

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING Tuesday, 17th October 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Clegg (in the Chair); Councillors Sultan Ali, Holly, Robinson, Smith, Zaheer and Zaman.

OFFICERS: V. Bradshaw (Chief Finance Officer), J. Murphy (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), J. McGregor (Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care), J. Rooney (Assistant Director – Information, Customers and Communities), L. Griffiths and P. Thompson (Resources Directorate).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

27 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Meredith, O’Rourke and Rush.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

28 In accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct, Councillor Robinson declared a personal interest in agenda item 16 (Revenue Budget Update 2018/19 to 2020/21 and Saving Programme 2018/19 to 2019/20 - Savings Proposals Appendix) insofar as the savings proposals contained therein related to Services that were partially or wholly in the remit of the Cabinet Member for the Housing and Environment Portfolio, to whom she was the Assistant.

URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

29 There were no urgent items of business for the Committee to consider.

MINUTES

30 Decision:
That the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 18th July be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW 2016/17

31 Decision:
That the report detailing the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review 2016/17 be deferred to a future meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

PROPOSED LOCAL POSITIVE RECRUITMENT CRITERIA POLICY

32 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Resources that provided Members with details of the Council’s proposed Local Positive Recruitment Policy, which represented an amendment to the Council’s existing Recruitment and Selection Policy. The report was being presented to this Committee for consultative purposes and would be forwarded on to the Cabinet for consideration and approval at its meeting on 24th October 2017.

Alternatives considered:

The Council could decide not to implement the policy that was detailed in the report; although this could potentially impact on its ability to meet its commitment to improve the prosperity of the residents of the Borough.

Decision:

That the Cabinet at its meeting on 24th October 2017 be recommended to approve the Rochdale Residency Criteria Statement, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, and that it be applied to all entry posts, that is those jobs graded 1 to 3.

Reasons for the recommendation:

The report provides details of the Council's proposed Local Positive Recruitment Policy for consideration and approval by the Cabinet.

FINANCE UPDATE REPORT 2017/18

33 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer which updated Members on the Council's financial position as at the end of July 2017 and which had sought approval from the Cabinet of the Budget Pressures Fund and Capital Virement expenditure. This report had been approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on 14th September 2017, where the recommendations contained therein were approved.

A Member referred to the Authority's balances and asked if a comparison of the level of the Council's balances and the underlying reasons behind the levels of balances could be forwarded to members of the Committee.

Alternatives considered:

Not reporting on financial performance puts at risk the achievement of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. Effective budget management was regarded as being critical to ensure that financial resources are spent in line with the budget and are targeted towards the Council's priorities. Monitoring enabled the early identification of variations against the plan and facilitates timely corrective action.

Decision:

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) The Chief Finance Officer be requested to forward to Members of the Committee a comparison of the level of the Council's balances and the underlying reasons behind the levels of balances.

Reasons for the recommendations:

Effective budget management was critical to ensuring financial resources were spent in line with the budget and are targeted towards the Council's priorities. Monitoring enables the early identification of variations against the plan and facilitates timely corrective action. The submitted report provided an overview of the Financial Position for the Council and focuses on the position as at the end of July 2017.

COLLECTION FUND 2017/18

34 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer presented a report that updated Members on the Council's Collection Fund outturn position as at the end of July 2017. The Committee were advised that this report had previously been submitted to the Council's Cabinet where the recommendations contained therein were approved.

Alternatives considered:

None: the item was presented for information purposes.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Reason for decision:

Monitoring enables the early identification of variations against the plan and facilitates timely corrective action.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018/19 TO 2022/23

35 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer that updated Members on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23. The Committee were advised that this report had been presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 14th September 2017 where the recommendations contained therein were approved.

Alternatives considered:

None, the report was presented to the Committee for information purposes.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Reason for decision:

The Council has a legal requirement to set a balanced budget for 2018/19 by no later than 11th March 2018. The Medium Term Financial Strategy provided a key part of the budget setting process.

REVENUE BUDGET UPDATE 2018/19 TO 2020/21 AND SAVING PROGRAMME 2018/19 TO 2019/20

36 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer which provided Members with an update on the latest position regarding the Council's Revenue Budget for 2018/19 to 2020/2021 and an update regarding Savings Proposals in order to meet the budget gap for 2018/19 to 2019/2020.

Alternatives considered:

The Council was legally obliged to set a balanced revenue budget. The budget setting process was complex and had to be undertaken in a planned way. Whilst budgets were prepared in accordance with approved guidelines, a number of alternative options relating to savings proposals and budget pressures were considered to be part of the

overall budget setting process.

Consideration had also been given to a number of options in putting forward the savings proposals contained in the submitted report and various alternate options were outlined. To do nothing was not considered to be an option as the Council was legally required to set a balanced budget.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Reasons for the decision:

The Cabinet was required to recommend a balanced Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2018/19 to the Budget Council meeting in February 2018 and provisional budgets for 2019/20 to 2020/21. It was the responsibility of this Committee to scrutinise those proposals and if necessary to propose alternatives for the Cabinet to consider ahead of a final recommendation to the Council. The Council is required to set a balanced budget for 2018/19 by no later than 11th March 2018.

DISCRETIONARY FEES & CHARGES 2018/19

37 The Committee was consulted on a report of the Chief Finance Officer that outlined proposed discretionary fees and charges across the authority for 2018/19; the report having been considered initially by the Cabinet at its meeting on 14th September 2017 and subsequently by the Council's four Township Committees.

In discussing proposed charges for the Adult Care Directorate it was noted that the Appointee-ship fee was 'proposed to be increased which, it was felt, would better reflect the cost of the services being provided'. Members of the Committee requested that further details relating to this proposal be provided by the Director of Adult Care.

Alternatives considered:

Not to review or increase the authority's fees and charges. This would potentially reduce the income available to the Council and make it more difficult to achieve a balanced budget.

Decision:

That (1) the report be noted,

(2) The Director of Adult Care be requested to forward to Members of the Committee further information relating to the sentence in the submitted report that 'Adult Care – Appointee-ship fee increased to better reflect the cost of the service provided' (paragraph 5.4 of the submitted report refers).

Reason for decision:

The Authority undertakes an annual review of discretionary fees and charges as part of the budget setting process. It is a requirement of this process that Elected Members agree a general level of increase for all income streams taking into account the prevailing rate of inflation. For the 2018/19 financial

year, Elected Members were asked to agree an increase of 2.0%, wherever possible to ensure that the Authority sets a balanced budget for the forthcoming year (2018/19).

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2018/19 TO 2020/21

38 The Committee were consulted on a report of the Chief Finance Officer that sought the views of Members on the Council's proposed Capital Programme 2018/19 – 2020/21.

In discussing the part of the report that related to the Commercial Investment Fund, a Member requested further information relating to the operation of the Fund asking if the Director of Economy could present a report at the end of the financial year (March/April 2018) which shows the expected returns from an investment against the actual returns.

Alternatives considered:

None: Consultation on the proposed Capital Programme was a legal requirement.

Decision:

(1) That the Capital Programme and provisional programmes for 2019/20 and 2020/21 be noted;

(2) The Director of Economy be requested to present a report to a future meeting of the Committee, perhaps around the end of the financial year (March/April 2018), detailing the operation of the Commercial Investment Fund, showing for example the expected returns from an investment against the actual returns.

Reasons for decision:

The Council is legally obliged to set a balanced budget. Budgets are prepared in accordance with the approved guidelines.

WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

39 Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2017/2018.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Reason for the decision:

The report is presented for information purposes, outlining the Committee's programme of reports during 2017/18.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

40 Decision:

That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

Reason for Decision:

Should the press and public remain during debate on these items there may be a disclosure of information that is deemed to be exempt under Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

REVENUE BUDGET UPDATE 2018/19 TO 2020/21 AND SAVING PROGRAMME 2018/19 TO 2019/20 - SAVINGS PROPOSALS APPENDIX

41 The Committee scrutinised a confidential report of the Chief Finance Officer that detailed Savings Proposals which would not require service consultation. The report also sought Member's views on various Workforce Savings Proposals that had been approved by the Cabinet, at its meeting on 14th September 2017, for consultative purposes.

In considering the report Members of the Committee sought clarification on work that had been undertaken to provide alternative solutions to the proposed Savings Proposals.

Alternatives considered:

Whilst budgets are prepared in accordance with the approved guidelines a number of alternative options relating to savings proposals and budget pressures are considered as part of the overall budget setting process.

Decision:

1. The identified Savings Proposals not requiring Service consultation be noted;
2. The Workforce Savings Proposals requiring consultation be considered as follows:

Savings Proposal

EC-2018-19-010	That the proposal be noted
NH-2018-19-015	That the proposal be noted
NH-2018-19-019	The Committee notes the withdrawal of this proposal
ICT-2018-19-021	That the proposal be noted
NH-2018-19-022	That the proposal be noted
NH-2018-19-023	That the proposal be noted
NH-2018-19-016	That the proposal be noted

Reason for decision:

The Council is required to set a balanced budget for 2018/19 by no later than 11th March 2018 and the proposals contained in the submitted report formed part of the budget setting process.