

# Minutes

## Scrutiny Committee

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Venue:	Microsoft Teams - Remote
Date:	Thursday, 26 November 2020
Time:	5.00 pm
Present remotely via Teams:	Councillors S Shaw-Wright (Chair), W Nichols (Vice-Chair), A Lee, N Reader, R Sweeting and K Ellis
Officers present remotely via Teams:	Dave Caulfield – Director of Economic Regeneration and Place, Stuart Robinson - Head of Business Development and Improvement, Angela Crossland – Head of Community, Partnerships and Customers, Peter Williams – Head of Finance, Laura Cobb – Community Safety Officer and Victoria Foreman – Democratic Services Officer
Others present remotely via Teams:	David Craven - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Martin Blakey – Wildlife Habitat Protection Trust

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### **25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Topping.

### **26 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **27 MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2020.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**To approve the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 24 September 2020 for signing by the Chair.**

## **28 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chair welcomed Councillor K Ellis to the Committee.

## **29 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Democratic Services Officer presented the work programme for 2020-21 to Members.

The Committee considered the work programme and asked Officers if the item on the Council's Covid-19 response could include information on partnership working; Members were keen to include as many representations as possible.

The Chair of the Committee asked that a letter be drafted on behalf of the Committee to the Director of Public Health, Dr Lincoln Sargent, to thank him for all his work in North Yorkshire, as he was leaving his post in December to join another authority.

### **RESOLVED:**

#### **The Committee:**

- a) noted the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2020-21 and;**
- b) agreed that a letter of thanks to Dr. Lincoln Sargeant should be sent on behalf of the Chair and the Committee to thank him for his work in North Yorkshire.**

## **30 YORKSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST - BARLOW COMMON ACTIVITY REVIEW APRIL 2019 TO SEPTEMBER 2020 AND THE WILDLIFE HABITAT PROTECTION TRUST - HAMBLETON HOUGH ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20**

The Committee received the report of the Partnerships Project Officer which asked Members to consider and comment on the annual reports of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) and Wildlife Habitat Protection Trust (WHPT) about the activity taking place at Barlow Common (managed by YWT) and Hambleton Hough (managed by WHPT).

In attendance at the meeting were David Craven from the YWT and Martin Blakey from WHPT, who gave an overview of their annual reports.

Members noted that whilst 2020 had been a very different year due to the pandemic, Barlow Common had not experienced any of the issues that other sites had, such as illegal raves. It was hoped that there would be further positive developments for the site and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust in the next twelve months.

The Committee were informed that the replanting work had been fulfilled

at Hambleton Hough, and whilst there had been some issues with fencing and damage to a sign, around £12k worth of trees had been planted. A minimal number of the planted trees had been stolen, but not in numbers that caused concern.

**RESOLVED:**

**To note the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust - Barlow Common Activity Review April 2019 to September 2020 and the Wildlife Habitat Protection Trust - Hambleton Hough Annual Report 2019-20.**

**31 FINANCIAL RESULTS AND BUDGET EXCEPTIONS REPORT TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2020**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked Members to consider the content of the report and make any comments on the Council's financial results and budget exceptions.

Members noted that as a consequence of Covid-19, a revised budget was approved at Full Council on 22 September 2020 and accordingly, Quarter 2 outturn forecasts were largely in line with the revised budget, with a few exceptions which were detailed in the report and appendices.

Officers explained that the estimated financial impacts for the year as a result of Covid-19 were additional costs, delayed savings and income losses of £3,624k across both the General Fund and HRA. To date the Council had received £1,068k emergency Covid funding from the Government with further compensation for losses in sales, fees and charges income expected. The revised estimate drew down £1,440k New Homes Bonus from reserves, and reduced the planned transfer to the HRA Major Repairs Reserve by £374k, to help offset these costs and losses pending further potential funding from the Government.

The Committee were informed that at the end of Q2, the forecast full year revenue outturn showed a (£81k) surplus in the General Fund, and a HRA surplus of (£3,380k) for transfer to the Major repairs Reserve. General Fund and HRA planned savings were on target to be achieved against the revised budget targets of (£156k) and (£23k) respectively.

Members noted that on the General Fund capital programme, the spend for new build projects and disabled facilities grants had been revisited and a further (£815k) had been forecast to now spend in 21/22. In the HRA, slippage in the empty homes programme was more than offset by an increase in the capacity to deliver additional carry out works on the housing stock.

Members acknowledged that Programme for Growth projects continued, and additional projects approved by Full Council on 22 September 2020 were now included in a project-by-project analysis shown in Appendix D.

The Committee asked for further information around the contributions to

the Bawtry Road roundabout and when this had been agreed; Officers confirmed that they would look into this and send a response after the meeting.

Some Members were concerned that savings targets had been missed and queried whether they were ambitious enough. Officers explained that as part of the revised budget, savings targets were also reviewed, but that some of the targets had not been achieved due to the resource requirements of the Covid-19 pandemic. Savings targets often meant additional work for Officers, which during the pandemic had proved to be difficult.

Members suggested that some of the text in the report appendices should be made bigger so that figures were easier to read; Officers confirmed that they would look into improving this for future reports.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) To note the Council's financial results and budget exceptions in Quarter 2 in 2020-21.**
- ii) To ask Officers to provide a response to the Committee's query relating to the Council's financial contributions to the Bawtry Road roundabout.**
- iii) To ask Officers to enlarge some of the figures in the report appendices to make them easier to read.**

**32 TREASURY MANAGEMENT - QUARTERLY UPDATE Q2 2020/21**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked Members to consider the content of the report and make any comments on the Council's treasury management in Quarter 2 of 2020-21.

Members noted that on average the Council's investments totalled £73.9m up to the end of the second quarter, at an average rate of 0.68% and earned interest of £252k (£182k allocated to the General Fund; £70k allocated to the HRA) which was £55k above the year to date budget. However, cash balances were expected to gradually reduce over the year, and interest rates were now at unprecedented low levels; budgets were revised in Quarter 1 based on forecast returns in the region of £260k, a budget reduction of £225k. Latest estimates predicted returns of £331k, a surplus of £71k against the revised budget. The Bank Rate of 0.10% was expected to remain in place for at least the next two years, and a Brexit trade deal was yet to be agreed. The position would be kept under review.

Officers explained that in addition to investments held in the pool, the Council had £4.55m invested in property funds as at 30 September 2020.

The funds achieved 3.60% revenue return and 3% capital loss. This resulted in revenue income of £83.4k to the end of Quarter 2 and an 'unrealised' capital loss of £140.6k. These funds were long term investments, and changes in capital values were realised when the units in the funds were sold.

The Committee were informed that long-term borrowing totalled £52.833m at 30 September 2020, (£1.6m relating to the General Fund; £51.233m relating to the HRA). Repayment was made in May 2020 of £6.5m HRA Debt. Interest payments of £1.917m were forecast for 2020/21, a saving of £0.871m against budget. This was due to HRA budgets allowing for borrowing to support Housing Delivery, which had not been required to date. The Council had no short-term borrowing in place at 30 September 2020.

Lastly, it was confirmed that the Council's affordable limits for borrowing were not breached during this period.

Members considered and noted the report.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee endorsed the actions of Officers on the Council's treasury activities for Quarter 2 2020/21 and approved the report.**

**33 COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2020-23**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Business Development and Improvement which asked Members to consider the content of the report and make any comments on the Council's Delivery Plan 2020-23.

Officers explained that the Council Plan had been agreed by Council in December 2019. The Plan set the strategic framework for the next ten years, retaining the vision 'to make Selby district a great place' and setting out four priority themes: 'to make the Selby district a great place to live; enjoy; and grow – supported by a Council that delivers great value.

The Committee noted that at that time, it was agreed to produce a more specific, three-year Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan 2020-2023 provided the detail to support Council services and stakeholders to understand and share priorities for the next three years, and a framework against which to check and communicate progress.

Members were informed that planning for the Council's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic had been underway since late April. The Council had been aligning itself to the wider recovery work across the county, and had undertaken an impact assessment and developed the planning along three lines:

- supporting the local community to recover;

- supporting the local economy to recover; and
- recovering as an organisation.

The Council's plans for recovery had been incorporated into the overarching Delivery Plan which had been updated and was being presented before the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee considered and noted the content of the report and the Council's Delivery Plan 2020-23.**

**34 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCRUTINY TRAINING ON 9 OCTOBER 2020**

*At this point the Chair altered the order of business on the agenda to take agenda item 11 – Recommendations from Scrutiny Training on 9 October 2020 before agenda item 10 – Update on delivery of the 2018-2021 Visitor Economy Strategy.*

The Committee considered the report of the Democratic Services Officer which asked Members to consider the recommendations set out at Appendix A to the report and decide which ones they wish to take forward.

Members noted that on 9 October 2020 some Scrutiny Committee members took part in training delivered by Link UK Ltd. titled 'Best Practice for Effective Scrutiny'. As a result of the sessions, a number of recommendations were pulled together by those Members that attended and were attached at Appendix A to this report.

Members emphasised the importance of being able to ask unscripted questions at meetings, and keeping Councillors effectively informed; for example, on issues such as the erection of scaffolding on Council homes in Member wards, which resulted in numerous queries from residents.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the recommendations as set out in Appendix A of the report be adopted.**

**35 UPDATE ON DELIVERY OF THE 2018 - 2021 VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY**

*The Head of Community, Partnerships and Customers joined the meeting at this point.*

The Committee considered the report of the Culture, Visitor and Creative Economy Project Manager which asked Members to note the content of the report.

Officers explained that in 2018 the Visitor Economy Strategy for Selby District was adopted and, in the autumn of 2018, Officers were recruited

into two new posts (Culture, Visitor & Creative Economy Manager and Tourism Development Officer) with the primary function of delivering the strategy.

The Committee noted that the strategy included an action plan, which set out the delivery focus. Impact was measured in a variety of ways, including project specific monitoring and evaluation, and annual commissioning of Selby District data using the Cambridge Model, which produced an industry respected tool for measuring the economic impact of tourism in a given area.

Officers explained that establishing Selby District as a Great Place to Live and a Great Place to Grow meant using what sets it apart and makes it special, to attract visitors, to improve quality of life for residents and to encourage people to invest. Selby District was well-located and had many assets to be proud of, including a unique heritage story. The Visitor Economy Strategy and Cultural Framework recognised the importance of this in the Council's plans for regeneration and revitalisation. It was explained to Members that culture could change lives and places for the better, as the neighbouring cities of Hull and Leeds had already demonstrated. Investment in arts and heritage could deliver quality of life for communities and directly enhance quality of place.

Members asked a number of questions of Officers relating to the future of Welcome to Yorkshire and the local impact of events it had arranged such as the Tour de Yorkshire. The importance of involving local Members from the start of discussions around such events was emphasised by the Committee.

Members suggested that the presentation given by Officers be disseminated to local parishes as well, as they were key components in the local visitor economy.

The Committee agreed that the Selby 950 celebrations had been good for the district, and that the coronavirus pandemic had encouraged local people to explore their local neighbourhoods more. Members emphasised the importance of Officers checking that they had the correct permissions for the placement of banners and posters, as there had been some confusion over this in the past. Officers accepted that there had been some misunderstandings around this, but reassured Members that lessons had been learnt and advice would be sought in the future from the Planning department.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee noted the content of the report.**

The meeting closed at 6.13 pm.