

Dear Councillor

**CABINET - TUESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2023**

I am now able to enclose for consideration at the above meeting the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

**Agenda Item  
No.**

**3. FINAL 2023/24 REVENUE BUDGET & MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2024/25 TO 2027/28); INCLUDING THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME**(Pages 3 - 4)

To receive a report providing the Cabinet with detail of the Final Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy prior to its consideration by the Council.

Executive Councillor: B Mickelburgh.

**4. 2023/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT, CAPITAL AND INVESTMENT STRATEGIES**(Pages 5 - 6)

To receive a report outlining 2023/24 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies prior to their consideration by Council.

Executive Councillor: B Mickelburgh.

**5. BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY**(Pages 7 - 8)

To receive a report seeking approval of the Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

Executive Councillor: S Ferguson.

**6. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER 3**(Pages 9 - 10)

To receive a report presenting an update on the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2022/23 and project delivery.

Executive Councillor: S Ferguson.

**7. FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER 3**(Pages 11 - 12)

To receive a report presenting details of the Council's projected financial performance for 2022/23.

Executive Councillor: B Mickelburgh.

**8. REVIEW OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS**(Pages 13 - 14)

To receive a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) Task and Finish Group on the outcome of their study on the Council's scheme of appointments to outside bodies and Internal Drainage Boards.

Executive Councillor: S Conboy.

## **FINAL 2023/24 REVENUE BUDGET & MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2024/25 TO 2027/28); INCLUDING THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

### **5.0 COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

- 5.2 The Panel discussed the Final 2023/24 Budget and Medium-term Financial Strategy (2024/25 to 2027/28) including Capital Programme at its meeting on 1st February 2023.
- 5.3 Councillor Harvey expressed praise for the report and thanked those involved in producing the budget for an excellent piece of work, a sentiment which was shared by the Panel.
- 5.4 Following a question from Councillor Harvey, the Panel heard that a planned temporary increase for Planning staff was included in the 2023/24 budget as an investment to help get the service back on track. It was further advised that once the service position was improved it would be in a position to generate some income for the Council through fees and charges.
- 5.5 Councillor Cawley asked for some clarification on this as the Fees and Charges document showed a planned decrease in Planning income, the Panel heard that there were recognised issues with recruitment and retention within Planning which were improving, but the forecasts were intended to not overestimate the potential income.
- 5.6 Following a question from Councillor Wells on the Community and Health line in Table 4b being significantly lower in 2023/24 than currently and also lower than subsequent years, the Panel were advised that the Officer would investigate the detail and report back to the Panel following the meeting.
- 5.7 Councillor Harvey asked for clarification on the damping adjustment in Table 2 and the Panel heard that this was linked to the re-baselining of the NNDR funding, the damping adjustments smooth the impact of this.
- 5.8 After a question from Councillor Pickering, the Panel heard that the agreed Council Principles underpinned and influenced the thinking and method when developing and setting the budget.
- 5.9 Councillor Gray commented that the purpose of the Panel was to scrutinise the report and to give Cabinet comments and thoughts to reflect upon rather than have a debate on the budget. He;
- reflected on unprecedented increase in government funding from the previous year which was good news for residents, whilst also allowing Council some flexibility on how that money be spent.
  - further expressed caution over the ambition to drive net expenditure down, observing that whilst inflation is predicted to fall it has not yet happened, in particular whether the expected salaries in Table 7 were realistic whilst maintaining the current staffing levels.

- did not dispute the removal of the Huntingdon redevelopment project from the Capital budget but did enquire how realistic it remained to deliver the anticipated projects within the budgeted staffing costs.
- challenged that the Fees and Charges in Appendix 2 did not match the rhetoric of keeping up with inflation or in line with neighbouring Councils, it was observed that this could be an area to develop.

5.10 Councillor Conboy thanked the Panel for their positive and constructive comments and commented that the opportunity to work with the shadow portfolio holder Councillor Jennings was a positive step forward.

5.11 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for the Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

## **2023/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT, CAPITAL AND INVESTMENT STRATEGIES**

### **4.0 COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

- 4.2 The Panel discussed the 2032/24 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies at its meeting on 1st February 2023.
- 4.3 Councillor Gleadow noticed the risk of a lack of specialist skills and asked how this was being mitigated after which, the Panel were assured that an additional member of staff would undertake training to assist in broadening the knowledge from the experienced Officer currently undertaking the work.
- 4.4 Following an enquiry from Councillor Gray, the Panel were assured that there had been no concern over Counter Parties over the past year which required urgent withdrawal of funds (although an investment with Thurrock BC had caused concern but had in the end been repaid on time) and that risk of investing generally had been minimised through use of DMO (Debt Management Office) and money market funds
- 4.5 Councillor Pickering enquired about the move to ESG products and the Panel were advised that whilst these products were still new to the market, an ESG compliance scoring mechanism is likely to be introduced by treasury advisors to help ascertain the right ESG investment products for the council's consideration and also that reporting on this and other ESG developments would be included in future treasury management reports in due course.
- 4.6 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for the Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

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## **BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY**

### **4.0 COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

- 4.2 The Panel discussed the Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy at its meeting on 2nd February 2023.
- 4.3 Following an enquiry from Councillor Alban on whether available support differed for rural or urban communities, the Panel heard that a wide range of support was available for businesses and would be applied appropriately.
- 4.4 It was clarified to the Panel after questions from Councillors Alban and McAdam, that charity shops receive mandatory relief and therefore the scheme does not apply to them. It was further clarified that there are notable differences between the help available for nationally recognised charities and non-profit organisations however work is done with such groups to ensure the correct support is given.
- 4.5 Following questions from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were assured that whilst the department aims to be cost neutral, the team undertake extensive modelling to ensure that there are clear guidelines in order to support local communities. The strategy gives structure to the package of support already available for businesses.
- 4.6 The Panel were advised that only standalone public conveniences could be considered for support in response to a question from Councillor Shaw.
- 4.7 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for the Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

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## **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER 3**

### **4.0 COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

- 4.2 The Panel discussed the Corporate Performance 2022/23 Quarter 3 Report at its meeting on 1st February 2023.
- 4.3 Councillor Howell observed that the Good to Go scheme for charities was seen to be helpful purely for the purposes of Council funding and required a lot of work for the application process. The Panel heard that the team were mindful of this and would be reviewing in light of the lack of interest from the voluntary sector.
- 4.4 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for the Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

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## FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER 3

### 4.0 COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- 4.2 The Panel discussed the Finance Performance 2022/23 Quarter 3 Report at its meeting on 1st February 2023.
- 4.3 Following questions from Councillor Blackwell relating to the one off payments for permanent staff, the Panel heard that these would be made in the March 2023 salaries and that staff would be advised of this by email following the meeting.
- 4.4 After a further question on staff retention from Councillor Blackwell, the Panel were advised that work was being undertaken to celebrate staff and recognise their achievements.
- 4.5 It was clarified to the Panel, following a query from Councillor Gray, that the early repayment of the People for Places and respective PWLB loans had still proved beneficial for the Council.
- 4.6 Councillor Gray further enquired whether more caution would be exercised following issues recouping money in relation to CCTV Shared Service staffing. The Panel were assured that the team were fully involved in ensuring due diligence across such matters, as was evidenced in the highlighted example.
- 4.7 Following questions from Councillor Cawley relating to the anticipated income for One Leisure, the Panel were assured that the figures were sustainable following the introduction of an improved sales management system and robust plans to deliver a better service than previously offered by a third party operator at the California Road site.
- 4.8 It was clarified to the Panel, following a question from Councillor Gardener, that following long term vacancies in the street cleansing service, three posts had been deleted after being identified as no longer required.
- 4.9 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for the Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

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## **REVIEW OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS**

### **4.0 COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

- 4.2 The Panel discussed the Review of Representative on Outside Bodies and Internal Drainage Boards Report at its meeting on 1st February 2023.
- 4.3 Councillor Gardener thanked all members and external bodies involved in the report, a sentiment which was shared by the Panel.
- 4.4 Having discussed the reasons behind the recommendations the Panel were happy to encourage Cabinet to endorse the recommendations within the report.

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