

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESOURCES

18 November 2015

Present:

Councillor Bull (Chair)

Councillors Baldwin, Brock, George, Harvey, Lyons, Packham, Sheldon and Thompson

Apologies:

Councillors Buswell, Bialyk, Mottram and Wardle

Also present:

Assistant Director Finance, Assistant Director Environment, Cleansing & Fleet Manager, Corporate Manager Property, Economy and Tourism Manager, City Arts and Events Manager and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (SLS)

In attendance:

Councillor Heather Morris	- Portfolio Holder Customer Access
Councillor Rachel Sutton	- Portfolio Holder City Development

52 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2015 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct, subject to an amendment to Minute 46 (Portfolio Holder Statements 2015/16) to read the Portfolio Holder for Customer Access commented that "as well as exploring a Credit Union" and "are able to work towards tackling rough sleeping".

53 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Brock made a declaration of discloseable pecuniary interest in relation to the St James Park development and withdrew from the room whilst the matter was discussed.

54 **Overview of Revenue Budget 2015/16**

The Assistant Director Finance presented a report which advised Members of the overall projected financial position of the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2015/16 financial year after six months. The report set out the key variances for each of the Service Committees, with a projected underspend of £721,680 against a revised budget of £13,492,330. The report also contained a supplementary budget request of £25,000, match funding with Devon County Council for weed control for the city.

A Member enquired if the City Council had in place a sustainable programme to address the impact of the future challenges to maintain the Council's housing stock, irrespective of any new build. The Assistant Director Finance referring to the impact of the anticipated 1% cut over the life cycle of the 30 year Business Plan, assured Members that every effort would be made to address the challenges of maintaining the current stock and any subsequent building. He also responded to a Member's

comment on the Debtors write off and creditor payments performance for the first quarter of 2014/15, and confirmed he would carry out a detailed work analysis and identify any corrective action required.

The Assistant Director Finance responded to a Member's question in relation to the City Council's trade waste collection. He was aware that a survey was due to be conducted inviting BID Members to comment on the current service. The Member asked if all BID Members would be invited to respond to the survey and referred to a number of challenging areas in the city centre. The Assistant Director Environment confirmed that city wide BID Members would be approached, regarding the opportunity for a later trade waste collection.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the report and requested that Council approve the following (where applicable):

- (1) General Fund forecast financial position for the 2015/16 financial year;
- (2) Housing Revenue Account forecast financial position for 2015/16 financial year;
- (3) additional Supplementary Budgets listed in Appendix C;
- (4) outstanding Sundry Debt position as at September 2015;
- (5) Creditors' Payments performance; and
- (6) Council Tax and Business Rates collection performance.

55 **Capital Monitoring Statement**

The Assistant Director Finance presented a report which updated the current position in respect of the Council's revised annual capital programme to £20,477 million. During the first six months of the year the council spent £4.683 million on the programme, which equated to 22.9% of the revised programme, compared with 16.3% which was spent in the first six months of 2014/15. Members were advised of the anticipated level of deferred expenditure into future years, the detail of which was set out in Appendix 1, circulated with the report. The report also sought approval to amend the annual Capital Programme in order to reflect the reported variations. The report also detailed two requests including the funding of an in-principle agreement to adopt the Idox system, and the purchase of a common solution of planning services for Strata across the three Councils, including East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils, and the continued roll out of the Econospeed Engine Management which was a device to reduce the fleet carbon footprint. The Cleansing and Fleet Manager was able to respond to a Member's enquiry and confirm that this would extend the anticipated life of the refuse collection fleet, by potentially, up to two years.

The Assistant Director Finance responded to a Member's enquiry and confirmed the detail of the current cash collection arrangement from the city's car parking machines with Teignbridge District Council and that he would report back to Members after further consideration of the matter. He also responded to a Member's comment in relation to the reported saving in the Structural Defects capital budget, and would make an enquiry to provide assurance that the budget remained sufficiently robust to address any required works.

The Chair wished to place on record, the recognition of the award made to the Corporate Energy Manager and the team on their recent achievements in winning a public sector National sustainability energy award in respect of the solar panels in two of the city's car parks.

Scrutiny Committee - Resources noted the revision in respect of the annual Capital Programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in paragraphs 8.4 and 8.5 of

the circulated report, and the additional funding requests set out in paragraph 8.7 of the report and recommended its approval by Council.

56 Treasury Management Half Yearly Report 2015/16

The Assistant Director Finance submitted the report, informing Members of the current Treasury Management performance for the 2015/16 financial year and the position regarding investments and borrowings as at 30 September 2015. The report was a statutory requirement and was for information only with no key decisions required. Members were updated on the interest rate prospects, net interest position and the future position. The report also detailed the future position in relation to borrowings, as set out in paragraph 10 of the report, with the City Council continuing to take advantage of the current low interest rate.

Scrutiny Committee - Resources noted the report and requested Executive to approve the Treasury Management report in respect of the first six months of the 2015/16 financial year.

57 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2

The Assistant Director Finance presented the report which advised Members of any material differences to the revised budget in respect of Resources revenue budgets for the first six months of the financial year up to 30 September 2015. The forecast suggested that the net expenditure for this Committee would decrease from the revised budget by a total of £697,040 after transfers from reserves and revenue contributions to capital, as detailed in Appendix 1 circulated with the report. This represented a variation of 11.26% for the revised budget and included supplementary budget of £145,550. An update on the approved budget savings had also been included.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the report.

58 Annual Health and Safety Report

The Assistant Director Environment provided an update which formed part of the Corporate Health and Safety Management System and was designed to provide Members with an all-round briefing on the 'state of play' in corporate health and safety. A copy of the annual report on the strategic Health and Safety at Work performance of the Council during the financial year 2014 /2015 was circulated with the report to ensure that Members were aware of key health and safety considerations affecting the Council.

A Member enquired about the involvement of trade union representatives. The Assistant Director Environment referred to the monthly meeting of Key Partners, which included a System Lead (Director, Assistant Director or Corporate Manager) as well as an employee of management grade from their area to act as a 'Key Partner' to assist in the review of and implementation of the Health and Safety Management System, aiming to promote the 'Exemplar' health and safety practice status expected of local authorities. The group also included trade union representation, and met on a monthly basis to study incidents and accidents and make any appropriate recommendations to the Senior Management Team. He also responded to a comment on the policies covering lone working where lone officers may be meeting clients at their home or workplace. When there were issues with aggressive or threatening behaviour, officers were trained to use the Council's Step Away Policy, whereby staff were encouraged to walk away or diffuse a situation. These incidents were reported through the accident/incident reporting system, and

where appropriate, an individual of concern was recorded on a corporate system with a relevant instruction to staff on how to approach the individual, the individual of concern is written to advising them of this record and the instruction, with an annual review following.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted the Annual Health and Safety Report 2014/2015 attached as an appendix to the report.

59 Social Media Update

Councillor Bull, Chair of the Social Media Task and Finish Group, advised that he had been tasked to report back on the continuing work of the Group. Social media remained an effective tool to enable the Council to engage with communities and individuals. The Group will continue to monitor and, if necessary, report back to Scrutiny Committee – Resources. He thanked the Council's Digital Media Officer for his excellent support of the Council's web site, Facebook and twitter accounts.

60 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I, Schedule 12A of the Act.

61 Waste Operations Staffing Levels

The Assistant Director Environment and Cleansing and Fleet Manager presented a report which requested an increase of permanent staff to ensure there was the optimum complement of staff to operate Waste Operations and the Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) effectively and reduce the dependency on agency staff use. The report also outlined other measures that had been taken to increase efficiency and reduce staff costs in these services. The Assistant Director Environment pointed out that there would be a proposed change in relation to the second recommendation outlined in the report, as there was a wish to reduce the dependency on agency staffing at an early stage.

The Cleansing and Fleet Manager responded to comments on the number of sickness absences, which included those members of staff on long term sick. There had been a recent reduction in the level compared with previous years, from 24 days average to 17.5 days, with most symptoms being more physical in nature, due to the rigours of the job. He also referred to the efforts made to encourage and upskill staff through a number of e-learning opportunities and action taken to address members of staff facing long term sickness absence. He would collate additional information and provide a more detailed sickness absence report for Members. He also welcomed any Member who wished to visit the MRF to see the day to day operation, or spend some time with the refuse collection crews in their wards, some Members having already done so.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources noted and requested Executive support for Council approval:-

- (1) the revised Waste Operations and MRF staff establishment as detailed in Appendix 1 circulated with the report;

- (2) for the associated costs of £57,359 to reduce the dependency on agency staffing; and
- (3) the preparation of a business case for the deletion of the (currently vacant) post of Clinical Waste van driver to be submitted to the Executive at a later date.

62 **St James Park Stadium Redevelopment Scheme**

Councillor Brock made a declaration of a discloseable pecuniary interest in relation to the St James Park development and withdrew from the room whilst it was discussed.

The Corporate Manager Property presented a report which advised Members on the proposed partial redevelopment of St James Park Stadium to improve the current playing and spectator facilities at the stadium. The report outlined the proposed mechanism for securing funding for the stadium improvements and sought the views of Members of Scrutiny Committee - Resources on the proposed recommendations to Executive. He responded to a Member's enquiry in relation to the future development and potential lease restructuring.

Scrutiny Committee - Resources noted the report which detailed the current condition of the stadium and supported endorsement and approval by Executive for the following:-

- (1) proposals for an upgrade to improve the current playing and spectator facilities at the stadium;
- (2) opportunity to facilitate the stadium improvements as part of a wider redevelopment of the St James Park stadium site and adjoining land; and
- (3) proposed mechanism for delivering improvements by way of disposing of land and recycling the consideration into stadium improvements.

63 **Additional Events Budget 2016/17**

The Assistant Director Finance presented a report which requested additional funding for 2016/17, and the following two years, to enable the Council to bid for two proposed events to be hosted in Exeter. A short information video was presented in respect of the event detailed in paragraph 8.1. The Arts and Events Manager attended to comment on the wider economic benefits for the city and surrounding areas associated with such events. Every effort would be made to ensure that operational arrangements such as crowd control and traffic management would be discussed with stakeholders and partners.

A Member spoke of his reserved support, commenting on the likely economic benefits and he enquired about the ticketing arrangements. The Arts and Events Manager provided details of the ticketing and distribution arrangements, which included a ballot with one ticket per person, on a first come, first served basis. She suggested that opportunities to attract sponsorship and advertising to decrease the budget would be pursued. A Member welcomed the event, but hoped that every effort would be made to minimise traffic congestion in and around the event site. The Arts and Events Manager advised that use of the Park and Ride buses would be explored.

The Economy and Tourism Manager also attended and provided more information on the event outlined in paragraph 8.4. The organisers were looking to continue to raise the profile for the event and the city. There were significant benefits as well as a

continuation of legacy work which had already commenced. It was noted that with greater commercial sponsorship and ticket sales, that the contribution would be reduced accordingly. A Member referred to the possibility of direct negotiation to ensure that the event was not subsidising the organising group, to which the Assistant Director Finance stated that the detailed arrangements were included in the report and the sum requested was to minimise the risk. The Member was reassured and considered the event would have wide reaching benefits for the city.

Scrutiny Committee - Resources noted the report and requested Executive to support Executive recommending approval by Council for:-

- (1) a budget for 2016/17 of £225,000 to enable the Council to bid for two events more particularly described in paragraph 8.1 of the circulated report to be held in and around the City; and
- (2) a further budget of £100,000 for each year in 2017/18 and 2018/19 to enable one of the events described in paragraph 8.4 of the report to be held in Exeter for a further two years.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.35 pm

Chair