

## CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), Dr Lilly Evans, Mohammed Ilyas, Lynne Jones, Richard Kellaway and Gerry Clark

Also in attendance: Councillors Saunders and Rankin.

Officers: Barbara Richardson, Alison Alexander, Rob Stubbs, David Scott and David Cook.

### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Quick, Cllr Kellaway attended as a substitute.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Lead Member for Finance presented the latest Financial Update report and informed the Panel that the projected General Fund Reserves was £7,118,000 which was well in excess of the £5,780,000 recommended minimum level set at Council in February 2017. This excess of reserves was important to provide a buffer from any future uncertainties, however this was less than previously reported.

The Schools Forum had discussed the increased deficit in the high needs block and had approved a recovery plan that did not have any impact on council tax.

With regards to the capital programme there had been slippage into the next years budget, the projects had not slipped it was just that the budgets spanned across years.

When the 2017-18 budget was approved by Council in February 2017, new borrowing was anticipated to be £72,999,000 for 2017/18. Due to the re-profiling of a number of schemes on the cash flow forecast, expected new borrowing has reduced to £17m by the year end. The Panel were informed that a reconciliation list of capital projects had been added to appendix D.

Cllr L Evans said it was good to see that our finances were in good order especially given the news of Northamptonshire's financial trouble and difficulties facing other authorities. Cllr Evans asked about the business rates discounts and was informed that public houses could apply for a business rate discount the other discounts were discretionary ones offered by the Council.

Cllr Kellaway asked why £67,000 had been paid to Bisham School to convert to an academy. The Panel were informed that this was to cover capital maintenance projects that had been put on hold when there was a possibility that the school may have closed.

In response to a question from Cllr Jones the Panel were informed that the housing grant did cover emergency housing need and that there was a possibility that expenditure would rise.

In response to a question from the Chairman the Panel were informed that there were no unforeseen significant pressures that officers were aware of.

**Resolved unanimously: that the report be noted.**

## BUDGET REPORT 2018/19

The Panel considered the 2018/19 Budget Report that was due to be considered by Cabinet and Council.

Mr Endacott asked the Panel the following questions, it was agreed to send him a written response outside the meeting with the answers being included in the minutes:

Question 1 - I can see where the expenditure come from, but is there an explanation as to the source of the income in the Directly Managed Costs aspect of the budget (p41-P102)?

*Answer 1 - Income posted to services budgets could come from several sources e.g. fees and charges, government grants, other grants, contract income, rental income.*

*We have sometimes included an explanation in the narrative for the service where this income is a material amount as in the Leisure Centre Concessions Contract:*

*“The budget provision includes contract fee income and revenue expenditure on retained buildings.”*

Question 2 - Is the Achievement for Children (AfC) contract (p55 & 57) amounting to a total of £33, 552K, split between the LA funding and a Designated Schools Grant (DSG) fund? If so are there checks in place to ensure taxpayers both at local and national level are receiving value for money from AfC and where does their accountability lie, particularly in light of the SEND Ofsted report last summer?

*Answer 2 - The proportion of the contract that is funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) remains ringfenced for education services and is reported on and monitored separately to the non DSG funded elements of the contract. AfC, on behalf of the Council, will also continue to report on the DSG position as a whole fund (elements that are within and outside the contract price) for Council and Schools Forum reporting. AfC are subject to the same audit and inspection processes that were applied when the services were delivered directly by the Council.*

*AfC signs up to an annual agreement with Windsor and Maidenhead which outlines the services that will be provided. This agreement includes a set of performance indicators with targets for maintaining or improving performance of services. Financial and service performance is discussed with the Council's Contract Commissioner monthly as part of the contract review meeting and the whole commissioning agreement is reviewed at least annually to ensure it remains aligned to Council priorities. AfC are accountable to the Council for carrying out the functions they have been commissioned to deliver, to agreed standards. The Deputy Chief Executive who leads the delivery of children and education services for Windsor and Maidenhead in AfC is also the statutory Director of Children's Services and is directly employed by the Council (seconded to AfC). This enables a direct line of accountability to the Royal Borough's Managing Director.*

*The Council and its local partners, including Health and schools are leading on the SEND improvement plan and are making this subject to public scrutiny through the Health and Wellbeing board to ensure that improvements are delivered in a way that makes a difference for local families while maintaining value for money.*

*It is also important to note that Windsor and Maidenhead owns 20% of AfC and therefore has oversight over the organisations governance structure, financial plans and strategic / business plans.*

Question 3 - Is it correct that the Designated Schools Grant (P57) has been entirely used on High Needs, Specialist School support and alternative provision? If so does this explain the reduction of £11, 879k in this allocation (P61)? Why is there then an increase of £317k in spending in this area?

*Answer 3 - The DSG AfC Contract sum of £12.196M mainly funds High Needs, Specialist School Support and Alternative Provision it also covers some Central Costs such as Early Years expenditure on under 5s, Behaviour Support Team and the contributions to Local Authority services such as Educational Welfare.*

*The DSG AfC Contract consists mainly of the movement between the 2017/18 and 2018/19 budget for High Needs, Specialist School Support and Alternative Provision. For 2018/19 the authority has received an increase in grant for High Needs and Early Years.*

Question 4 - I note the Dedworth Environmental & St Scene Enhance (PAVE) expenditure CC52 of £350k, however there is another Dedworth Environmental & St Scene Enhance (PAVE) expenditure CC78 for £100k, why are these figures split?

*Answer 4 - One of our local Members has requested that we change the report to clarify the reason for two budgets and they now read:*

*CC52 Clewer & Dedworth Neighbourhood Improvements £350k  
CD78 PAVE Dedworth £100k*

*CC52 is for general improvements in the area (roads, planters, benches, parks etc).  
CD78 is for improvements to Dedworth Rd.*

Question 5 - There are some omissions in relation to the Borough Local Plan including the improvements to Mill Lane and the Windsor Racecourse Park and Ride, is there a reason for this?

*Answer 5 - Mill Lane / A308 / Parsonage Lane Roundabout Referenced in Section 3.2 of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2018.*

*Windsor Race Course Park and Ride BLP refers to Park and Ride schemes in para 10.3.8 but does not refer to specific schemes. Specific schemes, including the Windsor Racecourse Park and Ride are referred to in the Local Transport Plan 2012-2026.*

Helen Price asked the Panel the following questions:

This question relates to Item 3, but data relating to this is contained in Item 4 P66. Where is the Flexible Housing Support Grant of £1.052m for 2017/18, and how much of this is it anticipated will be spent by year end, and can any underspend be carried forward to 2018/19? Is this a ring-fenced grant?

The Lead Member for Finance confirmed that it was a ring fenced grant that could be carried over to the following year. £1052k had been identified for the current year.

Helen Price said that she was concerned that the RBWM was borrowing now in the anticipation it will all "come good" in the future in relation to regeneration schemes. How can we be confident of the forecast cash flows whilst recognising the four Maidenhead JV income is guaranteed? Are there other risk factors to consider apart from those listed in App O?

The Lead Member for Finance informed that he had met with Helen Price to discuss her concerns. He informed the Panel that to meet future housing needs infrastructure was

required. This could be done by using developer contributions, however this may not be in place when required. A tactical decision had been made to invest now to be ahead of future demand. The forecasted spend was based on prudent analysis and would be re-visited year on year.

Mr Hill mentioned that he wished to see the housing grant used this year and not split over two years and he raised concern that a recent freedom of information request regarding homelessness had given incorrect information.

The Lead Member for Finance said he was happy to meet with Mr Hill to discuss his concerns. The Managing Director informed that there had been an error with the FOI request and this had been rectified.

Mr Hill asked why £2.4 million had been allocated for hostile vehicle mitigation but zero spend was being shown for this in 2018/19.

The Lead Member for Finance informed that there was a commitment for this spend in the capital programme for the year after next. It was anticipated that Thames Valley Police would pay half of the costs, however they have said they would pay £200,000 and not half. This would not impact next year's budget unless it was brought forward and alternative funding avenues are being explored.

Mr Wigley asked the following question. Given the number of Air Quality Management Areas in the Royal Borough and the well-known adverse health effects of poor air quality, why has current year expenditure for Environmental Protection dropped by some 17% to £273K compared to last year. The Panel were informed that the shift was due to the capitalisation of the equipment used for monitoring air quality.

Mr Wigley asked if LEP funding had been applied for regarding traffic schemes and was informed that bids had been submitted with two being successful.

Cllr Jones mentioned that when the draft budget was considered by Adult Services O&S Panel in November 2017 she asked where the 3% levy would be used, this was not in the pack discussed by the Panel recently. The Lead Member for Finance replied that the information was contained in appendix D and he would have expected this to be presented to Adult Services O&S Panel.

Cllr Jones asked if the savings identified were achievable and the Managing Director informed that they had all been rated as achievable.

The Chairman asked why fees had not been increased relating to the Gambling Act and was informed that these were set by statute.

The Chairman asked what had been the main changes since the Panel last considered the draft budget. The Panel were informed that since the indicative budget was presented in November 2017 additional revenue pressures had been identified. These had been offset by the authority taking part in the business rates retention pilot and by increased parking charges. Parking charges for residents with Advantage Cards would not rise and, unlike neighbouring councils, resident parking permits remain free. Parking charges for non-residents would increase to half way between the current rates and the levels charged in comparable places outside the Borough.

Cllr Jones mentioned that she had concerns that the authority was putting certain capital spend into the budget before we knew where we stood with the BLP and Golf Club. The Chairman stated that this had already been covered as we needed to invest into infrastructure for the future.

Cllr Jones replied that the authority should pause and get the BLP approved first before over extending and borrowing. The Lead Member for Finance replied that items would be brought to the Cabinet Regeneration Subcommittee when appropriate. There needed to be a balance between risk and borrowing and if required we could pull back capital expenditure.

**Resolved: that Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and approved the recommendations (Cllr Jones abstained from voting reserving her right to express her views at Council).**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.00 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....