

CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 29 September 2016

Present:

Councillor Sheldon (Chair)
Councillors Warwick, Baldwin, Hannan, Harvey, Holland and Musgrave

Apologies:

Councillors Lamb, Robson and Edwards

Also present:

Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Director Finance, Museums Manager, HR Transactional Services Manager, Corporate Energy Manager and Democratic Services Manager (Committees)

Councillor Pearson – Portfolio Holder for Support Services

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29 June 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable interest were made.

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AN ENERGY NEUTRAL COUNCIL - A RENEWABLES AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Corporate Energy Manager presented the report which provided an update on the second year of the Renewables and Energy Efficiency Programme, feasibility work for a new programme of projects to commence in 2017/18 and the outcome of recently completed greenhouse gas emission data across all the Council's operations in 2015/16.

The Corporate Energy Manager updated Members on the following:-

- the Livestock Centre Solar PV – benefits included the sale of discounted renewable energy to leaseholders providing the Council with an additional income;
- Leisure Centres – Solar PV remains a feasible opportunity for our existing centres;
- Battery Storage – this would allow the Council to take full advantage of solar energy generated;
- LED Replacement Lighting in Car Parks– this work will be actioned once a full condition survey of car parks is complete;
- Energy Monitoring – SMART control – improved and new methods of energy and data monitoring.

Members received a presentation illustrating a drop in CO2 emissions by 29% since 2009, and reduction in energy consumption following the installation of LED and Solar PV at the Civic Centre and Mary Archers Car Park. There was further

investigation required into the possibility of Solar PV at the Leisure Centres and the evaluation of opportunities and systems available to provide an improved method to reduce consumption and minimise costs. Whilst the installation of renewables was effective, there was still work to be undertaken with regards to the Council's management and monitoring of its buildings, so to reduce energy usage for the Council to achieve Energy Neutrality.

In response to a Member's question, the Corporate Energy Manager clarified that the use of battery operated equipment and tools was not in the current programme at present, the focus was on council buildings. The Council was ahead of other authorities in Devon and had recently won the Local Government Chronicle Environment award for the Renewables and Energy Efficiency Programme, demonstrating national recognition.

The Chair commented, that with only a team of two staff in Energy Management, they had still managed to achieve considerable savings for the Council.

In response to Members' questions, the Deputy Chief Executive stated that if the Energy Team be given more resources then greater efficiency savings could be made.

Members discussed the savings made to date and acknowledged that it would be cost effective for the Council to increase staff numbers within the Energy Management team.

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

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CREATION OF A FULL TIME UNION REPRESENTATIVE POST

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report which set out the logic for the creation of full time union official post within the City Council.

In response to Members' questions, the Deputy Chief Executive clarified that there were two trade unions in the Council - Unite and Unison. Unite was supportive of a Unison Member hold this position and the budget would sit with the Deputy Chief Executive.

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee noted the report and requested Executive note and Council notes, and approve:-

- (1) that each year, the employee elected into the role of Branch Secretary (within Unison) be seconded into a full time "union official" post to be created for the period of their office, normally 12 months;
- (2) during this secondment, their pay and conditions will match their substantive role;
- (3) a budget to cover the cost of each annual secondment, for this financial year a budget of £36,500 was required;
- (4) that this newly created post sit within the Deputy Chiefs Executive's budget; and
- (5) the Role Description to be applied to this seconded post as attached as Appendix 1 for information be noted.

NEW INCOME GENERATING INITIATIVES AT RAMM: TEMPORARY EXHIBITION ADMISSION CHARGES

The Museum Manager & Cultural Lead presented the report of review of actions undertaken as a result of the report 'Income Generating Initiatives at RAMM' which was presented to Economy Scrutiny Committee and Executive in November 2015.

Members were advised that the trial proposed was an exploratory exercise around charging for certain temporary exhibitions at RAMM. The first exhibition 'International Garden Photographer of the Year' showed a loss of £30. The results of trialling an admission charge in one exhibition provided limited evidence to consider when looking at the effectiveness of this strategy. Therefore the recommendation was to extend the admission charge to a forthcoming exhibition 'Hiroshige's Japan Stations on the Tokaido Road. Also to explore 'giving what you think' donations in the exhibition 'Queen Victoria in Paris'. This would help to build a body of knowledge to draw upon.

In response to a Member's question, the Museum Manager & Cultural Lead clarified that events for children and young people were held in school holidays and schools regularly visited the museum.

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee noted the:-

- (1) continuation to test different strategies for income generation relating to temporary exhibitions;
- (2) extension of the admission charge to a forthcoming exhibition, 'Hiroshige's Japan: Stations on the Tokaido Road,' an exhibition touring from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; and
- (3) exploration of 'give what you think' donations in the exhibition 'Queen Victoria in Pairs' touring from the Royal Collection.

BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 JUNE 2016

The Assistant Director Finance presented the report advising Members of any material differences to the revised budget in respect of Corporate Committee.

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee in order to be satisfied that prudent steps were being taken to address the key areas of budgetary pressure highlighted noted the report.

ANNUAL WORKFORCE PROFILE REPORT 2015/16

The Transactional Services Manager presented the report of a comprehensive profile of the Council's workforce as at 31 March 2016. The profile had been benchmarked where appropriate against the Labour Market Statistics for Exeter as captured by the 2011 Census. The reports also advised of the Human Resource performance data in respect of people resources and sickness absence during 2015/16 and information in respect of approach to Learning & Development activity for 2015/16.

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

CAPITAL MONITORING STATEMENT TO 30 JUNE 2016

The Assistant Director Finance presented the report of the current position in respect of the Council's revised annual capital programme and advising Members of the anticipated level of deferred expenditure into future years.

The Assistant Director Finance advised Members that, during the first three months of the year, the Council spent £2.167 million on the programme, which equated to 6.8% of the revised programme. This compared with £1.534 million (6.6%) being spent in the first three months of 2015/16. He advised of the expenditure variances including the Northbrook Flood alleviation scheme; e-tendering and RAMM Development. Members were assured, that while the Bus Station Complex appeared in the schemes to be deferred to 2017/18, the project would be delivered within the agreed timescales. The achievements during the first quarter of 2016/17 were the replacement of Car Park Ticket machines and repair to Turf Lock Gates.

There were two additions to the Capital Programme to be recommended to Council:-

- Railway Arches at Riverside, Cowick Street for £50,000 - this had been made under Section 21 of Financial Regulations regarding the urgency of the decision; and
- Farmers' Market Electricity Supply of an additional £10,000 to the original approved £20,000.

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee 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 report, and the additions to the Capital Programme detailed in paragraph 8.7 of the report and recommended its approval by Council.

OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2016/17

The Assistant Director Finance presented the report to advise Members of the overall projected financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2016/17 financial year after three months and sought approval for a number of supplementary budgets. The General Fund had an underspend of £232,000 and the HRA an overspend of £26,188.

The Assistant Director Finance advised Members of the position with regards to the Net Interest and Repayment of debt variations. The additional supplementary budgets being requested from Council were £27,900 to support the production of a staff survey and the subsequent actions arising from the responses and £350,000 to enable a detailed feasibility study into the benefits of setting up Housing Development Company.

The Chair welcomed the reduction in the trend of the outstanding debt.

The Assistant Director Finance commented that Housing Benefit made up two thirds of the outstanding sundry debt and, owing to the circumstances of the debtors, this took much longer to recover. This debt had increased as a result of real time information and it was anticipated that there would be a slow downward trend in this area of debt.

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee noted the report and requested Executive note and Council approves the following (where applicable):-

- (1) General Fund forecast financial position for the 2016/17 financial year;
- (2) The HRA forecast financial position for 2016/17 financial year;
- (3) The additional supplementary budgets listed in Appendix C;
- (4) The outstanding Sundry Debt position as at June 2016; and
- (5) The creditors' payments performance;

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FUNDING FOR PINHOE COMMUNITY LIBRARY

The Assistant Director Finance presented the report to seek approval for an expenditure budget of £100,000, to enable the funding set aside for the new Community Hub in Pinhoe to be allocated. The Council now needed to approve an expenditure budget to enable the funding to be used.

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee noted the report and requested Executive note and Council approves an expenditure budget of £100,000 as Exeter's contribution to the new Community Hub planned for Pinhoe.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.20 pm)

Chair

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