

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date and Time:** Tuesday 16 February 2021 at 7.00 pm

**Place:** Council Chamber

**Present:**

Worlock (Chairman), Axam, Davies, Dorn, Drage, Farmer, Lamb, Makepeace-Browne, Smith, Wildsmith and Wright

**In attendance:** Bailey, Forster, Kennett, Neighbour and Radley

**Officers:** Hughes, Phillips, Foy and Vincent

### **100 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **101 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

### **102 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received.

### **103 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)**

None declared.

### **104 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements.

### **105 MEMBER TRAINING - A REVIEW**

Members were provided an overview of the Council's member training and discussed the support and requirements for members moving forwards. It was recognised that not all members would require all areas of training offered but importance of clarity is required on mandatory topics and discretionary events.

Members were asked for their views on previous training, possible improvements and additional training. Discussions centred around:

- List statutory training undertaken by members and to provide links to the types of training undertaken.
- To offer online training modules with tests and examinations.
- Skills training and Member Development programme with effective timelines.

- Encouragement for more members to attend.
- Supply feedback on training perceived in an electronic and detailed analysis.
- Consider introducing mentoring to share skills and expertise across the organisation.
- Use allocated Member Training Dates more efficiently.

Topics for future training:

- IT requirements for TEAMS and SharePoint and new software training as it becomes available.
- Training for clear distinction to differentiate between briefings and training
- Further GDPR refresher training and planning.
- Safeguarding training.
- Equality and diversity training.
- Financial Statements training.
- To provide briefings on changes or significant updates in Government legislations and the implications.

## **DECISION**

1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report and the training undertaken.
1. The recommendations to Cabinet are as discussed and considered and will be documented and captured in a list to be circulated to all Council Members.

## **106 DRAFT BUSINESS CARE FOR HOUSING COMPANY**

The Committee were presented with the Business Case to set up a new Company limited by shares as a vehicle to hold the Council owned Edenbrook development of 41 apartments. At the Council meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> January; Members approved the establishment of a Council owned company subject to the business case being presented to Cabinet in March 2021. The Business Case has been presented in line with HM Treasury Green Book Five Case Business Model.

Members were advised of the two reasons for this business case. These being to secure more affordable housing for residents and to generate long term steady revenue for the Council.

## **DECISION**

The Committee would forward to Cabinet the following considerations on the Business Case.

- Add the Management Case to list of five key elements from Appendix 1 to the front of the report.
- The report to Cabinet should highlight high risk events, key milestones including MHCLG guidance with more detail and timelines
- Clarification was necessary to clarify the reference to rent base of 80% of current marketing rents raising by 3% per annum. The 3% uplift will need sensitivity testing on each occasion.
- There was a need to clarify the intention to track rent renewals with base figures and salary increments to ensure affordable housing.
- CPI (Consumer Price Index) will cap rent increases and so Hart may need to work within this legislation to protect tenants.
- It was confirmed that the 3% uplift figure in market rents would be reflected in the papers for Cabinet. This calculated model will be sensitivity tested and all legislation guidance will be factored in to reflect the numbers.

#### **107 DRAFT BUDGET 2021/2022**

Members considered the report which provided a summary of the revenue and capital budget proposals for 2021/2022 approved by Cabinet and recommended to Council. The report included the statutory statement of the Head of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) to Council on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves. This proposed budget referenced numbers included in the final Finance settlement for 2021/2022 which was published on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Members noted that the Government's multi-year Spending Review, due in 2019 was once again replaced by a short-term Spending Round, meaning that, in substance, any budget to be proposed will only be for one-year only. No figures have been made available for local government funding beyond 2021/22, either nationally or locally. This report therefore did not give any realistic projection for 2022/2023, however indicative budget requirements had been entered.

The Chairman advised Members that no additional papers had been received since the last meeting of the committee and the Budget Book would be available before going to the next full Council. Members were advised that all questions should be forwarded to the S151 Officer who would respond within 24 hours and recommended to move on to the next item of the agenda without any further discussion.

#### **108 2021-22 BUDGET MONITORING - TO END OF DECEMBER**

The Committee was advised of the position on revenue and capital expenditure at the end of December 2020. Cabinet would consider this report at its meeting on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March. It was noted that the forecast overspend on controllable budgets is £612k for 2020/21 before accounting adjustments and any deficit

required would be transferred from Reserves at the end of the year after all year-end adjustments had taken place and any Accounting adjustments which significantly affect the year end position, at which time can fully account for key areas of spend such as Housing Benefits and Business Rates payments to cover policy decisions made by Central Government during the year.

Officers were thanked for their hard work in this challenging year and acknowledged the increase in workloads during this difficult time.

Members discussed:

- Total reduced income from COVID.
- Clarification was sought on how staffing costs are calculated. These costs would be separated in the Budget Book.
- All details outlined and confirmed correct for expenditure year to date with further project adjustments to be reflected in the Outturn Statement which will include transfer from revenue to capital projects.
- Scheme funding was withdrawn for Fleet Road Pedestrianisation, the report for this will be presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March by officers.
- Housing benefits and additional rent allowances will be reconciled as part of the Outturn Statement.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The revised projections and reasons for the main revenue variations, highlighted in Paragraph 4 and analysed in Appendix 1, be noted.
2. The current spending position for Capital shown, in Paragraph 5 and Appendix 2 which includes project details be noted.

### **109 NOMINATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNING IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN MONITORING**

Members nominated were Councillors Farmer, Makepeace-Brown, Smith and Wildsmith to join a cross party working group to monitor the action plan for the Planning Performance Peer Review. The Chairman commended the working group on the tremendous job they did last year, and the Monitoring Officer requested the working group also include looking at performance and complaint handling.

### **110 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The Cabinet Work Programme was considered and amended:

Climate Change Working Group revised date to be April after consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### **111 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was considered and amended:

1. Climate Change Working Group in March.
2. Multi-Agency Flooding Meeting to be scheduled early April.
3. Hart's Equality Objectives be included in April.
4. Business Plan for April.
5. Fleet Road Pedestrianisation costs in March.
6. External presentations for the forthcoming year.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm