

CABINET - THURSDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2017

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COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 1st February 2017

INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016/17 QUARTER 3

The Panel received the Integrated Performance Report 2016/17 Quarter 3. Members asked a number of questions which were answered during the debate.

The additional comments in the finance section of the report were well received by the Panel. One Member stated that those comments answers a lot of questions Members may have.

When discussing employment figures, Members asked if they should be brought before the Panel however they were told that the Employment Committee already review and scrutinise employment figures so any scrutiny by the Panel would be a duplication.

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COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 1st February 2017

LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN FOR BEARSCROFT FARM DEVELOPMENT

The Local Lettings Plan for Bearscroft Farm, Godmanchester was presented to the Panel. Members were informed that 51 affordable rental properties are being developed and they will be dispersed in four clusters across the development.

Some Members of the Panel struggled with the purpose of the Local Lettings Plan but they were informed that the Council has recognised that previous lettings on larger sites have not worked as well as anticipated and that the Plan is designed to create a more cohesive community.

The Panel were very supportive of the Local Lettings Plan and enquired as to whether the Local Lettings Policy should be changed to reflect the approach taken in the Plan. However, the Panel were informed that the Policy complies with legislation and that to amend the Policy to reflect the approach taken in the Local Lettings Plan would be difficult.

A Member raised a concern that there may be some residents in the District who may feel that the Plan is not fair and would attempt to challenge it.

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COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 1st February 2017

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) HUNTINGDON RENEWAL BALLOT – DELEGATION OF POWERS

The report on the Business Improvement District (BID) Huntingdon Renewal Ballot – Delegation of Powers was presented to the Panel. Members were informed by this and the previous agenda item that the BID is seeking renewal. This means that powers are required to be delegated in order to ensure the Council's involvement and responsibilities are carried out.

Members were informed that as a levy payer, the Council currently contributes £10,680 annually towards the BID but as the collections agency for the BID the Council receives £5,961.

Whilst discussing the report, Members expressed their support for the BID and its achievements to date but believe that the word 'positively' is removed from the recommendations to give the Head of Development the freedom to vote either way depending on the strength of the BID Stage 2 business plan as it is developed.

A Member was keen to put forward suggestions to the BID but were reminded that this report covers the process and that they are free to make suggestions to the BID independently of the Council.

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COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 1st February 2017

CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The report on the Corporate Risk Register was presented to the Panel. Members were informed that the risk register has been update with four risks added to the register and 52 risks closed.

Despite the Panel being informed that the Corporate Risk Register only lists risks that the Council has control over, some Members believe that the Cabinet should consider adding the following risks:

- The collapse of the shared services.
- A negative effect on Huntingdonshire's vulnerable residents should funding be withdrawn from Cambridgeshire County Council.
- The Council lacks ability to provide affordable services as a result of being unable to recruit to low wage positions.
- The negative impact upon the financial position of the Council as a result of the accelerated reduction of the New Homes Bonus.
- A lack of investment in the infrastructure of Huntingdonshire due to the decision of the Mayor of the Combined Authority disproportionately allocating funding to other Districts.

After a short discussion regarding the updated Corporate Risk Register, Members were content with the decision to close the risks listed within the report.

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COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 1st February 2017

DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

The Panel received the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and were given an overview of the report by the Local Taxation Manager.

After some questions of clarification, which were answered fully, the Panel decided to recommend to Cabinet that they approve the recommendations in the report.

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COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 1st February 2017

FINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18 AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018/19 TO 2021/22

The Final Revenue Budget 2017/18 and Medium Term Plan Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018/19 to 2021/22 was presented to the Panel. Members were informed of the changes since the Draft Revenue Budget and MTFS was presented to the Panel.

Some Members stated that they thought the font for fees and charges section of the report was printed too small. As such Members were concerned that they could be missing important information. The Head of Resources promised to review the format of the fees and charges for the 2018/19 budget.

A Member welcomed the inclusion of funding for the apprenticeship scheme in the budget. The same Member noted the additional cost of the transformation work and would like to view evidence that it is good value for money.

A concern was raised that the predicted £5.2m of rental income during 2017/18 maybe an over estimation based on the expectation that the Council will not meet its rental income target this year.

Whilst the Members present agreed that it is sensible to increase Council Tax in 2017/18, concerns were raised about how the council tax rise would be communicated to residents.

A Member was concerned that the 1% pay increase for staff will not be adequate enough by the end of the next financial year.

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COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 1st February 2017

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2017/18

The Panel received the Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18. The Head of Resources informed Members that the Strategy is similar to the one presented last year but noted what has changed.

A Member suggested that in order to aid the Commercial Investment Strategy, the Council should borrow money whilst interest rates remain low. In response, Members were informed that it would not be prudent to borrow money if the Council does not make any investments.

The Panel agreed that the Cabinet should recommend to Council that it approves the recommendations in the report.

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COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMERS) – 1st February 2017

3C SHARED SERVICE UPDATE

The Panel received the 3C Shared Service Update. Members were informed that the Shared Services are not on course to achieve a 15% savings target and that a number of the first year savings were not embedded and were one off savings.

It was commented on that the Businesses Plans were not robust enough however Members were informed that the Plans did the job at the time and that when the new Plans are published in March they will look different.

Following a discussion about recruitment, a Member stated that they believe that every post is crucial to which the Executive Councillor for Commercialisation and Shared Services and the Managing Director agreed.

The Panel requested that they see the content of the Action Plan. It was noted that is it difficult to assess whether the performance of the 3C Shared Services can be rectified without viewing the detail of the Action Plan designed to do that.

Members requested a monthly report, to be circulated via email, on the number of agency staff employed by the 3C Shared Services.

A concern was raised in regards to the cost of agency staff however it was noted that there is a difference in the type of agency staff required. The agency staff with highly technical expertise cost considerably more than agency staff without that expertise.

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