

MINUTES

FINANCE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 DECEMBER 2016

Present:

Councillors: Chapman (Chair)
Douris (Vice-Chairman)
Clark
Silwal
Taylor
Tindall
Adeleke

Officers: S Marshall Chief Executive
R Smyth Assistant Director, Performance & Projects
D Skinner Assistant Director, Finance & Resources
C Baker Group Manager, Revenues, Benefits & Fraud
B Trueman Group Manager, Technology & Digital Transformation
B Hosier Group Manager, Commissioning, Procurement and Compliance
N Brown Group Manager, Commercial Assets & Property Development
M Rawdon Group Manager, People
M Brookes Solicitor to the Council
J Doyle Group Manager, Democratic Services
C Souto Financial Planning & Analysis Team Leader
T Angel Member Support Officer (Minutes)

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Elliot attended as Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources
Councillor Harden attended as Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

61 MINUTES

The minutes of the Finance & Resources OSC meeting held on 8th November 2016 were confirmed by the Members present and signed by the Chairman.

62 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor's Ashbourn and Birnie.

63 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

64 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

None.

66 **JOINT BUDGET REPORT 2017/18**

The Chairman explained that M Brookes, R Smyth and D Skinner would give presentations on their individual service areas detailing the savings and budgets and questions could be asked after each presentation.

M Brookes gave a presentation on Legal Governance and Democratic Services. He then welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Taylor asked if a risk assessment has been done for the Pupillage scheme post. M Brookes said no direct risk assessment had been done but explained they had looked at the post in detail and were satisfied it could be covered. He highlighted that it was a trial for 12 months.

Councillor Douris raised concern with the Pupillage scheme as we would be training someone and adding value to them and then they could leave after the trial. M Brookes advised that it was the risk of the scheme and they could leave if there was no position to offer them once the trial was completed.

The Chairman asked if the team were all DBC staff or if any agency was used. M Brookes advised that they outsourced some litigation work but he hoped they wouldn't need to once a pupil was in place.

Councillor Adeleke referred to the legal services restructure and asked M Brookes how it had affected him and his team. M Brookes explained that it had been a testing period but the work was manageable and if it wasn't, they could bring in external help.

The Chairman thanked M Brookes for his presentation.

R Smyth gave a presentation on Performance, People & Innovation. He then welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Tindall advised that 11 members' iPads were currently offline and queried what guarantee of resilience there was going forward. B Trueman felt that was a difficult question to answer but explained that the problem they were experiencing was with a supplier rather than the iPads and they were working to ensure they had all the correct technology. Councillor Tindall asked how much it would cost if the problem were to persist. R Smyth said it would only cost if we were go elsewhere

with a new supplier but we were working with our current suppliers to rectify the problem. Councillor Tindall said it was important to ensure this problem doesn't throw out the budget. B Trueman and R Smyth noted Councillor Tindall's comments and concerns.

Councillor Tindall noted that only 66% of staff would occupy The Forum and asked if they were looking to introduce Skype or any other systems that would allow face-to-face meetings from home. R Smyth said they were investigating the use of Skype going forward.

Councillor Taylor referred to the shared data links with Bucks CC and Herts CC and queried if there would be traffic. B Trueman explained the route of the data links and advised that they would only be sharing part of the journey not all of it.

Councillor Adeleke said he felt uncomfortable with ICT making savings as he felt this is the time they should be investing and not reducing. He also queried the reduction from 2 team leader roles into 1 in the Improvement and Innovation team restructure.

R Smyth advised that one staff member had left so the other had taken on some additional work and the roles were merged into one. He said there was a junior and an Intern supporting that new role so they felt confident they were still able to deliver the same service and had the right people with the right skills in place. B Trueman referred to the ICT savings and explained that there were occasions when you can get just as good for less money and they had experienced this recently. He said there was now more resilience for less money and also he recognised the need to invest and they were keen to invest further.

Councillor Douris referred to the postage savings/move to digital and queried if those individuals who aren't very technical could still ask for paper mail. R Smyth explained that although 86/87% of people were using the digital services, it was still possible to contact us by phone or face-to-face, and paper mail would still be sent to and from us as some services still require paper usage. He advised that digital was much cheaper and the more services that were online the better so the money saved can go elsewhere on other much needed services.

The Chairman thanked R Smyth for his presentation.

D Skinner gave a presentation on Finance and Resources. He then welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Tindall referred to the support and service budgets on page 22 and queried what the large increase was for. D Skinner said the increase was for insurance.

Councillor Tindall asked if they were going to consider smart machines for our car parks as the current ones were out of date. D Skinner advised that our current contract didn't end until May 2018 but they were going to look into different options and technology.

Councillor Douris felt that £180k for insurance seemed like a lot and queried if they were looking at procurement for similar cover and rates. D Skinner explained that the budget was an estimate and could be regarded as a protection figure.

Councillor Douris sought clarification on the savings figures for the HCC Election as the two figures didn't add up. D Skinner advised that the reserve funding would go in to match the cost and the figures would then be equalised.

Councillor Douris referred to page 14, growth of Town Centre promotional pitches, and queried the increase. D Skinner advised that it was for the cost of allowing additional space in the market. C Souto said the income in the Town Centre was less than expected. D Skinner highlighted that we sometimes give discounts to encourage traders.

Councillor Douris referred to page 24 relating to community centres and halls and noted the budget had disappeared. D Skinner reassured Councillor Douris that it had only been transferred and could be found on page 20.

Councillor Tindall queried the Corporate Health and Safety savings on page 23. D Skinner explained that a review of the structure was done within the team. He said the way of delivering the service would remain the same.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 24 relating to support and services and queried the extra 73% spend. M Rawdon advised that the Apprenticeship Levy was coming in April 2017 so the budget was accommodating that.

The Chairman referred to page 11 and asked if £900k was the total amount. D Skinner explained that it would go through a three year cycle as the pension payments were gradual.

The Chairman thanked D Skinner for his presentation.

Outcome:

The Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed and noted the budget proposals for 2017/18.

67 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman asked officers to let member support know if there was anything they would like to add to the programme.

The Meeting ended at 9.15 pm