

PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 15th February, 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Kier Barsby in the Chair;

Councillors Paul Grafton (as substitute for Jodine Cronshaw), Julie Gregory and Warren Nuttall.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Jodine Cronshaw and John Smallridge.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Peter Hudson, Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

PS.17 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

PS.18 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 January 2024, be received and approved as a correct record.

PS.19 Annual Budget Update

The Corporate Resources Director (and Section 151 Officer) attended the meeting to provide a presentation on the 2024/25 Annual Budget and an update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Members were advised that the 2024/25 Annual Budget would be fully considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 19 February 2024 in readiness for its final approval at the Extraordinary Council (Tax Setting) meeting on 4 March 2024.

General Fund Budget

Members were advised that the budget for 2024/25, as presented, had assumed a 2.94% increase to Council Tax (an anticipated additional income of £2034K for the Council) without any contribution from General Reserves.

In relation to the General Fund, savings and efficiencies had been identified from undertaking a Council wide base budget review, a Regeneration service review and a renegotiated contract with Civica for the Revenues and Benefits system.

Investments had been made in the following areas:

- Training and development – new Decision Making Accountability (DMA) Structure
- Growth in Council events
- Infrastructure Grants to Voluntary Bodies
- Asset Management – Cleaner Greener Initiatives
- Corporate Policy and Performance Review
- Corporate Communications Review
- Customer Services – Improved Accessibility.

Comparison of Borrowing against Neighbouring Authorities

Members were shown an illustration of the Council's borrowing compared to other Nottinghamshire authorities and confirmed that the Council were very much in line with their spending in comparison.

Council's Investment Portfolio

An update was given as to the current status of the Council's investment portfolio and its contribution towards the Council's total income stream.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Committee was advised of the significant uncertainty around the level of resources which would be available to the Council beyond 2024/25. Local Government Funding Reform was due to take place during 2025/26 at the earliest. A summary was then given of estimated expenditure, income, cumulative and annual funding gaps and inflation assumptions that could evolve and affect the Council's finances over the next 3 years.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - Investments

Members were advised that investments had been made in the following areas:

- Payment of new Regulator Fee - (Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023)
- Staff Training under new Regulations
- Policy and Performance Review (HRA share)
- Corporate Communications Review (HRA share)

To conclude Members received an outline of the proposed HRA budget for 2024/25 which included provision for funding for increments and contractual inflation, any revenue implications from the proposed Capital Programme (not yet determined) and the effect of the recent Council housing rent increase of 7.7%, as determined by Cabinet on 29 January 2024.

RESOLVED that

- a) the presentation from the Corporate Resources Director (and Section 151 Officer) on the 2024/25 Annual Budget and the update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, be received and duly noted;
- b) as a result of (a) above, the following comment from the Committee Members be forwarded to Cabinet/Council for consideration as part of their budget deliberations for 2024/25:-

“Having listened to the presentation and update from the Corporate Resources Director (and Section 151 Officer) in relation to the Council’s 2024/25 Annual Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy and then having undertaken a full and robust discussion regarding the same, Cabinet be advised that the Principal Select Committee urges them to approve the Annual Budget (with the assumption of a 2.94% increase to Council Tax and without any contribution from General Reserves) in its entirety, without amendment.”

PS.20 Select Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Research Officer gave an update on progress of the Select Work Programme for 2023/24 and asked Members to consider two further topics for possible inclusion on the Work Programme going forward:

1. Markets Update

For Committee to undertake a single meeting review and received an update from the Town Centres and Markets Manager as to take up, ongoing financial viability and customer usage of the Council’s indoor/outdoor market sites at the March 2024 meeting.

2. Council Staff Recruitment and Retention

To potentially add the topic to the Select Work Programme to commence after May 2024.

3. Customer Experience

Following the recent investment and restructure of the Customer Services Team; to consider how this has improved customer service and satisfaction (suggested by the Assistant Director for Democracy).

Members also received an update on progress against the current Select Work Programme:

Work Programme Topic:	Progress:
Ashfield District Council – 50 Year Anniversary	Project passed onto Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), led by Assistant Director for Democracy and Scrutiny Research Officer
Damp and Mould	Completed – October 2023
Christmas Lights	Officers currently working on tender requirements
Homeless Prevention Strategy	Completed – contributions made to Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024 -2029
General Waste Bins	Awaiting progress with the

	Environment Bill 2021
Universal Credit	Completed – Update received at meeting on 15 November 2023
Funding Programme Updates	Executive Lead Member for Growth, Regeneration and Local Planning invited to present update at March 2024 meeting
Parks and Green Spaces on New Estates	Topic removed – not suitable for general review but agreement to replace with new topic ‘S106 Council Contributions’
No Mow May	Completed – Cabinet considered recommendations in January 2024
Performance	Standing Item - Quarterly
Crime and Disorder	Topic to be determined
Budget	Completed – presentation received at February 2024 meeting

RESOLVED that

- a) the update in respect of the Select Work Programme for 2023/24, be received and noted;
- b) the following three topics suggestions be added to the Select Work Programme for 2023/24:
 - Markets Update (Single Meeting Review)
 - Council Staff Recruitment and Retention
 - Customer Experience.

The meeting closed at 8.49 pm

Chairman.