

MINUTES

FINANCE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

3 DECEMBER 2019

Present:

Councillors: Chapman
Guest
Tindall
Mahmood (Chairman)
Claughton
Douris

Also Present:

Councillor Elliot – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources
Councillor Williams – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services

Officers:

C Baker	Group Manager – Revenues, Benefits and Fraud
M Brookes	Assistant Director – Corporate and Contracted Services
B Hosier	Group Manager – Procurement and Contracted Services
N Howcutt	Assistant Director – Finance and Resources
S Marshall	Chief Executive
B Trueman	Group Manager – Information, Communication and Technology
R Rice	Group Manager, Commercial Assets and Property Development
T Angel	Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

Following a Joint meeting of the OSC's where a presentation on the Corporate Plan and the budget was given, the Finance & Resources OSC meeting began at 9.00pm.

1 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2019 were agreed and then signed by the Chairman.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adeleke, Arslan, Symington, Taylor and Townsend.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

4 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

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

None.

6 **BUDGET PREPARATIONS 2020/21**

N Howcutt, M Brookes and B Trueman each gave presentations on their service areas. They then welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Tindall referred to the roll out of Universal Credit. He asked how confident we were that there would be a reduction in workload for the benefits service and if that was based on evidence from other councils. C Baker advised that the core workload for the benefits team had started to drop and had already reduced by 10-15%. He explained that for those people that were impacted by Universal Credit and unable to pay their rent, that impact was on the HRA rather than the General Fund so it was a separate issue. He reassured the committee that they will continue to monitor the issue closely.

The Chairman asked if the caravan storage facility was just for parking. N Howcutt confirmed it was but also offered additional services that others don't. He said it was managed well by CCTV.

Councillor Chapman asked if there were other site locations in mind. N Howcutt said there were potential sites they could look at but the housing agenda was the priority and there were greater commercial returns to be made from some of the sites elsewhere. He added the reason this site was useful was due to its location near to Buncefield and the development restrictions in that area.

Councillor Tindall asked if there was an opportunity to improve the slope at the Old Town Hall if we're improving the seating. N Howcutt said he would feedback on that. He then explained there were 3 aspects to look at when replacing the seating; one is making sure new seating meets health and safety standards, two is that we maximise space for revenue returns and thirdly looking at audience needs.

The Chairman referred to the arches next to the Old Town Hall. He felt there was more potential there. N Howcutt said opportunities have come and gone over the years but at the moment it was being used for the new Old Town market and was developing well. Councillor Williams added that it would cost a huge amount for the work required as it was a listed building and wouldn't be worth the return.

Councillor Tindall asked if there had been any progress with installing additional charging points in the Water Gardens car park. B Hosier advised that the infrastructure and upstands for the chargers had been installed and he was just waiting for the service provider to confirm when a surveyor will come to look at the Water Gardens North to view how and when the charge points will be installed.

Councillor Douris asked if the charging points would be on the ground floor of the Water Gardens. B Hosier explained that they would be looking at installing charging

points on the ground floor first and some in the white zone on the upper deck, however it was dependent on getting energisation to those areas and the cost of it.

Councillor Tindall asked if we received a full refund for the cost of Elections. M Brookes advised that we didn't for Borough Elections.

Councillor Tindall said he continued to receive complaints from residents regarding the telephone system and asked if there was any plans for improvements. B Trueman advised we worked closely with Netcall and should get any enhancements as soon as they're available, however there may be scope for making sure the routing is working efficiently. He said he would work with CSU on that.

Councillor Douris asked how confident we were in Netcall as an early adopter. B Trueman explained that we received an enhanced support level and was closely monitored. Councillor Douris asked how quick the recovery time was. B Trueman said he would find that out.

Action: B Trueman

Councillor Guest referred to Appendix C on page 22 and asked how we made a 29% saving under legal services. N Howcutt advised it was a rebalance of the budget. F Hussain said they had looked at subscriptions and materials that weren't used or required and made some cut backs.

Outcome:

That the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed and agreed the draft budget proposals.

7 WORK PROGRAMME

There were no changes to the work programme.

The Meeting ended at 9.44 pm