

FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

30 NOVEMBER 2017

Present: Councillor P D Simpson, Chair

Councillors: S A Bagshaw
T P Brindley
S J Carr
E Cubley
R Jackson
P Lally
G Marshall
P J Owen
J M Owen (substitute)
M Radulovic MBE
A W G A Stockwell

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Easom.

29. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chief Executive declared a non pecuniary interest in item 15, minute no. 42 refers, and left the meeting before it was considered.

30. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2017 were confirmed and signed.

31. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – REVIEW OF BUSINESS PLAN PROGRESS – SUPPORT SERVICE AREAS**

The Committee noted progress against outcome targets identified in the Business Plan for support services areas.

It was asked that figures of how many Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were dealt with in 20 days be provided in future reports, rather than percentages.

The Committee noted that there would be progress on participation in a countywide procurement exercise for card processing merchant services once a new Procurement Officer was appointed. The due date for the completion of the task was to be revised.

Discussion progressed on to the number of working days lost to sickness. It was noted that there had been some instances where staff had been suspended and certified as off sick. It was requested that the sickness figures be recalculated without suspended members of staff who were also off sick.

The Committee considered the apprenticeship levy and the effect it would have on the number of roles the Council could offer at this level. It was requested that the Committee be provided with figures to show the drop in apprenticeships offered by the Council.

It was noted that although the Council had attempted to share Human Resource services with other authorities, there had been no opportunities to do so, the section having been restructured to save money. The Employee Induction Programme was also discussed, the review of which was due to be completed by 31 March 2018.

There followed a discussion about the Committee Management System. The business case for the project had been revised and it was due to be piloted for one committee in February 2018, with full implementation in May 2018.

The Committee noted that the action to establish a legal service partnership with Rushcliffe Borough Council would not be continued. This was due to Rushcliffe withdrawing from the project.

There was concern that the percentage of planned audits being completed was down. It was noted that the intention was to complete the internal audit programme as planned. The Committee requested that the performance indicator be changed to state that it measured internal audits. The backlog of sundry debtors was discussed. It was noted that there was now an officer in post to tackle the backlog. It was requested that the number of sundry debtors be circulated to the Committee.

The number of complaints being acknowledged within three working days had dropped and the Committee voiced concern that this was because of a lack of resource. It was noted that there was a Complaints Officer in post, but that the responsibility for acknowledging complaints within three working days rested with the relevant department. A detailed report on complaints with data from each department was requested.

It was noted that the current rate of rent collection of 95.8% would take Broxtowe out of the top quartile. Improvements to collection rates were noted. The Council was also looking to promote Discretionary Housing Payments to those struggling with housing costs and there was a revised Rent Collection Policy. It was also noted that the Council still had six months of the financial year left to collect the £265,000 of outstanding rents. A report on rent arrears was requested. Discussion progressed on to the introduction of Universal Credit and the impact that would have on rent arrears. It was noted that Erewash Borough Council had much higher rates of rent arrears at present due to Universal Credit. It was requested that the report include benchmarking figures and the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit.

There was also a request that any sources of help for people in rent arrears be shared with councillors so that they could refer constituents to the correct agencies.

Call abandonment rates were discussed. Clarification was requested as to whether a call is counted as abandoned if it is put through to a department, but then not answered. The increase in calls was discussed, in particular the increased demand for housing, benefits and waste services.

32. TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2017/18 – MID YEAR REPORT TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2017

The Committee was informed of treasury management activity and the actual prudential indicators for 2017/18 up to 30 September 2017. There was a discussion concerning the type of investments the Council had put its funds in. It was explained that the Council only invested in institutions with an A+ rating. It was noted that investments tended to be made on short term loads. The loans which paid for the Housing Revenue Account self-financing would start to mature in 2022. It was requested that a list of institutions and their credit ratings be provided in future reports, as in the budget report.

33. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET AMENDMENTS 2017/18

Approval was sought for a number of amendments to the General Fund revenue budget for 2017/18.

The Committee discussed Section 106 contributions, with particular reference to those that had been reduced. It was asked that the Environment (Open Spaces) contributions that were not to be received be broken down by amount and developer.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the General Fund 2017/18 revenue budget as set out above be approved.

34. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017/18 UPDATE

The Committee noted the capital expenditure incurred in 2017/18 up to 31 October 2017 along with the planned financing of the 2017/18 capital programme. Schemes totalling £708,400 were not currently funded and it was added that there was not the level of funding to the General Fund that there had been.

A question was raised regarding the projects that had funding, but against which no expenditure had been made. It was noted that some schemes relied on third parties and work had started on others, but had not been invoiced. For example £20,000 had been allocated towards the Bennerley Viaduct.

This money could not be taken out of the capital programme as the Council was relying on a third party to conduct the work and collect the funding.

The Committee noted its disappointment with the decision of the Department of Work and Pensions to withdraw from its plan to relocate within the Council Offices.

A discussion followed regarding the funds allocated towards contamination surveys at Chewton Street, Eastwood. Additional information was requested on the type of survey to be conducted.

The debate progressed on the Warm Homes on Prescription Scheme. The Committee noted that referrals to the scheme had to be made by a person's General Practitioner.

Following the discussion a recorded vote was requested. The voting was as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstention</u>
T P Brindley	S A Bagshaw	S J Carr
E Cubley	P Lally	
R I Jackson	G Marshall	
J M Owen	M Radulovic MBE	
P J Owen		
P D Simpson		
A W G A Stockwell		

RESOLVED that the capital budget variations for 2017/18 as set out in appendix 3 be approved.

35. BROADGATE PARK – PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT

The Committee considered the funding that had been awarded in respect of refurbishing Broadgate Park play area from Waste Recycling Environmental Limited, the Tesco 'Bags of Help' fund and United Living. A contribution of £28,000 was required from the Council to carry out the refurbishment.

RESOLVED that a budget of £87,000 be allocated in the 2017/18 capital programme for the refurbishment of the Broadgate Park play area with funding of £28,000 from the Council and £59,000 from external sources.

36. SECTION 106 FUNDS

The Committee was informed of the level of section 106 funding currently available and the projects intended for its use.

There was discussion about how education contributions were spent. It was noted that these came under the control of Nottinghamshire County Council. A breakdown of section 106 monies that had been reneged on by amount and developer was requested. There was also a discussion around monies being spent in the areas which had seen development, for example, Swallow Hill Homes in Eastwood.

Discussion progressed on to how few affordable houses had been built to replace council homes that had been sold under right to buy. It was noted that part of the receipts for council houses sold went to the government and part into the Housing Revenues Account.

37. GRANT AID TO PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS AND BEESTON SPECIAL EXPENSES AREA REGARDING THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Committee considered the level of grant aid to be paid to each of the parish and town councils and to the Beeston Special Expenses Area.

RESOLVED that the grant assistance to parish and town councils and the special expenses area in respect of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2018/19 be as set out in the appendix be approved.

38. ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT

The Committee noted a detailed report in relation to absence requested at the meeting on 12 October 2017. It was suggested that this report should be provided quarterly so that the Committee could be provided with a regular update on the efficacy of the actions being taken to manage absence.

Discussion centred on what had caused the sickness figures to rise. It was noted that there had been a particular problem in one department that was being resolved. It was also noted that reasonable adjustments were always made at the earliest possible opportunity.

39. CIVIC EVENT – FREEMAN/ALDERMAN OF THE BOROUGH

The Committee discussed a request for funding to host a ceremony at which the status of Freeman or Alderman would be conferred on those who have rendered eminent services to the Borough, prior to a request to full Council that the meeting be held.

RESOLVED that funding be approved prior to a request to full Council for the official admittance to the office of Honorary Freeman or Alderman of the Borough to take place as a special meeting of the Council to be held at a date to be confirmed in November 2018.

40. WORK PROGRAMME

After discussion items on complaints, rent arrears and a quarterly attendance management update were added to the work programme.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme, as amended, be approved.

41. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

42. EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

Following the discussion a recorded vote was requested. The voting was as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstention</u>
S J Carr	S A Bagshaw	T P Brindley
E Cubley	G Marshall	P Lally
R I Jackson	M Radulovic MBE	
J M Owen		
P J Owen		
P D Simpson		
A W G A Stockwell		

RESOLVED that the termination of the Housing Allocations and Options Manager's employment contract on 1 December 2017 and the related payments in paragraph 3 be approved.