

OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

Thursday, 4th July, 2019

Present:-

Councillor P Innes (Chair)

Councillors	Bagshaw	Councillors	Coy
	Blakemore		Flood
	Borrell		Hollingworth
	Catt		Kellman
	Caulfield		Kelly
	D Collins		Sarvent ++
	L Collins		Snowdon

Rachel Appleyard, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
 Richard Staniforth, Deputy Chief Accountant +

+ Attended for Minute No. 3
 ++ Attended for Minute No. 5

1 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations were received.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dyke.

3 DEPUTY LEADER - BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT

The Deputy Chief Accountant attended to provide members with an update on the outturn of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) at the end of 2018/19, and the forecast for 2019/20 onwards.

At the end of 2018/19, the General Fund had returned a surplus of £395k, which was an increase of £233k from the original predicted surplus

reported to Cabinet in May, 2019. The favourable variances which had resulted in the increased surplus included:

- reduced expenditure due to carry forward requests in relation to training, survey fees and advertising;
- increased income from Operational Services Division, SpirePride service and grants.

There had also been some adverse variances to the budget which included:

- increased expenditure at the leisure centres;
- reduced rental income from business rates in the Pavements;
- deficit on the building cleaning contract.

The £395k surplus had been transferred to the Budget Risk Reserve which would enable it to be used to support the General Fund budget in future years and fund the one off costs of recurring saving initiatives.

The General Fund Capital Programme outturn was £8m, which was an underspend of £3.1m from the revised budget. The material underspends were:

- Northern Gateway Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP)
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- ICT Digital Innovation Project

These underspends would be rolled forward into the 2019/20 Capital Programme.

The General Fund budget forecast had been approved by full Council in February, 2019 and reported a deficit of £202k for 2019/20, rising to a deficit of £803k in 2020/21. By 2023/24 the deficit would rise to £1.3m. The increase was largely due to the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant and New Homes bonus which, by 2023/24, would reduce to £0. It was highlighted that the budget forecast for 2019/20 included savings of £227k from the ICT Digital Innovation project; at quarter 1 savings of £207k had already been achieved. The Deputy Chief Accountant advised members of the current challenges to the revenue position which included:

- reduced income from retail;

- more competition from private sector in terms of leisure provision;
- business rates appeals.

The Capital Programme for 2019/20 had been approved by Council in February, 2019 and included the following schemes:

- Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre
- ICT Digital Innovation project
- Northern Gateway MSCP
- Northern Gateway public realm
- Artificial sport pitch in Queen's Park
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Beetwell Street Car Park repairs

The challenge for the Capital Programme would be generating the capital receipts in the current economic climate.

The HRA had returned a surplus of £8.9m at the end of 2018/19, a rise of £4.4m from the original budget forecast. The favourable variance was predominately due to a transfer back from the bad debts provision. In addition, the HRA Capital Programme had been underspent by £5.6m due to procurement issues and delayed starts on sites at some schemes.

The HRA budget for 2019/20 forecast a surplus of £3.4m. The HRA Capital Programme budget for 2019/20 was £26.5m; £9.8m of the work would be completed by the Council's Operational Services Division with £16.8m completed by other contractors. The current challenges to the HRA were the continued roll out of Universal Credit and achieving the capital programme, in particular the new build element.

In response to members' questions, the Deputy Chief Accountant advised that Chesterfield had submitted a bid to take part in a Business Rates Pilot for 2019/20 however had been unsuccessful. The Council is not in control of setting the business rates; the valuation office assesses every property and place a rateable value on each property, the rates are then set on a multiplier.

Members asked how shop occupancy rates in Chesterfield compared to similar towns and were advised that Chesterfield had less vacant units than other towns however the current challenges were the lower rents and incentives given to tenants. Some vacant units on Vicar Lane were still receiving rent until the lease ran out; a new company were in charge

of lettings on Vicar Lane and were working to bring the vacant units back into use. In addition, a modular unit design would be adopted where people could move straight into the units with little set up costs.

With regard to the underspend of Disabled Facilities Grants, the Deputy Chief Accountant explained that this was due to spending less during 2018/19 than was planned however the funding could still be used in future years.

Members thanked the Deputy Chief Accountant for providing the update and answering their questions.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That a further update be scheduled for the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum meeting on 21 November, 2019.

4 CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE - UPDATE ON RELEASE OF GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON SCRUTINY

The Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer attended to provide an update on the Government's new Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities, and advised members of the new processes that were being implemented to improve the Overview and Scrutiny (OS) function at Chesterfield.

A survey was carried out of all scrutiny members during 2018/19 to identify where improvements were needed. One of the areas highlighted by the survey were the preparations for scrutiny meetings including equipping scrutiny members with the right skills and information to carry out effective scrutiny. As a result, the scrutiny induction had included interactive sessions to develop the questioning and thinking skills required when scrutinising a topic. Two new templates had also been designed to support officers preparing for scrutiny meetings:

- **scoping document** – to be completed for each topic that comes to scrutiny which clearly sets out the purpose, remit, timescale, methodology and anticipated outcomes of the review;

- **report template** – to be completed by the author, focussing on the initial scope of the review and prompting the sharing of information that will help scrutiny add value and have an impact.

Members reported that the consultation process on scrutiny project group reports needed careful planning to ensure a successful transition through its parent OS Committee and onto Cabinet. Members also asked for clarification on the role of officers in scrutiny project group reports.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That a further update be brought to the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum meeting on 21 November, 2019 providing clarification on the role of officers in scrutiny project group reports.

5 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer presented the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2018/19. The report would be submitted to Full Council for approval on 17 July, 2019.

Councillor Sarvent, former Joint Chair of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum, noted that scrutiny intervention in Universal Credit and the Night Shelter had helped to prevent deprivation in the town. In addition, attending the East Midlands Scrutiny Network had been beneficial, allowing scrutiny members and officers to learn new ideas and share best practice.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19 be approved for submission to Full Council on 17 July, 2019.
2. That authority be delegated to the Joint Scrutiny Chairs and the Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer to make any late amendments to the Annual Report.

6 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20

The Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer submitted a report which included the details of the proposed Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Work Programme for 2019/20.

Members were asked to state their interest in taking part in one of the two new scrutiny project groups.

In addition, the scrutiny member nominations for the council working groups were discussed.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/20 be approved and recommended to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs).
2. That members contact the Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer by 22 July, 2019 if they are interested in joining one of the two scrutiny project groups or the council working group on housing.
3. That Councillor Catt and Councillor P Innes be appointed as scrutiny representatives on the Member Development Working Group.

7 FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was considered.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

8 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Monitoring Schedule was considered. Members noted that a rise in alcohol related health admissions had been reported in the news. Statistics were requested every 6 months on this issue and would be presented to the Customer, Community and Organisational Scrutiny Committee on 26 September, 2019 under the Statutory Crime and Disorder functions.

RESOLVED –

That the Monitoring Schedule be approved.

9 **JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Chair provided an update from the East Midlands Scrutiny Network meeting which was held on 28 June, 2019. Scrutiny members from around the East Midlands shared what they were most proud of in their Overview and Scrutiny functions. The Chair also reported that he had been voted in as Chair of the Network. East Midlands Councils would be hosting a Scrutiny Conference in October, 2019 and had asked members to consider ideas for including at the conference and for future network meetings.

There was no update to report from the Sheffield City Region Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As a non-constituent member of the Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority, the items discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings had moved to focus more on the local authority areas that are constituent members. Therefore, the value of the Scrutiny Chairs attending these meetings would be reconsidered.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That members send ideas for inclusion on the East Midlands Scrutiny Network work programme to the Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer.

10 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS**

There were no Overview and Scrutiny developments to report.

11 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum held on 19 March, 2019 were presented.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.