

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 2 November 2017

Present:

Councillor Wardle (Chair)

Councillors Foale, Branston, Foggin, Hannaford, Holland, Thompson and Vizard

Apologies:

Councillors Hannan and Morris

Also present:

Service Improvement Lead (Benefits), Technical Accounting Manager, Principal Accountant Corporate, Scrutiny Programme Officer and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

In attendance

Councillor Emma Morse

Councillor Hannah Packham

Councillor Phil Bialyk

- Portfolio Holder for People

- Portfolio Holder for the Housing Revenue Account

- Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing,
Communities and Sport

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held on 7 September 2017 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

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HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - BUDGET MONITORING TO QUARTER 2

The Technical Accounting Manager advised Members of any major differences, by management unit between the approved budget and the outturn forecast for the second quarter in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Council's new build schemes. An outturn update in respect of the HRA Capital Programme was also incorporated in the report in order to help provide a comprehensive financial update in respect of the Housing Revenue Account.

During this period, the total budget variances indicate that there would be a net surplus of £928,511 in 2017/18. This represented a significant movement of £3,416,126 compared to the revised budgeted deficit of £2,487,615 for 2017/18 with, most notably, £2,700,000 attributable to delays with the St Loyes Extra Care scheme.

The total amount of HRA capital expenditure for 2017/18 showed a total forecast spend of £10,429,195 compared to the £11,722,625 approved programme, a decrease of £1,303,430.

The following responses were given to Members' queries:-

- the tender return had prompted a review of the St. Loyes Extra Care Scheme, the results of which would be reported to this Committee;
- further information would be provided to Members on the progress of the new fire management safety policy in Council properties particularly the provision of appropriate storage for bicycles as concerns remained over tenants responses to the new requirements for these with reference also made to prams;
- Members sought reassurance that existing Council specialist expertise in tree management would not be lost and that the Portfolio Holder for Place be requested to advise on the status of a Tree Strategy. Members were advised that works being delivered this financial year to deal with at risk trees are being prioritised by Public Realm with the works on site more weighted in the second half of the financial year, due to seasonal works; and
- further information would be provided to Members on surveyor recruitment, vacant posts having placed a constraint on the delivery of certain planned works, one Member remarking on the competition from the private sector in this area.

People Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

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PEOPLE - BUDGET MONITORING TO QUARTER 2

The Principal Accountant advised Members of any material differences, by management unit between the approved budget and the outturn forecast for the second quarter in respect of People Services. An outturn update in respect of the People Capital Programme was also incorporated in the report in order to help provide a comprehensive financial update in respect of the People Services budget.

The current forecast suggested that net expenditure would increase from the approved budget by a total of £122,780 after transfers from reserves and revenue contributions to capital. This represented a variation of 4.37% from the revised budget and included a supplementary budget of £178,300.

The 2017/18 Capital Programme showed a total spend of £182,616.

People Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE EXECUTIVE

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EXETER CITY COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2018/19

The Benefits and Welfare Lead presented the report seeking Members' views on the local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for working age residents for 2018/19. The local CTS scheme had commenced in April 2013 and Members were required to agree the scheme rules annually.

Members welcomed the continuation of the scheme largely on the same basis as existing and noted that officers continued to closely monitor the situation in light of the fluidity of the overall welfare picture and the anticipated impact of the full Universal Credit regime in 2018.

People Scrutiny Committee noted the report and recommended Executive approve the scheme for 2018/19 to continue without substantive changes from the current year's scheme.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

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TOPIC IDEAS FOR TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Scrutiny Programme Officer invited Members to suggest Task and Finish Group topics for consideration at the Interim Scrutiny Work Programme Meeting on 13 November 2017.

The one suggestion put forward was for a review of play area provision in the City, specifically to map what play areas there are, their level of use and what maintenance is required.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

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EXETER HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD - MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2017

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Sport reported that the Director (JY) would be bringing a final report to the January meeting of the Board on revised operational arrangements following a recent review of its purpose, function, terms of reference and membership.

People - Scrutiny Committee noted the minutes of the Exeter Health and Wellbeing Board of 12 September 2017.

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HRA MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Portfolio Holder for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) updated Members on progress with the proposal to establish a HRA Management Board. It was proposed that the Board would comprise elected Members, who would hold the majority, together with representatives with expertise in housing matters. Recommendations from the Council's Remuneration Panel were to be considered by Council and would include a recommendation for remunerating the above representatives.

Final proposals for the establishment of the Board would be presented to this Committee, Executive and Council in due course.

People Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.10 pm)

Chair