

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 1st February 2021

Present: Cllr Johnson (Chair)
Cllrs Brennan, Janet Eaton, Kempson, Kenyon, Morris,
Pendlebury and Procter
Z. Ali (Co-opted Member)

In attendance: Neil Shaw, Chief Executive
Adam Allen, Director of Communities
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Karen Spencer, Head of Finance
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager
Jenni Cook, Committee and Member Services Officer

Also Present: Cllrs Ashworth, A. Barnes, Haworth, Lythgoe, Marriott, Neal,
Serridge and Walmsley
0 press
0 public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTIONS

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr L. Barnes (Cllr Pendlebury substituting) and Cllr Gill.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items of business.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- 5.1 No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting. The Chair noted that she would allow questions to be asked on each item as it was discussed.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

- 6.1 There was no update from the last meeting.

7. QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (OCTOBER, NOVEMBER DECEMBER) 2020/21

7.1 The Head of People and Policy provided members with an overview of the Quarter 3 performance report with the following highlighted:-

- Overall the council was performing well with no corporate projects classified as 'red'.
- Key highlights were noted to members which included:
 - o Green Flag status for Stubbylee and Moorlands Park – application in February 2021.
 - o Additional staff training with regards to fly-tipping.
 - o Bin replacement programme.
 - o £18m of business grants had been distributed.
 - o Plot 1 works had commenced.
 - o Covid support continued and food groups had been established.
- KPIs were noted: 6 of these were in red at the end of Quarter 3.
- Risks were outlined and these were monitored and reviewed by CMT, along with formal monitoring at the Audit and Accounts Committee.
- Corporate priorities were noted and those in 'red' were outlined.

7.2 Members asked questions and commented, with clarification given, as summarised below:

- Business grants had been given out in the first phase and there were currently 9 live schemes.
- Operations staff would be trained with regards to fly-tipping, assessing evidence and clearing away on rounds, if appropriate. The Director of Communities would pick up a specific issues in Haslingden raised by a member and an update on fly-tipping enforcement would be given at a future O&S Committee.
- The Covid Business Recovery Plan would be shared with members shortly.
- The Bacup Future High Street Fund, lessons learned and future plans were clarified.

Resolved:

1. The Quarter 3 updated was noted.
2. An update on fly-tipping and enforcement would be brought to a future O&S Committee.

8. 2021/22 COUNCIL BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

8.1 The Head of Finance outlined the report which asked members to consider the proposed revenue budget, council tax proposals and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22. The key information within the report was outlined:

- The final budget estimate was £8.903m.
- A 1.99% increase in council tax was recommended.
- Unavoidable changes were noted which included £43k cost of running the bus station, £200k in the revenue budget for the Empty Homes Scheme and a move to an MRP annuity model.
- Budget proposals were outlined which included reduction of The Whitaker support grant being pushed back, increased Operations productivity including

a trial bin cleaning service, enhanced garden waste collection service, some fees and charges increased by up to 2% and staffing savings.

- A future shortfall from 2022/23 of around £400k was noted and the impact on reserves and transitional reserves was highlighted.
- Risks were outlined which included a reduction in council tax collection from 255 properties due to Covid, potential NNDR baseline reset, a postponement of the Fair Funding Review extra provision for the Empty Homes Scheme in the revenue and capital budgets, impact of Covid and the Rossendale Leisure Trust.

8.2 Members asked questions and commented, with clarification given, as summarised below:

- The Property Services and Operations positions were clarified as being 2-year contracts which could be renewed on a performance basis.
- The council received a £5.56 of the council tax collected per property.
- Legal fees, PLR and sales of land processes were clarified.
- A cross-party working group to discuss potential savings was suggested.
- The Economic Development team had been working hard to generate income and would be brought to a future O&S Committee to update members on their work and success stories.
- The Head of Finance and her team were thanked for the report and their work.

Resolved:

Overview and Scrutiny considered the proposals and recommended the following to Cabinet:

1. The proposed revenue budget for 2021/22 of £8.903m, as detailed in the report.
2. The proposed council tax rate for Band D for 2021/22 of £285.13.
3. The proposed use of £606k from the Business Rates Retention reserve to support the 2021/22 revenue budget.
4. The proposed the fees and charges attached as Appendix 1 of the report.
5. The proposed technical resolutions necessary to give effect to these budget proposals attached as Appendix 4 of the report.
6. The proposed £100k contribution to Rossendale Leisure Trust funded from the Council's Covid LA support grant allocation.

9. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021/22 – 2024/25 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22

9.1 The Head of Finance outlined the report which provided members with an overview of the council's Capital Strategy and Capital Programme. The report had been produced in line with CIPFA's Prudential Code with the following noted to members:

- The proposed capital expenditure and projects were outlined which included the Empty Homes Scheme, replacement of the operational fleet, Waterside Mill and the river wall project.
- Financial sources were outlined as £6.2m from DFG, £5.83m from capital receipts, £370k revenue funding, £7.54m borrowing and £6.67m of external contributions.

- The Capital Strategy was outlined which followed the layout specified by CIPFA and also included prudential indicators. This layout would enable better rates when obtaining loans from the PWLB.

9.2 Members asked questions and commented, with clarification given, as summarised below:

- The operations fleet would be replaced on a rolling stock replacement based on a combination of age and need.
- There were no current plans with regards to a waste transfer station, however there was a provision for recyclable goods at the depot.
- Empty Homes costs were clarified and it was confirmed that the council did have a strategy for general empty properties.
- Section 106 charges were noted.

Resolved:

Overview and Scrutiny considered the report and recommended the following to Cabinet:

1. The council's Capital Strategy 2021/22 - 2024/25.
2. The council's capital programme for 2021/22 and associated capital expenditure of £6.21m.

10. THE FORWARD PLAN

10.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan and the agenda for the March committee was outlined. In response to a query on the Haweswater Aqueduct works, members were reminded that there was a Member Training Session regarding this on Tuesday 9th February 2021 and attendance was recommended.

Resolved:

The update was noted.

The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____