

Minutes

Scrutiny Committee

Venue:	Microsoft Teams - Remote
Date:	Thursday, 16 December 2021
Time:	5.00 pm
Present:	Councillors S Shaw-Wright (Chair), W Nichols (Vice-Chair), A Lee, R Sweeting, J McCartney and J Chilvers
Officers present:	Louise Wallace, North Yorkshire Director of Public Health, Angela Crossland, Head of Communities, Partnerships and Customers, Peter Williams, Head of Finance, Stuart Robinson, Head of Business Development and Improvement and Victoria Foreman, Democratic Services Officer

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Ellis and N Reader.

25 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

26 MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2021.

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 October 2021 for signing by the Chair.

27 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There was no Chair's address to the Committee.

28 SELBY HEALTH MATTERS - A POPULATION HEALTH APPROACH TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN SELBY DISTRICT AND NORTH YORKSHIRE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2021 (S/21/9)

The Committee welcomed North Yorkshire's Director of Public Health, Louise Wallace, and the Head of Communities, Partnerships and Customers to the meeting.

Officers presented to the Committee the Selby Health Matters Annual Newsletter 2018-19, the Selby Town Population Health Management Programme and Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2021. The reports and accompanying information updated the Scrutiny Committee on progress made since the development of the Selby Health Matters partnership in 2018, a strategic partnership of local authority, health and voluntary and community sector representatives focused on reducing health inequalities through population health management.

Members were informed that the reports did not simply focus on Covid-19; there was a great deal of other health information within them that was vital. Other matters included the Council's close relationship with public health, social connectivity with local communities, non-medical health and wellbeing, longer and happier lives for residents and adjustments that will be needed in lieu of the forthcoming local government reorganisation, whilst ensuring service delivery is maintained.

The Committee asked about funding and the need for there to be a fair focus of particular areas such as Selby compared to Tadcaster and Sherburn, particularly due to deprivation. Officers explained that partnerships in Selby with organisations such as AVS was looking at population health and focusing on particular areas and the people that lived in them. Combatting isolation, loss of employment and using the Council's leisure services were all being looked at in detail. Work was also being undertaken in deprived rural areas, particularly with local Members who knew their communities well.

Members also asked about the lack of available housing and care home spaces, which resulted in bed blocking as there were no homes to send patients home to. Members explained that the Selby District had over 1,200 bungalows that would be suitable for such patients, but that they weren't given to the people that needed them, i.e., the elderly. Many residents did not want one-bedroom bungalows now; two-bedrooms would be much better in order for carers or relatives to stay over to help older people living in them. Half-way housing to bring people out of hospital would also be very beneficial. There was also concern from the Committee about the state of the social care system in general due to the ongoing multitude of vacancies in carer roles.

Officers were asked to find out how many people lived in one-bedroom bungalows and how many of these individuals actually needed them, and if the Council could possibly extend them to accommodate a second

bedroom.

The Director of Public Health noted Members' views and confirmed that she would take the matter back to the County Council's health and adult services service area for further investigation.

The Committee thanked the Director of Public Health for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To note the update and information from the Director of Public Health for North Yorkshire; and**
- 2. ask Officers to find out:**
 - **how many people lived in one-bedroom bungalows;**
 - **how many of these individuals actually required a single bedroom and;**
 - **if extensions to such properties to accommodate a second bedroom were possible.**

29 FINANCIAL RESULTS AND BUDGET EXCEPTIONS REPORT - Q2 2021-22 (S/21/10)

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked Members to consider and comment on the Council's financial and budget exceptions for Quarter 2 of the 2021-22 year.

Officers explained that whilst the majority of financial impacts of Covid-19 were in 2020-21, there continued to be an impact on the 2021-22 financial year. The Council continued to report monthly to MHCLG the estimated impacts on its income streams and cost base, affecting both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Members acknowledged that at the end of Quarter 2, current estimated full year revenue outturn estimates indicated a surplus of (£93k) for the General Fund and a (£101k) surplus for the HRA. Recommendations had been included in the original report to the Executive to approve a permanent virement for £20k to support phase 2 of the Property Services Team restructure, funded from operational savings within the HRA to assist with retaining, recruiting and regrading Joiner posts.

The Committee were informed that several savings were put back to 2024-25 as part of the recent Medium Term Financial Strategy paper. General Fund planned savings were forecast to deliver at £184k; however, the £195k saving in the HRA for the housing system would not be achieved this year as it is predicated on the implementation of phase 2 of the housing system which would not happen until later in the year.

Officers went on to give details of the capital programme, which was underspent by £1,687k at the end of Quarter 2. Of this, £1,262k was forecast to be underspent at the year end, of which £739k was in the General Fund. The majority of the General Fund underspend related to investment in the industrial units and the car park improvement programme. The HRA underspend of £523k was made up of works at St Wilfrid's Court, the Environmental Improvement Plan and the Health and Safety Improvement Programme.

Members also noted that the Programme for Growth projects spend was £830k in Quarter 2, £491k of which was staffing costs with the majority of the remainder on visitor economy, transforming cities fund, High Street Shop Fronts and towns master planning.

Lastly, the latest MHCLG return submitted for September indicated an overall estimated gross impact on Council finances of £2,746k across both the General Fund and HRA when compared to pre-pandemic budget levels.

Members noted the report and the information contained within.

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and noted the report.

30 TREASURY MANAGEMENT - QUARTERLY UPDATE Q2 - 2021-22 (S/21/11)

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked Members to consider and comment on the Council's borrowing and investment activity (Treasury Management) for Quarter 2 (the period 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021) and presented performance against the Prudential Indicators.

Officers began by explaining that, on average, the Council's investments held in the North Yorkshire County Council Investment pool totalled £77.7m up to the end of the second quarter, at an average rate of 0.19% and earned interest of £73.1k (£49.3k allocated to the General Fund; £23.8k allocated to the HRA) which was £14.4k above the year-to-date budget. Interest rates on Council investments had stabilised following the drop in Bank of England base rate because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and for the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year the rate of return on investment was expected to remain at current levels. In this regard, forecast returns could be in the region of £133k, which was a budget surplus of £16k.

Members noted that a prudent forecast had been made in this respect, continuing to assume decreasing invested cash balances over the course of the year as funds were utilised for the annual capital programme. The interest forecast would be kept under review as the year progressed; the Bank Rate of 0.10% was expected to remain in place until March 2022.

The Committee were informed that in addition to investments held in the pool, the Council had £4.93m invested in property funds as at 30 September 2021. The funds had achieved a 3.46% revenue return and 5.96% capital gain over the course of the year. This had resulted in revenue income of £82.9k to the end of Quarter 2 and an 'unrealised' capital gain of £277.1k. These funds were long term investments, and changes in capital values were realised when the units in the funds were sold.

Officers reported that long-term borrowing totalled £52.833m at 30 September 2021, (£1.6m relating to the General Fund; £51.233m relating to the HRA). Interest payments of £1.912m were forecast for 2021-22, a saving of £0.015m against budget. The Council had no short-term borrowing in place as at 30 September 2021.

Lastly, Members noted that the Council's affordable limits for borrowing were not breached during this period.

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

31 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2 2021-22 (S/21/12)

The Committee received the report of the Head of Business Development and Improvement which asked Members to consider and comment on the performance information presented to them for Quarter 2 2021-22.

Members noted that the reports provided a progress update on delivery of the Council Plan 2020-2030, as measured by a combination of: progress against priority projects/high level actions; and performance against KPIs.

Officers summarised progress in Quarter 2, with 57% of KPIs reported showing improvement over the longer term or having maintained 100% performance, and 63% of KPIs reported were on target, with 25% of KPIs within acceptable tolerances.

The Council was currently finalising a Covid-19 variation to the leisure contract that included revised KPI's, and as such the Council had not recently been reporting any leisure KPI's due to the variation, and the fact that leisure centres had been closed most of last year and part of the current year. From Quarter 2 onwards Officers would be reporting three KPIs: the number of memberships at combined leisure centres, the number of visits to combined leisure centres and the and number of GP referrals.

Members noted that examples of what had gone well in Quarter 2 included performance in Environmental Health, Enforcement and Licensing relating to responses to complaints, targeting sector specific businesses and undertaking spot checks and assessed compliance with

the relevant COVID-19 regulations and government guidance, ongoing support relating to the COVID-19 Outbreak Control Teams (OCTs), by working closely alongside colleagues from Public Health England, Health and Safety Executive and NYCC to manage COVID-19 outbreaks related to workplaces and the local community, continued work with colleagues at NYCC and the Police to share intelligence and co-ordinate responses and any necessary enforcement action that had been taken; supporting the work of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) by providing advice and support to the operators of events in the district to ensure they are adhering to the relevant COVID-19 guidance.

Officers explained that with reference to business grants, the Restart Grants scheme closed for payment on 31 July 2021; in Quarter 2 a further £741,784 was issued in grant payments to businesses to assist with reopening through the restricted measures. In August 2021, phase 3 payments of the Additional Restrictions Grant were considered and £477,408 in discretionary grants were issued in payments to eligible businesses.

Members were pleased to note that other general positive performance included the total number of empty homes being brought back in use through direct action; the average wait time in minutes before a customer phone call was answered by an advisor for Quarter 2 was 1.86 mins, against a target of 5 mins; the percentage of people accessing benefit forms and taxation direct debit forms online in relation to other channels; the total number of missed bins for Quarter 2 was 188, against a target of 321; percentage of sundry debt collected was 55.80% ahead of the 45.79% target and an improvement on the Q2 figure for 2020/21 which was 50.61%; lastly, the average days to re-let standard void types had improved since Quarter 1 with the average time taken to bring a standard void back into re-use sitting at 21.5 days, which was a reduction of 2.03 against a target of 26 days.

Members acknowledged however that some performance had not been as hoped; this included the percentage of stage 1 and 2 corporate complaints fully responded to in required time; the percentage of non-domestic rates collected; the percentage of Council Tax collected; the average days to re-let major void types; the average days sickness per full time employee (FTE) rolling 12 months; planned savings and repairs to council owned properties.

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

32 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the 2021-22 work programme.

Members asked for an update on council house repairs; this would be raised with Officers by Democratic Services.

Members discussed the format of Scrutiny Committee meetings and felt strongly that they should revert to remote meetings on Microsoft Teams, on a permanent basis, due to the current Covid-19 situation as well as ease of access for Members and Officers.

Officers informed Members that the legal position on this would need to be considered, as the legislation which allowed remote decision making came to an end in May 2021.

Members noted the work programme.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the work programme 2021-22 and:

- **asked that an update on Council housing repairs be given at a future meeting; and**
- **that a permanent return to remote meetings by the Committee be considered by Officers.**

The meeting closed at 5.40 pm.