

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

2 FEBRUARY 2016

Present:

Councillors: Mahmood (Chairman)
Banks
Mrs Bassadone
Silwal
Timmis
W Wyatt-Lowe

Co-Opted members: None

Councillors: M Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Officers:	Richard Baker	Group Manager - Financial Services
	Fiona Williamson	Group Manager - Property & Place
	Andy Vincent	Group Manager - Tenants and Leaseholders
	Mark Gaynor	Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration
	Julia Hedger	Group Manager - Strategic Housing
	Julie Still	Group Manager - Resident Services
	Chris Troy	Group Manager - Regulatory Services

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1 **MINUTES**

There were no minutes to be agreed.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Cllr Adshead, Cllr Mclean, Cllr Link, Cllr Conway, Cllr Hearn, Co-Opted TLC Members Cook and Howard and Officer Elliott Brooks.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was no declaration of interest.

4 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

5 **CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN**

None.

6 **JOINT BUDGET OSC 2015-16**

R Baker introduced the report by saying the key changes had been highlighted in the presentation. Key things to note were that this version included the fees and charges and capital financing which had not been in the last version seen by the Committee.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 6 what rates of housing increase was included in the assumptions for the new homes bonus.

R Baker said that the £2.2m would be based on averages, and is based on a 4 year rather than 6 year settlement, on the assumption as one year drops out another comes in.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe asked what the chances of achieving it?

R Baker said we would have to wait until all the consultations have come out. The basis for the grant depends on the revised distribution method.

M Gaynor said that the consultation very clearly indicated that payments would reduce from the cumulative within a rolling 6 years to 4 years and that £800M will be top sliced for social care.

Cllr Mahmood asked if the increase in council tax sum includes the new homes.

R Baker said yes they are included in the additional growth.

Cllr Mahmood referred to the growth for the Strategic Housing Officer on page 11, does this give us the return we need, and is 44 thousand a good investment.

J Hedger said that this has been grant funded for two years. 160 families are in the scheme if they didn't have that scheme we would have to house them. It's a key post and we need to bring in future schemes like this. There are also opportunities for income generation from having this post.

Cllr Bassadone asked why some of the items are in red?

R Baker said those are the changes since the last financial report.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 12, the reduction in 39/41 The Marlowe's this is such a high amount?

R Baker said the building is being leased to the health trust and so the council no longer have the liability for Business Rates and utilities.

M Gaynor added to that saying that we have had no income from it last year so following a rent free period then the rent will start to kick in and then increase.

R Baker said confirmed that this would be included into future budgets.
Cllr W Wyatt-Low referred to page 14 regarding the customer services unit and the contractual reductions.

R Baker said it was one of the contractual reduction built into the contract when the service was tendered a few years ago. This is in the last in the contract and it will be up for renewal in the next year.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to appendix D do we have to do heritage?

R Baker said there is 58 thousand for a grant to the Heritage Trust it and it's not a statutory service.

M Gaynor went on to add more information on what the Trust do including storage of heritage items and making these available for public viewing

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 36 verge hardening, is there a budget for this.

R Baker said it comes under capital programme, for the next 5 years there is money and this money comes from the sales of garage funds. One third of the garage sales is used towards verge hardening.

Cllr Griffith asked if this was the first time we had ring fenced this as she was unaware that the money came from the garage sales fund, and whether it would cause a reduction in the programme if the garages were not sold.

R Baker said that the garage sale programme was in the early stages but the first two site sales had been progressing extremely well. If the sales were not as successful decisions would need to be made about the programme or to borrowing.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said that the Theatres and Public Entertainment is not mandatory but it's very expensive, why?

J Still explained that it is used for a number of things including arts, dance, jazz etc. and Members are very keen on it. It has been an investment for the last 2 years and that Members choice.

The national proportion of seats sold is 59% and we are 77% and it is also popular with schools which for Arts Education and the Arts awards and dance which bring in additional income.

Cllr Timmis agreed.

Cllr Mahmood referred to page 35, the working group looked at the use of the old town hall and agreed it is it is well valued by the community.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe queried things like the Tour of Brittan, we lose money on this.

J Still said this is not included in this budget for 2016/17 but will be included for the following year 17/18.

Cllr Bassadone referred to page 37. Charges of private parties have gone down and concessions are cheaper.

J Still said yes it's because it's about being competitive and bookings are going up.

Cllr Mahmood asked if we should maximise the advertising of our facilities.

J Still said this is in the pipeline and we have a new website coming for advertising and a lot will be done via social media.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said that the Adventure Playground parties seem too cheap and queried this price.

J Still said Adventure Playground parties are competitive though staff are going to review at these prices.

M Gaynor confirmed the fees shown are by the hour not by the booking.

Cllr W Wyatt-Low asked about the large changes on Licensing Fees.

R Baker explained some are statutorily set, and these show no increases. Others are set on a cost recovery basis. The large reductions reflect changes recently approved at Licensing Committee where a full review had been undertaken to ensure that we were following the legislation on the setting of these fees

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said there has been a big reduction in betting, and is this something we really wanted to encourage.

R Baker said these fees are set using the statutory calculations, and that we could not charge more.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to the flexi care scheme in Evelyn Sharpe, do we have plans so extend this.

Cllr Griffith said officers said yes but she has said no as it is causing conflict and is over subscribe and the scheme wouldn't be able to support it, shes not against a new scheme but not keen to expand this one.

M Gaynor said future provisions for a new flexi care scheme would ideally be purpose built, but in the meantime we will ensure that opportunities using our won sheltered stock we will consider them. Cllr M Griffiths explained that she was in favour of the flexi care system but that the choice of scheme was important and that to date HCC had wanted what were very popular schemes already in areas without choices of schemes.

Cllr W Wyatt-Low asked if we have a site for extra care which could be used and what was the estimate cost to build.

M Gaynor said that we could almost certainly and a scheme would cost around £8-10M to build.

Cllr Mahmood asked how the budget impacts Osbourne's.

F Williamson said that they are stretching the development programme by a year so there will be a slight reduction over the next 4 years and that there is no guarantee of expenditure in the contract.

M Gaynor added to that saying they will still achieve the agreed arrangements with tenants.

Cllr Mahmood referred to page 61. The toilets in Bennett's End were closed is that spend correct.

J Still said yes the cost is correct it's the cost for the community centre toilets not the outside public ones.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

7 WORK PROGRAMME

Agreed

The Meeting ended at 8.55 pm