

Cherwell District Council

Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 15 January 2013 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Patrick Cartledge
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Neil Prestidge
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Douglas Williamson
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Also Present: Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council
Councillor Ken Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management

Officers: Karen Curtin, Head of Finance and Procurement
Claire Taylor, Corporate Performance Manager
Nicola Jackson, Corporate Finance Manager
Beth Baines, Strategic Finance Accountant
Louise Tustian, Land Charges Manager
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

45 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

46 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

47 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Performance Management Framework Second Quarter 2012/13 Report

The Board considered a report of the Policy and Performance Officer which covered the Council's performance for the period 1 July to 30 September 2012 as measured through the Performance Management Framework. The report had been approved by the Executive at their meeting of 3 December 2012.

The Corporate Performance Manager explained that a shared Performance Team between CDC and South Northamptonshire Council was now in place. Work was currently underway drafting the Quarter 3 performance monitoring report and Council's Business Plan 2013/14 which would be presented to Council for approval in February 2013.

In presenting the report, the Senior Performance Officer highlighted the many successes that had been achieved during Quarter 2. In particular, the Board noted that satisfaction with street cleanliness had risen to 69% in the Annual Customer Satisfaction survey which was the second highest attained.

The Board was also updated on the four areas of concern raised through the Quarter 2 performance monitoring and assured that officers were taking action to address each of these issues.

In response to Members' questions regarding pre-application advice for planning applications, the Head of Finance and Procurement confirmed that officers were currently drafting a proposal to begin charging for pre-application advice.

In terms of the increase of the number of planning appeals allowed, Members noted that there had been some difficult appeals recently and commented that the loss of appeals could potentially have significant financial implications for the council. Members requested that further information on this area be provided to the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

Members requested that an update on the Corporate Pledge to "Work with local police and licence holders to roll out the 'best bar none' scheme which will help make our town centres safer in the evenings" be presented to a Performance Scrutiny Working Group meeting as this had reported amber in Quarters 1 and 2.

Members also requested that updates on "Number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman" be presented to the Performance Scrutiny Working Group as this had turned red in Quarter 2.

Resolved

- (1) That the Performance Management Framework 2012/13 Quarter 2 report be noted.
- (2) That officers be requested to provide an update on the "Best bar none" scheme, complaints referred to the Ombudsman and planning appeals to a future meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

Budget Scrutiny 2013/14

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council, the Lead Member for Financial Management, the Head of Finance and Procurement, the Corporate Finance Manager and the Strategic Finance Accountant to the meeting.

The Head of Finance and Procurement circulated an overview of progress against recommendations of budget scrutiny work undertaken for the 2011/12 and 2012/13 budgets. The Board was advised that 15 of the 18 recommendations had been completed, two partially completed and one deferred to 2013/14. Members agreed that it was useful to receive the update which demonstrated that the budget scrutiny reviews had an impact and requested that a further update be provided in six months to include the value that each recommendation had expected to achieve as well as an update on the recommendations of the budget scrutiny 2013/14.

The Chairman advised the Board that he had attended the January 2013 meeting of Executive to present the Board's budget scrutiny 2013/14 recommendations. Subject to some amendments to the capital programme proposals, all recommendations had been accepted.

The Executive had noted the Board's concern about the decreasing level of the capital pot and agreed that the Board should consider adding an item to its work programme to look at the capital pot and how the pot could be managed and what options there would be if it wasn't topped up.

The Lead Member for Financial Management explained that CDC had previously had high capital funds as a result of the sale of housing stock and investment however it was reducing rapidly as it was spent on projects across the district. There were conflicting demands for capital money and as it reduced, it would be important to consider ways of managing it.

The Board agreed that it was important to ensure that the capital pot was preserved. Members commented that whilst this year there had been bids requiring maintenance work of a capital nature, they had been pleased to support the bid for a conditions survey which would lead to a maintenance schedule for the council's assets.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Finance and Procurement provided an overview of Council Tax Support Funding whereby deductions will be made at source rather than paid back. It was confirmed that CDC would be passporting the full grant in 2012/13 to town and parish councils but this would only cover 86% of their shortfall. It was anticipated that there would be grant in 2014/15 but it was not yet possible to confirm how this would be allocated.

The Lead Member for Financial Management and the Leader of the Council commented that it was therefore important for town and parish councils to be looking at their own funding and ways they would be able to address future shortfalls.

The Head of Finance and Procurement provided an overview of draft 1 of the 2013/14 budget which had been approved by the Executive at their 4 January

meeting. The Board was advised that whilst there was currently a £230k shortfall, it was anticipated that a balanced budget would be achieved.

Members noted that an area for further review in terms of achieving a balanced budget was the deletion of vacant posts. Members requested that further information be provided on vacant posts to be deleted and if there a process for the deletion of vacant posts.

In terms of longer term budget planning, the Board was advised that now the Government settlement figure was known the Medium Term Financial Strategy was being reworked for the next four years

The Board commended the Head of Finance and Procurement and her team for their hard work and in particular for supporting the Board's budget scrutiny 2013/14 review and thanked the Executive for considering and supporting the Board's comments.

Resolved

- (1) That replenishment of the capital pot be added to the Board's work programme and a scoping document be drafted in due course.
- (2) That officers be requested to provide further information on the deletion of vacant posts.

50 Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2012/13

The Board considered a report of the Head of Law and Governance which presented the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 for consideration.

In considering the report, Members agreed that at the next meeting they should undertake preparation for the Landscape Maintenance item that was due to come to the Board in April.

Members requested that a review of the budget scrutiny 2013/14 be added to the work programme and had a preliminary discussion on areas that could form part of the budget 2014/15 scrutiny review. The Board felt that it would be important to look at the discretionary budget and non-statutory functions, e.g. communications. Members also discussed that the review should not only focus on savings and generating efficiencies but also consider income generation. Members requested that updated information on income generated through the council's car parks and the free parking initiative be provided to a future meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 be noted.
- (2) That budget scrutiny 2013/14 review be added to the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board work programme.

- (3) That officers be requested to provide an update on income generated through the council's car parks and the free parking initiative be provided to a future meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chairman:

Date: