

Councillor Birnie substituted on behalf of Councillor Matthews.

Councillor R Sutton substituted on behalf of Councillor Ashbourn.

281 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

282 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

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

None.

284 JOINT BUDGET REPORT 2017/18

D Austin and J Doe gave a presentation on each of their areas highlighting the efficiency savings in the budget.

Councillor Birnie asked J Doe about the scheme to train potential staff in building control. It seems staff often leave for a better paid job elsewhere – is it possible to have a contractual arrangement for them to pay back the course fees?

J Doe said they were discussing this possibility with Human Resources and repaying course fees was expected of staff. Building Control is a hard area to recruit into and the challenge is attracting staff into the department in the first place.

Councillor Birnie then referred to the £40k insurance savings and asked if this pressure is the narrow access in waste services and the solution was a smaller vehicle?

C Thorpe said yes and a smaller vehicle had been purchased.

Councillor Birnie asked if this was a capital cost not an ongoing pressure.

C Thorpe said there would be revenue costs in staffing the vehicle.

Councillor Birnie referred to the reduced sickness levels in the Waste Service. If there are reduced absences, this must reduce the need for agency staff and therefore make a significant saving?

C Thorpe said they had worked hard to reduce sickness levels in the department so yes, there would be less reliance on agency staff.

Councillor Birnie asked if this was an additional saving.

C Thorpe said they had reduced the budget to reflect this.

Councillor S Hearn asked J Doe how confident he was that he would still be able to provide a good service after significant cuts in his department.

J Doe said it would be a challenge but the focus has been reducing the administration costs rather than the front line service. The number of planning applications being made is still very high and we are keen to keep our planning officers as these are also hard to recruit. There has been capital allocation for new software which will improve efficiency. He expressed confidence that the good service provided will resume.

Councillor S Hearn asked if the change in values would indirectly affect income.

J Doe said the level of major development will depend on the national economy which will be watched over the next 18 months. There was some hesitancy earlier in the year after the referendum vote but there will be some large development in Dacorum in the next year, for example, LA3 where 900 homes will be built. Income from major planning application fees should be seen from this and other proposals in Q1 or Q2 next financial year.

Councillor Anderson thanked the officers for all the hard work in preparing the budget reports and hoped that the savings would be achieved.

Outcome

That the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report.

285 WORK PROGRAMME

An extra meeting was agreed for Tuesday 31st January 2017.

Members agreed the work programme.

The Meeting ended at 8.48 pm