

MINUTES

FINANCE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

7 FEBRUARY 2017

Present:

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

Also in attendance:

Councillor Williams attended as Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership
Councillor Harden attended as Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services

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 & Monitoring Officer
	J Doyle	Group Manager, Democratic Services
	T Angel	Member Support Officer

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

68 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Finance & Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6th December 2016 were confirmed by the Members present and signed by the Chairman.

69 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Adeleke and Elliot.

70 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

71 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

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

None.

73 **JOINT BUDGET REPORT 2017/18**

D Skinner introduced the report and drew members' attention to page 5 onwards, which detailed the changes since the last Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in December. He welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 11 and queried if the £200k for the leisure review was from reserves or if it was additional. D Skinner confirmed it wasn't additional; it was just the £200k from reserves.

Councillor Birnie asked if the staff costs, in addition to pension requirements, had a general increase in salaries. D Skinner explained that the increase had factored in the 1% pay award and also any increments. He said this was detailed in the report from the last meeting in December.

Councillor Birnie highlighted a large percentage increase in the Management Team employee costs. D Skinner advised this was due to the realignment in the Corporate Management Team budgets following the realignment of responsibilities following a reduction in the posts within the Leadership team.

Councillor Douris referred to the employee budget reduction in Housing Benefits and asked if it was due to a vacancy void or reduction in post. D Skinner advised it was a saving created by the removal of a post.

Councillor Douris sought clarification on the cessation of a Primary Authority function. D Skinner advised that Regulatory Services previously carried out inspections nationally for Tesco and the activity has been ceased due to the loss of income and that it didn't reflect the risk of activity.

Councillor Douris referred to the removal of Civic Buildings Business Rates on page 10 and asked if the rates for The Forum would be lower given the size difference and the energy efficiency. D Skinner advised that the energy efficiency wasn't reflected in the rates but The Forum would definitely be more efficient. He said they were currently waiting for the calculation of the new business rates.

Councillor Tindall referred to Councillor Birnie's earlier question relating to the Management Team employee budget and sought clarification on identifying the increase for the realignment. The Chief Executive referred to page 9 where a detailed summary and breakdown could be found covering inflation, growth items, one-off

items and officer's efficiency savings and that there were savings of £103k detailed for the leadership team restructure.

Councillor Birnie queried if the 17% increase in the Housing Strategy employees budget was due to a new post. D Skinner confirmed it was.

Councillor Douris referred to the Get Set Go Dacorum project expenditure and queried its removal. M Rawdon explained the project was due to finish in September 2017 and there were no additional costs as it was grant funded.

Councillor Douris sought clarification on the past service costs on page 19. D Skinner advised it was linked to the cost of the pensions deficit as explained by the Corporate Director (Finance & Operations) in his presentation on key changes since the December OSC.

Councillor Tindall sought clarification on the £27,942 increase in premises budget for Community Centres and Public Halls. N Brown said he would look into the matter and report back.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 22 relating to Human Resources Supplies and Services and asked why there was such a large increase in the budget. R Smyth advised it was due to the Apprenticeship post.

Councillor Silwal asked if there were any plans to allow external use of the meeting rooms. D Skinner said they were waiting for everything to stabilise as we've just moved in to The Forum but in 6 months' time they would look at the community interest and income provision.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 18 and queried why the employee budget for Community Centres and Public Halls had changed from £0 to £131,850. D Skinner said he would look in to the increase and let him know.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 20 relating to Support Services Insurance and queried the increase. D Skinner advised it was a technical adjustment and was in relation to insurance premiums for employees.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 32 and asked why the budget for garage premises had increased from £3,040 to £499,100. D Skinner said he would investigate the matter and update the committee.

Councillor Silwal referred to page 6, items 12 and 15, and asked why the budget was no longer required. D Skinner advised that the additional funds for item 12 (Insurance) was no longer required due to an award of contract following a tendering exercise, and item 15 (Benefits Accounting) was not as great as previously anticipated.

Councillor Tindall referred to the verge hardening budget on page 66 and queried if the £350k in 2021/22 was increase in the General Fund Capital Bid or if it was an error. D Skinner explained that it would be an addition as a new bid, and the summary of this could be found on page 74.

Councillor Douris referred to page 28 relating to off street parking charges and asked if regular users were able to reclaim the VAT from the parking tickets and if the tickets displayed the VAT number. B Hosier said he would need to look in to it and report back.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 5 relating to the £32k increase in bad debt provision. He asked if it was due to a problem in the community or something different. D Skinner said he couldn't comment on that but highlighted that overall the figure was very low.

Actions:

- D Skinner to advise why the employee budget for Community Centres and Public Halls has increased to £131,850.
- D Skinner to investigate the increased budget for garage premises.
- B Hosier to advise if it's possible to reclaim VAT on parking tickets and if the VAT number is displayed on the tickets.
- N Brown to investigate reason for £27,942 increase in premises budget for Community Centres and Public Halls.

Outcome:

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

The Chairman and Vice Chairman commended the officers for all their hard work.

The Chairman said it had been a brilliant year despite the hard times and he hoped he could sit here again this time next year and say the same.

74 **REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL 2016 - MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

J Doyle introduced the report and drew members' attention to the financial implications on page 80 which highlighted that the total figure for the increase would be £10,427. He explained that the conclusions were detailed on page 82 and this also highlighted that members hadn't received an increase on their basic allowance rate since 2008/09. He said the increase would bring us up to the average allowance rate in comparison with other Local Authorities in Hertfordshire.

Councillor Taylor said he had been involved with discussing the matter at length and felt happy to say the increase was acceptable.

Councillor Tindall felt that a 2.1% increase for members was reasonable as staff had received a pay increase in the last few years and the members hadn't since 2008/09.

The Chairman sought clarification on the HM Revenue & Customs mileage allowance rate as he thought it was 40p per mile but the report stated it was 45p. Councillor Tindall explained that the County Council rate was 45p and his understanding was that it was to reflect all motoring costs and not just fuel.

Outcome:

The Committee considered the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel following its review of the Council's existing Members' Allowance Scheme and agreed with its recommendations to implement a 2.1% increase.

75 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman asked the officers if there were any items they wanted to add to the meeting in March. There were no amendments to the work programme.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

The Meeting ended at 8.54 pm