

## **CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING Wednesday, 8 December 2021**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Holly (Chair); Councillors Ali Ahmed, Bamford, Brett, Winkler and Wraighte

**OFFICERS:** J. Murphy (Chief Finance Officer), S. Smith (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), C. Goddard (Head of Revenues and Benefits) and A. James (Resources Directorate)

#### **32 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anstee, Councillor Joinson, Councillor Nolan, Councillor O'Neill, Councillor Rana, Councillor Robinson and Councillor Donna Williams.

#### **33 MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021 be approved as a correct record and that the actions list be noted.

#### **34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Holly declared personal and prejudicial interests in regard to Savings Proposal NH-2022-23-003 on the private Agenda and left the room during consideration of the item. Councillor Brett chaired the meeting for the item.

#### **35 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business for the Committee to consider at this meeting.

#### **36 CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022**

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2021/2022, which outlined a programme of reports to be presented at meetings during the 2021/2022 municipal year.

Resolved:

That the Committee's Work Programme 2021/2022 be noted.

#### **37 UPDATE ON INTELLIGENT AUTOMATION**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Revenues and Benefits providing an update on Intelligent Automation.

The Committee were informed that intelligent automation simplifies processes, frees up resources and improves operational efficiencies which in practice means a "virtual worker" does everything on a computer that a human would do but it can do it all day and all night, every day. The best processes for the

virtual worker to do are large volume, regular and repetitive processes and ones that follow “rules”.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that:

- There was some sample verification undertaken by Officers on the processes;
- More complex processes would be considered as the project developed further;
- The virtual workers were not a replacement for staff but worked alongside staff.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation on Intelligent Automation be noted.
2. That a further update be submitted to the Committee in a years' time.

### **38 CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE - 2022/2023**

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate /Chief Finance Officer which advised that Council on 15th December would be asked to agree the statutory Council Tax Base calculation for 2022/23, calculated in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 as part of the 2022/23 Estimates process; for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme to remain unchanged for 2022/23 and to approve the precept payment dates for 2022/23.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be noted.

### **39 SETTING THE BUSINESS RATE BASE - 2022/2023**

The Committee considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate /Chief Finance Officer which advised that Council on 15th December would be asked to consider the draft Business Rate baseline figure of £65.329m for 2022/23, subject to any changes which may result from:

- the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23.
- the issue of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) guidance on completion of the 2022/23 Business Rates baseline return (NNDR1), due in January 2022.

Also, that the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate, be authorised to conclude and agree the final Business Rates baseline return (NNDR1) due on 31 January 2022, should the final information yet to be received from DLUHC change the baseline figure for 2022/23.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be noted.

**40 FINANCE UPDATE REPORT QUARTER 2 - 2021/22**

Consideration was given to a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate / Chief Finance Officer updating Cabinet on the Council's forecast 2021/22 financial position as at the end of September 2021.

Committee Members made the following comments relating to the report:

- Ongoing issues with regard to capital rephasing and how this affected the budget. It was suggested that Directors be invited to meetings to provide updates on why this was happening within their Directorates;
- Funding with regard to building social housing and how this could be used. It was noted that the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also identified this as an issue and that there may be an opportunity for some joint work going forward in this regard;
- In response to questions about the property growth fund, the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that update reports would be submitted to future meetings of the Committee for scrutiny.

Resolved:

That the Finance Update Report Quarter 2 – 2021/22 be noted.

**41 DISCRETIONARY FEES & CHARGES 2022/23 FOR CONSULTATION**

Consideration was given to a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate / Chief Finance Officer which sought approval of a consultation period for the proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2022/23, including the statutory and other exemptions.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be noted.

**42 REVENUE BUDGET UPDATE 2022/23 TO 2024/25 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate / Chief Finance Officer updating on the on the Revenue Budget 2022/23 to 2024/25; and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be noted.

**43 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 TO 2026/27**

Consideration was given to a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate / Chief Finance Officer outlining changes to the Council's Capital Programme 2021/22. The 2021/22 programme has been increased to £107.3m. The base budget of £57.2m agreed at Budget Council March 2021 has been increased by £94.7m of budget rephased from previous years, £11.7m of capital budget changes, and reduced by £56.3m of budget that has been reviewed and rephased into future years.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be noted.

**44 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved

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 the resolution

Should the press and public remain during debate on this item there may be a disclosure of information that is deemed to be exempt under Part 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

**45 SAVINGS PROPOSALS 2022/2023**

Consideration was given to a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate / Chief Finance Officer setting out Savings Proposals in order to contribute towards a balanced budget position for 2022/23.

(Note: Councillor Brett chaired the meeting for Savings Proposal NH-2022-23-003 due to the Chair leaving the room for consideration of this item)

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be noted.