

Monday, 8 December 2014
at 6.00 pm



Scrutiny Committee

Present:-

Members: Councillor Ansell (Chairman) Councillor Shuttleworth (Deputy-Chairman) Councillors Cooke, Murray, Thompson and Ungar

11 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2014.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2014 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as an accurate record.

12 Apologies for absence.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Belsey.

13 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) by members as required under Section 31 of the Localism Act and of other interests as required by the Code of Conduct.

There were none.

14 Corporate Performance - Quarter 2 2014/15.

Members considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer and Head of Corporate Development updating Members on the Council's performance against Corporate Plan Priority actions, indicators and milestones for Quarter 2 2014/15.

Due to operational improvements made to the Council's activity reporting procedures, changes had been made to one of the reported performance indicators. CS_012 "Calls Handled at First Point of Contact" had now been replaced with CS_012a "Telephone Calls handled at first point of contact." This new version of the indicator focused solely on phone scripts.

Appendix 1 to the report provided a detailed report on the 2014/15 activities and outturns of the performance indicators listed within the Corporate Plan. The first section of Appendix 1 listed all the Corporate Plan priority actions whose in-year milestones had already been fully completed this year. The second section of Appendix 1 listed the ongoing actions showing all milestones that were scheduled for completion within the first quarter of the 2014/5.

Of the 29 Key Performance Indicators reported in the Corporate Plan this quarter, 7 were currently showing as Red, 14 were showing as Green, 2 were showing as Amber and 6 are data only or contextual PIs. The off target PIs were

- DE_011 - Number of reported fly-tipping incidents
- CD_008 - Decent Homes programme
- CD_055 - Number of completed adaptations (Disabled Facilities Grants)
- CD_156- Number of households living in temporary accommodation
- ECSP_002 - Shoplifting rate compared to 2013/14
- ECSP_004 - Violent crime in a public place rate compared to 2013/14
- ECSP_016 - Serious Acquisitive Crime (robbery, car crime and burglary dwelling) rate compared to 2013/14

Members discussed the Business Rates review, Beach huts, the work of the Multiple Needs Panels, the low rate of sickness absence by Council staff, the Staff Survey and the introduction of Universal Credit and support for more vulnerable members of the community.

Members noted the position of the General Fund showed a variance of £77,000 on net expenditure which was a movement of £60,000 compared to the position reported at the end of the first quarter in June. Service expenditure has a variance of £113,000 mainly as a result of:

One-off Backdated rental income (£35k)
Development Control Legal and Consultants Fees £40k
Downs Water Supply new Contract £33k
Dotto Train £65k

An element of this service overspend is off set by the saving on the contingency fund

The committee was advised that quarter one monitoring report that there were a number of risks around the Revenues and Benefits area due to the implementation of a new system. Whilst the project was delivered broadly on time and on budget, the nature of the benefits regime required post implementation checking to be put in place to reduce errors. This checking was still ongoing and would continue to year end. At year end the new system and the audit would be complete and therefore the risk would be quantifiable.

The contingency fund currently stood at £161,050, and had been used to offset service expenditure. Therefore there was no further funding available for any future unforeseen one off areas of expenditure during the year. The projected outturn showed a variance of £49,000. This was within 0.28% of the net budget and was within an acceptable tolerance level. However management continued to manage this position to ensure that the final outturn position was maintained or improved.

HRA performance was currently above target due to a number of factors including underspending on council tax for void properties, new insurance contract and reduction in provision for bad debts required.

Rental income was down as a result of a reduced number of properties from Right to Buys and a delay in opening Winchester Court, which went live on the rents system on 27 October.

The detailed capital programme was shown at Appendix 4 to the report. Actual expenditure was low compared to the budget, due to delays in the start dates of housing major projects, sheltered accommodation remodelling projects and several general fund projects. Expenditure was expected to increase as schemes progress however the spending patterns would be reviewed at quarter three and re-profiled into 2015/16 year where appropriate.

The projected Collection fund for the year was highlighted within the report.

Council Tax was currently showing a £172,950 surplus, due to higher than budgeted number of chargeable properties and a reduction in the number of Single Person Discounts awarded.

The Business Rates deficit of £1,314,414 was as a result of a bigger than anticipated provision made in 13/14 for outstanding appeals, giving rise to a higher than budgeted for balance carried forward as at 1 April 2014. Currently there were 93 properties with appeals outstanding with a total rateable value £12m, a reduction of 13 properties with a rateable value of £6m since 1 April 2014. The valuation office was expecting to settle all claims within the next 12 months however the uncertainty of the potential value of successful appeals remained a major risk to the Collection Fund at this time. The deficit represented 3.98% of the total debit for the year.

NOTED.

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm

Councillor Ansell (Chairman)