

RESOURCES AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2016

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Nick Martin.

6. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded all Councillors to declare any known interests before the consideration of each item. No such declarations were made.

7. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2016 be confirmed and signed, subject to the following amendment:

That further to Minute no. 5; that the Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to form a Task Group with the following Members of this Committee to discuss the proposed changes to Business Rates collection and legislation once the Government has announced its decision:

Task Group Members:

Councillors Emma Famarzi, Maureen Penny, Chris Watts and Carole Sydney-Smith.

8. Public Question Time

Brian Cockbill, Stratton, asked two questions concerning (a) the Council's reserves in each year from 2003 onwards and (b) dialogue between the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services and the management, staff and union representatives of Thamesdown Transport concerning the Local Bus Services Strategy.

The Chair provided Mr Cockbill with a written response at the meeting.

9. Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services Question and Answer session

Councillor Russell Holland, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, was in attendance and the Committee considered a presentation by Councillor Holland summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within his portfolio of responsibility:

- Financial Management (Revenue and Capital Programme).
- Finance Management Overview.
- Preparing Future Year's Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Procurement.

- Revenue and Benefits Services.
- The Council's Demand Management Agenda including Stronger Together.
- Corporate Performance Resources.
- Personnel Management.
- Risk Management.
- Developing welfare and benefits policy.

Councillor Holland referred to a report submitted to Cabinet on 7th September 2016 presenting the 2016/17 revenue forecast out-turn as at the end of July 2016 concerning the first quarter's monitoring position for the capital programme, and the updated financial plan to 2020 that councils are required to submit to Government by 14th October 2016.

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Holland responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following matters:

- A possible "get-out" clause in the Efficiency Statement.
- That the principle of devolution should apply regardless of the physical structure of Local Government.
- Joined up working with the Police Authority.
- The standard of services that the Council provides in order to balance its budgets.
- The need to consider all possible options for the future delivery of the Libraries Service including outsourcing.
- Going Local, including Parishing.
- Difficulties in recruiting social workers.
- Legal costs due to planning application appeals.
- Alternative value for money options for areas due to rising demand.
- Whether the strong leader model or the elected mayor option for local governance is the cheapest.
- Problems with continuity of service associated with employing Social Workers through agencies.
- Whether the Council achieved value for money through its contracts with SEQOL.
- If the Council achieves value for money from internal and external providers of services.
- Any overspend associated with the decision to extend the Libraries consultation period.
- Income creation and commercialisation becoming a key priority for the Council.
- The total spend to date on the Wichelstowe project.
- The departmental areas that fall under the Chief Executive's budget heading.

Resolved – (1) That Councillor Holland be thanked for attending the meeting to present his performance report, and for his full and open responses to Member's questions.

(2) That Forward Swindon and its Lead Member be invited to attend the joint task group to be formed with the Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.