

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

on Thursday, 9th February, 2017 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Lee Anderson in the Chair;

Councillors Ben Bradley, Amanda Brown,
Christian Chapman, Joanne Donnelly,
John Knight, Cathy Mason, Christine Quinn-
Wilcox and Paul Roberts.

Officers Present: Dave Greenwood, Joanne Froggatt, Mike Joy
and Alan Maher

In Attendance: Councillors Cheryl Butler and Don Davis

OS.17 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point.

OS.18 To receive and approve as a correct records the minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny, held on 12 January 2017

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 12 January 2017 were approved as a true record, subject to Cllr Quinn-Wilcox's apologies being recorded.

OS.19 General Fund Revenue Budget 2017-18

The report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee set-out the financial challenges facing the Council and how these challenges would be met in terms of preparing the budget for 2017-18.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Resources), Dave Greenwood, explained that the financial position had become more difficult since the autumn. In particular, the Council's funding from the New Homes Bonus Scheme was now expected to fall substantially. Furthermore, the Committee were informed that the Council would have to pay significantly more into the Nottinghamshire Local Government Pension Scheme, following a re-valuation exercise carried out by its administrators, Nottinghamshire County Council.

As a consequence, the Council is required to save between £800k - £900k for each of the five years covered by the Medium Term Financial Strategy

(MTFS). The original savings target had been £670k per annum over this period.

The Deputy Chief Executive set out how the Council proposed to meet the shortfall. Members were informed that that new or enhanced commercial activities would help to generate income. These activities included a recycling scheme for 'trade waste', charging for some Planning & Building Control and pest control services. Taken together, they are expected to generate £142k of income during 2017/18 and a further £27k the following year.

The Committee was also informed that a package of service efficiency measures would be introduced. These would deliver £678k of savings during 2017/18 and a further £158k of savings in 2018/19.

Further savings would come from the closure of Ashfield Homes Limited (AHL). The Committee were informed that that these savings would be generated by the deletion of some of AHL's senior management posts and by integrating its back office functions, such as Human Resources and Information Technology etc., into those of the Council. There would be no reduction to the services received by tenants. The Committee welcomed this.

Members were then informed about changes to how the Council collects money. These changes, it was explained, would be both more cost effective and user friendly; by extending the number of payment options that are available, including the use of Pay Point at shops and post offices across the District. Again, this was welcomed.

With regards to Huthwaite Leisure Centre, the Committee were informed that alternative options regarding community or other groups having the opportunity to take over the Centre were currently being explored. Members expressed their hopes that this is successful and that the Centre remains open as a community managed facility.

The Committee were informed of a review of Selston Golf Course. Cllr Christine Quinn Wilcox declared an Interest at this point in her capacity as a Selston Parish Councillor. Members heard that the Council had worked closely with Selston Parish Council over the future use of the site. Alternative operators to run the golf course would be sought.

Finally, Members were informed that the programme of service reviews and the reorganisation of senior management responsibilities within the Council were expected to deliver significant savings. They heard that progress was being made on the current round of Service Reviews and that the Chief Executive was now drawing up proposals on the future senior management arrangements for the Authority.

The Committee thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for setting out the Council's financial position and the specific budget proposals. Members recognised that the process of finding additional savings would become increasingly difficult once all of the relatively easy reductions had been made. The Council would have to embrace new ways of working if it is to meet the challenges facing it.

The Committee recognised that there would be a constant struggle over the next five years to generate greater income through commercial activities and to make financial savings by reviewing services. In this context, they heard about the ongoing work to transform the Council, through the use of new technology and different ways of working designed to make further efficiencies possible. The Committee supported this.

Members considered that scrutiny should play an ongoing role in monitoring how the Council is changing and how it is delivering further efficiencies. The Committee requested regular reports to be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in relation to progress made.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Committee notes the Provision Local Government Financial Settlement and its consequences for Ashfield'
- b) the Committee monitor further progress made in meeting the financial challenges facing the Council.

Reasons

In order to allow input to the budget from a Cross-Party Committee.

OS.20 Corporate Scorecard - Quarter 2 2016/17 Position

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee was reminded that the Council had adopted a 'Balanced Scorecard' methodology for measuring how well the Council was performing. This methodology placed greater emphasis on customer satisfaction and service quality and aims to provide a more rounded way of measuring how the Council's new Corporate Priorities are being delivered.

The report to Committee set out the Balanced Scorecard information for the period April to September 2016. This was introduced by the Corporate Performance Manager. Members were informed that 78% of the measures had improved compared to the same period of 2015 and that 83% of the measures had been achieved or exceeded. These included the amount of waste recycled in the District, which had recorded improvements over the three summer months.

The Committee was also informed on areas where further improvement was required. In particular, the number of Anti-Social Behaviour incidents recorded by the Police had fallen quite sharply towards the end of 2016. Members discussed the possible reasons for this and the role which the Council's own Community Protection Team (CPT) plays in successfully combatting anti-social behaviour throughout the District. In particular, they noted that customer satisfaction with the CPT had increased.

The second area for improvement was the number of homes in the District classed as below the nationally determined 'Decent Homes Standard'. The Committee was informed that improvement work had taken place on a number of properties, which had brought them up to the standard. The Committee

welcomed this.

The third area for improvement was around fly tipping. The Committee was informed that the number of fly tipping requests generated by the public had increased. The report explained that this increase formed part of an upward trend in fly tipping that had taken place nationally, with a country-wide increase last year of 5.2%.

Members discussed how the Council was seeking to tackle the problem. In particular, they were informed that work was underway to gather crucial evidence on repeat offenders in order that prosecutions can take place. The Committee discussed possible ways in which this evidence could be gathered, such as a whistle blowers line for the community to report instances.

The Committee also heard that recent changes in legislation meant that Fixed Penalty Notices could be issued when evidence is found of small fly tips. Members supported this.

The Committee accepted that the increase which had occurred in Ashfield formed part of wider national problem. Furthermore, they considered that in order to take effective action, the reasons why fly tipping occurs in the District should be understood fully. The Committee concluded that it would be appropriate for Scrutiny to investigate this further as part of its 2017/18 work programme.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Committee notes the Corporate Scorecard;
- b) the Committee notes the Quarter 2 Performance Levels.

Reasons

To monitor and scrutinise performance outturn information for the Corporate Scorecard.

OS.21 Scrutiny Workplan 2016-17

The Committee considered the latest position on the remaining topics from the 2016/17 work plan and the consultation arrangements with both Members and Officers to identify possible topics for the 2017-18 Scrutiny Work Plan. As in previous years, all suggestions would be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to determine topics to be included in the Plan. Members of the Committee welcomed this.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Committee notes the ongoing topics on the 2016-17 Workplan;
- b) the Committee and other Members consider and identify future topics for the 2017-18 Workplan that may benefit from scrutiny involvement.

Reasons

Consulting, reviewing and agreeing items for the Scrutiny Workplan 2017/18 provides guidance and direction for the work undertaken by scrutiny in the coming year.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm

Chairman.