

## **Overview Select Committee (OSC) Finance Task Group**

### **Minutes of Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

#### **Present**

Cllr Baljit Singh, Chair of Task Group  
Cllr Virginia Cleaver  
Cllr Jean Khote  
Cllr Elly Cutkelvin  
Cllr Ratial Govind  
Alison Greenhill, Director of Finance  
Amy Oliver, Chief Accountant

#### **Apologies**

Cllr Mustafa Malik  
Cllr Lynn Moore  
Cllr Ross Grant  
Cllr Diane Cank  
Cllr Nigel Porter  
Cllr Malcolm Unsworth

#### **1. Revenue Budget Monitoring Outturn, 2016/17**

- 1.1 Cllr Singh introduced the recommendations within the Revenue Monitoring Outturn report.
- 1.2 Cllr Singh noted the £3m contingency was not required for Adult Social Care or Children's Services, identifying this demonstrates a robust budget process by the Council. Furthermore, the savings coming from spending review recommendations enabled the continued use of the managed reserves policy in the future.
- 1.3 Alison Greenhill confirmed earmarked reserves can only be used for the purpose the reserve was set up for. Further to this, Alison confirmed the process for decisions arising from the outturn report and the approval of the recommendations (a City Mayor decision once OSC has considered the position).
- 1.4 Members noted that some divisional underspends would be used for channel shift and the Transformation Fund to enable these programmes to continue. Members requested that a report on channel shift be brought to OSC during the next year.
- 1.5 Members queried the saving of £1.09m achieved by the Delivery, Communications & Political Governance Division. This reflects a transfer of £107k to the elections reserve.
- 1.6 Members noted the significant expenditure on independent sector service care packages, and concerns were raised about the continued pressure in this area, as described at paragraph 12.3. Members queried if we had made sufficient allowance for these

pressures when setting the budget for 2017/18. Alison Greenhill confirmed that the budget was set prudently with the best knowledge available at the time, but acknowledged there are continued pressures. ASC has not overspent its total budget in 2016/17.

- 1.7 A discussion took place between members regarding the use of the one-off savings achieved by Adult Social Care, detailed in paragraph 12.9. The proposal to make this available to the voluntary sector was supported by members.
- 1.8 Members recognised the savings achieved by Adult Social Care through reducing temporary staff and reviewing care packages.
- 1.9 Members discussed the forecast budget gap in Adult Social Care as detailed in paragraph 12.11. Alison Greenhill noted that further uncertainty lies ahead as we are currently unaware of the level of funding that will be available and the council tax increases that will be allowed post 2020.
- 1.10 Members discussed the saving achieved in Sexual Health. Alison Greenhill confirmed that this was a mandatory service and that the savings being made in this area were about delivering services differently (rather than service reductions).
- 1.11 Members discussed the number of children in external residential placements. Alison Greenhill confirmed these are the most complex cases, for example involving sexual exploitation. Discussion took place between members about alternatives to caring for children in external residential placements, e.g. joint working with other authorities could be explored.
- 1.12 Members requested details of the number of agency staff employed by Children's Services in 2015/16 as a comparator to the 45 detailed in paragraph 14.6 for 2016/17.
- 1.13 Cllr Singh expressed support for the proposal to set aside £7.4m of corporate savings for the Economic Action Plan. Members recognised the link between the continuous improvement and development of the city, the creation of jobs, and attractiveness of the city to inward investors.

## **2. Capital Budget Monitoring – Outturn 2016/17**

- 2.1 Members discussed the continued delay to the Extra Care scheme, for which government funding announcements are awaited. Members requested that OSC be notified promptly of any changes in this area.
- 2.2 Cllr Singh noted the achievements of the Mayor's capital programme, particularly making note of schemes in the Planning, Development and Transport Division.

### **3. Income Collection April 2016 – March 2016**

- 3.1 Members queried when proposed changes to the current council tax support scheme are going to consultation. Alison Greenhill confirmed the consultation would start in June.
- 3.2 Members noted the level of outstanding debt for council tax at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 was £13m. Members queried if appropriate action was taken to investigate non-payment. Alison Greenhill confirmed that this debt was a snapshot at a point in time, and continues to be collected. Non-payment is always thoroughly investigated. Members urged the need to continue to tackle non-payment.
- 3.3 A discussion took place regarding council tax and NNDR collection rates: members believed the Council had performed well in this area, but expressed concerns about comparative NNDR collection performance. Alison Greenhill offered assurances that this can fluctuate due to nature of the businesses within the area, and business turnover.
- 3.4 Members expressed concern that £7m of housing benefit overpayment debt had been raised during the year. Members questioned why this figure was so high. Alison Greenhill stated that this needed to be seen in the context of the overall housing benefit bill in 2016/17, of £129m. The main reason for overpayment was a delay in claimants notifying the Council of any change in circumstances, and such overpayments are amongst the most difficult debts to collect.

### **4. Review of Treasury Management Activities 2016/17**

- 4.1 This report was deferred to the OSC meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017 meeting.