

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 14th July, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Gahir (Chair), Matloob (Vice-Chair), Akbar, Bal, Basra, Kaur, M. Malik, S. Malik and Strutton

PART I

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bal declared an interest as a Taxi Driver licensed by SBC. He stayed and participated in the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 7th April 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th April 2022 be approved as a correct record.

3. Member Questions

No Member Questions had been submitted.

4. Budget Process Update

The Director of Finance introduced a report that proposed the framework for the scrutiny of budget proposals that would come to the committee later in the year. It was anticipated that the circa £20m savings proposals for 2023/24 would come to scrutiny in October/November 2022 and possibly again in January 2023 if further proposals came forward.

A template for ‘key lines of enquiry’ was proposed to assist the committee and panels in scrutinising savings proposals considering each proposal against issues such as:

- Deliverability;
- risks and mitigations;
- impact on service performance;
- strategic fit;
- alternative options;
- consultation and impact on individual groups.

Members commented that the quality of the detail provided in the finance reports over the past year had improved, which was important as Members needed robust and clear information to effectively scrutinise. The Director was asked whether any further in-year savings proposals for 2022/23 would come to the committee for scrutiny if further savings were required to deliver the current year’s budget. The Finance Director explained that additional savings would be set out in the Budget Monitor that the Committee may wish to consider that report at future meetings. It was also noted that there was to be

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an Associate Director of Communications to be appointed and it is hoped that a key part of their role will be to improve communications.

In response to a question about improvements to the budget process for 2022/23, the Director explained that further work had been done to improve financial data which would provide a stronger basis on which to make financial decisions. It was explained that in the long term the Council was considering adopting a Zero-Based Budgeting process, but that this would not be implemented in the short term as this needed to be an informed practice based on solid data.

In response to a question about the budgets required to meet minimum statutory service provision, the Finance Director explained that whilst the Council can engage in benchmarking exercises, there was a judgement to be made about the definition of the level of some statutory services and the Council relied on the professional expertise of officers to assess this when considering savings proposals.

A Committee Member asked whether there had been any slippage in the budget and whether the Committee will be told about any further impacts expected as a result. It was explained that a report will come to September Cabinet which will explain mitigations brought forward by colleagues. The Director noted that if the Council over-delivered on capital receipts from the disposals programme then this would have a beneficial effect on debt levels.

It was explained that tracking systems would improve over time and become more stable as Council colleagues got used to data management and engage in further training.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee agreed the framework for budget scrutiny for the year ahead and adopted the key lines of enquiry template as set out in the report.

Resolved – The Committee agreed that budget savings for 2023/24 will be tabled in October/November and if necessary January 2023 also.

5. Contract Management/Procurement

The Director of Finance introduced the report on contract management which set out a framework for effective scrutiny and key lines of enquiry to focus the committee's questions and evidence gathering.

It was proposed that a task and finish group be formed to carry out further work on this in the coming months and bring back a report to the main committee.

A member of the Committee suggested that a synopsis of each contract should be completed as contracts end to assess whether lessons have been

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learnt. Therefore this would create a place to work from when contracts come to the Committee to be renewed or assessed. It was agreed to establish a task and finish group with Councillors S Malik, Strutton, Gahir, Basra and Kaur to:

- Review the major contracts list and select some to focus on;
- Meet with relevant officers for those contracts and discuss the key lines of enquiry in the appendix; and
- Bring a report back to a future meeting of Scrutiny for consideration.

The first meeting was expected to be held in September to review the contracts list and select some key contracts for further scrutiny.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that a scrutiny task and finish group be established on contract management.

6. Date of Next Meeting -15th September 2022

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on 15th September 2022.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.03 pm)