

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee - Corporate and Resources held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Wednesday, 24 July 2024 at 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Bob Filmer (Chair)
Cllr Henry Hobhouse (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Philip Ham	Cllr Tony Lock
Cllr Martin Lovell	Cllr Peter Seib
Cllr Brian Smedley	Cllr Andy Soughton
Cllr Lucy Trimmell	Cllr Mike Murphy
Cllr Sue Osborne	Cllr Simon Coles

In attendance:

Cllr Norman Cavill	Cllr Heather Shearer
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Other Members present remotely:

Cllr Mandy Chilcott	Cllr Peter Clayton
Cllr Dixie Darch	Cllr John Hunt
Cllr Andy Kendall	Cllr Leigh Redman
Cllr Sarah Wakefield	Cllr Richard Wilkins
Cllr Rosemary Woods	Cllr Ros Wyke

26 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Councillors Diogo Rodrigues substituted by Councillor Sue Osborne, Councillor Nick Cottle substituted by Councillor Simon Coles. Apologies were also received from Councillor Theo Butt Philip, Alyn Jones, Nicola Hix and Jason Vaughan.

27 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations of Interest.

28 Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Agenda Item 3

Resolved that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee - Corporate and Resources held on 29 May 2024 and 19 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record of both

meetings.

29 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

No members of the Public had registered to speak.

30 Forward Plan 2024/25 - Agenda Item 5

The members noted the Forward Plan for this committee and the Executive and had no other suggestions for the committee's work plan.

It was noted that the venue for the next meeting had been changed due to room availability and an updated calendar appointment will follow after the meeting.

31 Budget Monitoring Report – 2023/24 Draft Outturn and 2024/25 Emerging Issues - Agenda Item 6

The Deputy Leader Councillor Leyshon and Finance Manager Christian Evans presented their reports that had been on the Executive agenda on 15 July 2024.

Areas highlighted were:

Appendices 1 -9 related to the 2023/24 outturn for the various services and Appendix 10 detailed the 2024/25 Revenue Budget Monitoring Month 2 – Emerging Issues.

It was hoped that the final outturn for each service will be to the September Executive with the Housing Revenue Account to the August Executive.

The draft revenue outturn was showing an underspend of £1.6m with savings being made in directorates.

There are still concerns with the budgets for Adults and Childrens Services therefore a more detailed budget monitoring exercise has been undertaken.

During discussion, Members requested further details on the savings expected and the capital programme; it was confirmed that the capital programme budget had reduced due to slippage on the programme.

Members also highlighted that tracking liabilities was extremely important with some concerns raised about the overall budget rather than focussing on individual budgets.

It was noted that Corporate Performance reports needed to be clarified on overall changes and these reports will be provided in the future.

Other areas queried by committee members related to the breakdown of the finances relating to each of the Yeovil venues, budget for Childrens Services but it was noted that this was scrutinised by another committee and also information was requested on staff pay.

Resolved:

The committee noted the reports submitted with the agenda and looked forward to receiving monthly update reports as agreed on both 2023/24 Outturn and the 2024/25 monthly budget monitoring reports.

32 Improvement and Transformation Programme Update - Agenda Item 7

Sara Cretney presented the update report on the Information and Transformation Programme which detailed the progress being made and was presented in the form of the Monthly Programme Reporting Dashboard which detailed the status of each area.

Milestones achieved recently were:

- Productivity Plan which included comments from this committee and now submitted to Government
- Partnerships, Devolution and Localities: this was shown as amber due to resource and capacity issues; however these have now been resolved and so will be shown as Green next month.

Members commented on the following areas:

Staff engagement survey shows a low response? 48% response and therefore considered this was a reasonable response

Risk summary on redundancy? Mitigation in place and target scores detailed capital receipts also being tracked.

Steps confirmed on Capitalisation Programme? CIPFA review and Government, Directive borrowing to pay costs therefore selling the assets to fund those costs.

Programme looks to have slipped by 6 weeks? It was confirmed that the original programme had the consultation going to September and work is on-going to meet targets

Comments were also made about staffing, resources and impact on remaining staff due to redundancies and staff leaving the authority. All staff structures were hoped to be consulted on by end of September and HR are mapping the process currently. It is hoped that the complete picture will be known by mid-November to December. Service Standards will come through Scrutiny for consideration.

Resolved:

The committee resolved to note the progress of the timeline and milestones of delivery of the Improvement and Transformation Programme and the risk register as detailed for each area.

33 Disposal of Non-Operational Assets - Agenda Item 8

It was confirmed that this report was being brought to this committee before being presented to Executive and that report would include comments made by the committee.

The details of each asset being considered had been shared with local Councillors and Parish/Town Councils via email. There were 22 assets on the list, decision not made just on financial reasons but included operational use, developments, rationalised use of assets and land holdings. Councillor Leyshon confirmed that the Asset Management Group agreed the decision on each item and it was hoped that using this approach would be more transparent.

Members were assured that before any sale, consideration would be given to whether the sale would be enhanced with planning permission for development or to include covenants or up lifts.

It was explained that some assets would be in partnership especially if it would be developed for Affordable Housing and included funding schemes, government grants and the sale would meet the social objectives of the Council but some would be open market or through auction depending on the asset.

There was a request for further information to be provided on the policy for the County Farms, however it was confirmed that parcels of land would be sold rather than the farms at present.

The committee were informed that it was resource intensive, however it was explained that external support was also being used and risks being monitored as it was high-risk. It was also confirmed that any loss of income was written into the budgets for 3 years and will be factored in for any sales and included within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

It was requested that a further email be sent to local Councillors and the Councils just to ensure that they had noted the information sent and for any comments to be received before the Executive decision.

The committee then went into confidential session to discuss individual assets.

Resolved:

The committee noted the draft report to the Executive Committee which detailed the sites due for disposal, with each site considered and verbal clarification where needed from Officers.

Members requested that a further email be sent to Division Members where appropriate to highlight the sites in their area being proposed for disposal.

(The meeting ended at 2.03 pm)

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CHAIR