

RESOURCES AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2017

PRESENT:- Councillors Emma Famarzi (Chair), Steve Allsopp, Nick Martin, Des Moffatt, Maureen Penny, Caryl Sydney-Smith, Chris Watts and Robert Wright.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Timothy Swinyard.

Also present: Andy Stevens (Head of Revenues and Benefits), Mick Bowden (Interim Head of Finance), Carmel Burton (Corporate Planning Lead), Susie Kemp (Corporate Director, Resources and Transformation).

23. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

24. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2017, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

25. Public Question Time

Mr Roy Worman, Haydon View Community Association, submitted questions regarding the Council's Commitment to Priority 1, Pledge 4, and the review of the Transport Strategy that is to be completed by 2018.

The Chair thanked Mr Worman for his questions and advised that a written response would be circulated.

26. Measuring the Council's Performance - The Council's Performance Dashboard

The Corporate Planning Lead was in attendance and made a presentation to the meeting on the detail of the Council's Performance Dashboard in monitoring corporate progress against the Council's Vision, and its priorities and pledges. The officer explained the differences between the current and previous Performance Dashboards and, in particular, emphasised the project related and conventional reporting elements of the new system, not present in the earlier model.

Following the presentation, the Corporate Planning Lead responded to members' questions and comments in respect of the following matters:

- Format and structure of the Performance Dashboard.
- The pledges relating to health centres when these were part of the Clinical Commissioning Group's remit.
- The function of Peer review and how these might be best utilised to improve service delivery standards.
- Actions to address problems of fly tipping.

- The monitoring and enforcement of street cleaning standards after this function was devolved to Parishes.
- The number of Council officers volunteering to help the community and the areas they covered.
- Accessing performance data by members of the public.
- Opportunities available for community feedback on the Performance data.
- The role of the Internal Audit office in monitoring performance.

Resolved: (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That, with regard the significant improvements reported, the officer obtain and circulate information on the specific measures taken by Milton Keynes Borough Council to improve its service delivery standards

(3) That the Corporate Planning Lead submit a Dashboard Performance update report to the Committee during the next Municipal year.

(4) Promotion to increase public awareness of the Dashboard Performance to ensure more members of the public access and comment on the Council's performance.

27. Update on Business Rates

The Interim Head of Finance circulated information regarding business rates. He advised that that the Council had very little influence on the amounts of business rates that were charged as the levels of rates was determined by National statute. The Committee heard that the Valuation Office Agency, who are part of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, assigned each business a rateable value. The Interim Head of Finance commented on the partial business rates retention scheme and explained that whilst local authorities are able to keep a proportion of the growth in Business rates, they also bear the risk of having to contribute to any reductions in rates income. Members noted that the losses in income resulted not only from business units being demolished, but also from short period of empty exemptions. In response to a query regarding rates, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that 2017 was a revaluation year and elaborated on the types of premises that were either exempt, had discounts or rate reliefs.

Following the introduction of the report, the Interim Head of Finance and Head of Revenues and Benefits responded to members' questions and comments in respect of the following matters:

- The balance between high and low rateable values and how this may attract or detract businesses coming to Swindon.
- Formulae for calculating business rates.
- The type of businesses needed in Swindon.
- Ways to promote and market Swindon.
- Resetting of the deprivation index.
- An explanation regarding the levy on growth.
- The discretionary relief for public conveniences from 2018.
- The provisions of the Local Government Finance Bill.
- The latest developments on the preparation for the 100% business rates retention

Resolved: That the report be noted.