitoring reports and, having noted the discussion at this meeting and made specific resolution where it so wished, it was content to note the revenue monitoring report.

33. DIGITISATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL - SCOPE

This item had been included on the agenda at the request of the Chair, to enable the Committee to discuss the scope for this Panel, with a view to the outcome being incorporated into a formal scope document for subsequent agreement by the Scrutiny Commission.

The Panel was listed as having a potential start date of Spring 2020 and its Chair was Councillor Parsons. The Panel's scope as currently set out was stated under item 8 on the agenda, filed with these minutes.

Assisting with consideration of the item: Strategic Director of Corporate Services, Head of Customer Experience, Democratic Services Officer.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Current scope reflected initial Scrutiny Commission position on what Panel should consider.
- (ii) View that focus on front end of website not appropriate or useful scrutiny for a panel. The Digitisation and Transformation agenda warranted a wider scrutiny scope.
- (iii) The scrutiny scope should explain in plain language the question(s) to be asked and what the work intended to achieve.
- (iv) A suitable focus for the Panel from within the Digitisation and Transformation agenda could be identified under the next item on the agenda, when the Committee's work programme was considered, with that focus/topic to then be used by the Chair and Vice-chair to draft a detailed scope document, with assistance from appropriate officers, for subsequent agreement by the Scrutiny Commission.
- (v) Panel should not be progressed if a useful area of work could not be identified.

RESOLVED that this matter be progressed on the basis set out in (iv) above.

Reason

To work towards an appropriate and useful scrutiny scope for the Digitisation and Transformation of Services Scrutiny Panel.

34. WORK PROGRAMME

Considered a report of the Head of Strategic Support to assist the Committee in (i) reviewing and planning the scrutiny work it would undertake moving forward; (ii) considering a request of the Scrutiny Commission that this Committee "review the Budget Scrutiny Panel report on a quarterly basis"; and (iii) considering, at the request of the Chair, the dates of future scheduled meetings of the Committee (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the report: Strategic Director of Corporate Services, Head of Customer Experience, Democratic Services Officer.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) To assist Committee in reviewing work programme, report included the current work programme, Corporate Strategy 2020-24, proposed Corporate Delivery Plan 2020/21, current Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions, details of the services which the Committee had responsibility for scrutinising.
- (ii) Committee agreed that existing items on work programme should be retained. Addition of regular capital monitoring reports was supported, Committee currently only monitored at outturn.
- (iii) Chair suggested Committee highlighted issues from the Corporate Delivery Plan and that he and the Vice-chair then review the work programme following the meeting with those issues in mind, with the resulting proposed work programme to be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.
- (iv) Commercialisation and Transformation were significant matters which warranted monitoring/scrutiny, including outcomes. Suggestion that visions within Corporate Strategy should also guide scrutiny work.
- (v) Discussion regarding the questions that the public would wish scrutiny to ask and the outcomes they would be looking for.
- (vi) Committee could hold additional meetings to the quarterly meetings scheduled by Council, if it so wished. Such meetings should be useful/necessary. Limited resources available to support regular increase in meeting frequency. Timetabling of meetings briefly explained. Noted that Committee may wish to hold additional meetings for specific purpose in future.
- (vii) How budget scrutiny should be undertaken moving forward discussed. Committee could recommend to Scrutiny Commission that it continue to be undertaken by a Budget Scrutiny Panel (Commission responsible for establishing scrutiny panels).

RESOLVED

1. that the existing items on the Committee's work programme be retained, with the addition of capital monitoring reports at each quarterly meeting;
2. that, following this meeting, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee consider appropriate additions to the Committee's work programme, the focus for that work being the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan 2020/21 and issues highlighted above;
3. that the proposed work programme resulting from 2. above be considered at an additional meeting of the Committee to be held for the purpose and scheduled between this meeting and the next scheduled meeting of the Committee in July 2020;
4. that, as part of the work outlined in 2. above, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee consider a useful scope for the Digitisation and Transformation of Services Scrutiny Panel, with appropriate assistance from relevant officers, with that scope to be emailed to members of the Committee for input prior to it being submitted to Scrutiny Commission for agreement;
5. that it be recommended to the Scrutiny Commission that scrutiny of the Council's draft budget 2021/22 be undertaken on the same basis as for the 2020/21

budget, that being via a Budget Scrutiny Panel, and that that Panel also monitor the outcomes of this year's Panel report.

Reasons

1. To enable the Committee to continue and widen work within its remit of receiving regular performance and financial monitoring reports
2. To work towards an efficient and effective approach to scrutiny, focused on the priorities of the Council.
3. To avoid delay in agreeing and commencing the above scrutiny.
4. To ensure panel work is useful, adds value and makes best use of the resources available to support panel work.
5. To ensure the most effective approach to scrutiny of the Council's budget. To ensure continuity and retain experience, the Committee supports retention of the Panel Chair and membership but would look to expand that membership if possible. An additional Panel meeting in June would also be useful, to commence budget scrutiny at an earlier stage and to consider the previous year's outturn position. Monitoring of the outcomes of this year's Budget Scrutiny Panel is more appropriately undertaken by next year's Panel, rather than this Committee (reference request of Scrutiny Commission, Minute 94.2, 13th January 2020).

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 27th April 2020 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee.