

Minutes

Scrutiny Committee

Venue:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9FT
Date:	Thursday, 29 September 2022
Time:	5.00 pm
Present:	Councillors S Shaw-Wright (Chair), W Nichols (Vice-Chair), J Chilvers and J McCartney
Officers present:	Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer, (from agenda item 7), Keith Cadman, Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement, Stuart Robinson, Head of Business Development and Improvement, and Dawn Drury, Democratic Services Officer

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Keith Ellis and Councillor Richard Sweeting.

12 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13 MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on the 30 June 2022.

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 30 June 2022 for signing by the Chair.

14 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There was no Chairs address.

15 UPDATE ON LEISURE SERVICES PROVISION (S/22/4)

The Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement gave an update on the provision of leisure services, mainly covering the period April to August 2022.

Members asked several questions to include increased energy prices, the reasons why gym memberships and attendance at the leisure centre had not returned to pre pandemic levels, and staff retention and pay.

The Officer explained that increases in energy costs had impacted the financial position of leisure services, and that customer confidence in leisure services remained low due to the pandemic and the nature of leisure centres, where people were in close proximity to other users.

Members noted that Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles (IHL) did pay the national living wage to their employees to encourage recruitment.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update.

16 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4, 2021-22 (S/22/5)

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 4 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 4, with 54% of KPIs reported showing improvement over the longer term or having maintained 100% performance, and 78% of KPIs reported were on target, with 9% of KPIs within acceptable tolerances.

Discussion took place regarding the Councils housing stock classed as void and the length of time taken to refurbish and re-let some properties. Officers explained that there had been delays because of the pandemic, and it was often found that when the Council received properties back from tenancies an increasing number of the properties needed a full refurbishment, which took longer. Members also noted that there had been significant pressure on Trade resources.

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

17 FINANCIAL RESULTS AND BUDGET EXCEPTIONS - QUARTER 1, 2022-23 (S/22/6)

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 1 of the 2022-23 year.

Members noted that at the end of Quarter 1, current estimated full year revenue outturn estimates indicated surpluses of (£382k) for the General Fund (GF) and a £28k deficit for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) before the pay award. It was further noted that should the pay award offer which was currently under consideration by the unions be accepted, it was anticipated that this would reduce the GF surplus to (£45k) and increase the HRA deficit to £184k.

Officers explained that the main forecasted variances against the HRA deficit were rent collection forecasts which to date showed a £102k shortfall. The main driver being that void rates were higher than budget which were driven by the assumptions in the business plan. Members heard that this was mainly due to the poor condition the properties were left in when vacated and the resource available to bring them back in to use. The cost-of-living increases had also started to impact on collection rates, but this would be reviewed again at quarter 2 when more data was available for comparison.

The Committee heard that currently there was insufficient data to be able to accurately predict the outturn for utility costs, but as they were expected to rise, an increase of 50% above budget, which equates to £67k, had been forecast; this would be reviewed again at quarter 2.

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and noted the report.

18 TREASURY MANAGEMENT - MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 1, 2022-23 (S/22/7)

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked Members to consider the Council's borrowing and investment activity (Treasury Management) for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022 and presented performance against the Prudential Indicators.

Officers explained that on average the Council's investments held in the North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) Investment pool totalled £83.5m over the quarter at an average rate of 0.78% and earned interest of £161.7k (£116.6k allocated to the General Fund; £45.0k allocated to the HRA) which was £123.5k above the year-to-date budget.

Members were informed that current performance trends indicated that forecast returns for the year could be in the region of £871.8k (£628.9k GF, £243.0k HRA) a total budget surplus of £719.4k. For the General Fund, any interest earned above a £350k threshold would be transferred

to the Contingency Reserve. This figure was currently forecast to be £278.9k.

Members noted that in addition to investments held in the pool, the council has £5.63m invested in property funds as at 30 June 2022. The funds have achieved a 2.93% revenue return and 3.13% capital gain over the course of the quarter. This resulted in revenue income of £40.5k to the end of Q1 and an 'unrealised' capital gain of £170.8k. The funds were long term investments and changes in capital values were realised when the units in the funds were sold.

The Committee acknowledged that long-term borrowing totalled £52.833m at 30 June 2022, (£1.6m relating to the General Fund; £51.233m relating to the HRA), and interest payments of £1.917m were forecast to be paid in 2022-23, a saving of £59k against budget. The Council had no plans for any short-term borrowing for the year.

Prudential Indicators – the Council's affordable limits for borrowing were not breached during this period.

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and noted the content of the report.

19 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the 2022-23 work programme as presented in the agenda.

Members were reminded that the next date in the Committee Calendar for Scrutiny Committee was Thursday 27 October however this was being held provisionally and it was queried if the date should be taken out of the diary. The Committee agreed that they wished to confirm the 27 October 2022, and that the meeting would go ahead on that date.

Members requested that an officer from parking enforcement at North Yorkshire County Council be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee, to discuss the serious issue of on-street parking within the district.

Members agreed that going forward, items of priority for consideration were Covid-19 in Selby district and on-street parking enforcement in the district.

RESOLVED:

That the committees' 2022-23 work programme be amended to reflect Members' suggestions as detailed above.

The meeting closed at 5.30 pm.