

Wednesday, 13 March 2024

## **CORPORATE RESOURCES & GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY & IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Corporate Resources & Governance Scrutiny & Improvement Committee was held on Wednesday, 13 March 2024 at the Civic Centre, Ridley Street, Redcar, TS10 1TD.

**PRESENT** Councillor G Nightingale (Chair)  
Councillors N Bendelow, P Chaney, R Clark,  
C Curr, I Hart, C Morgan, J Symon, P Thomson  
and J McCue.

**OFFICIALS** J Sampson, S Newton, P Winstanley, M Lyth,  
A Pearson, V Smith, C Styles and S Connolly.

**IN ATTENDANCE** Councillor C Massey.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Clarke and A Oliver.

40 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31  
JANUARY 2024 AND TO CONFIRM THE ATTENDANCE MATRIX**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Corporate Resources & Governance Scrutiny & Improvement Committee held on 31 January 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

41 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

Councillor Curr declared an interested in all matters relating to Guisborough Town Council.

Councillor I Hart declared an interest in all matters relating to Ormesby Library Friends Group.

42 **RELEVANT CABINET REPORTS.**

#### Organisational Plan

The Head of Strategic Performance, Policy and Improvement referred members to the report relating to the development and implementation of the Council's Organisational Plan.

The following key points were noted:

- The Organisational Plan sets out the approach to delivering upon

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aspirations set out in the Corporate Plan. Strategy documents set out in the Plan set the direction to deliver upon Corporate Plan priorities and are underpinned by a range of other policy documents which help to direct operational service delivery.

- The plan attempts to strike a balance between ambition and pragmatism, particularly in the context of available resources.
- The Plan and associated monitoring will begin in April 2024 and reporting will commence from the first quarter of financial year 2024/25.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following comments and questions were noted:

- A discussion took place relating to review and refresh of the document, and Members were advised that there would be a biennial refresh of the Plan, and that the various strategies contained within should be substantial enough to run for 2 years. An annual report to update Members on the progress of the Plan would be reported via the Scrutiny / Cabinet process.
- A member asked if copies of the Service Plans outlined in the document were available to Members and the Committee was advised that they would be finalised over the following few months, with reporting to take place via the usual Q1 performance session following summer recess.
- A request was made to nominate specific Committees to the reporting route for performance indicators, beginning at page 11 of the Plan, and that the Monitoring Report be referenced in the Plan. A Member also suggested that there appeared to be plans missing from the priorities masterplan outlined at page 13 of the document. The Committee was advised that the Plan had attempted to reflect a wide u not exhaustive range of Council strategies, to give an oversight of management at a higher level.
- Members expressed concerns with aspects of the Organisational Plan, particularly with regard to the lack of detail relating to implementation schedules and timescales. The priorities contained within were considered too vague and better definitions and statistics would help to exemplify the problems outlined in the document. The indicators listed and plans/strategies named in support of the document were also not considered to be comprehensive enough. The Head of Strategic Performance, Policy and Improvement advised this was an aspiration towards which the Council was heading. Granular measures would be included in the Service Plans, whereas this Organisational Plan provided a broader approach.
- A Member requested that specific measures and key indicators be put in place, with comparators to other authorities, to ensure that

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the Corporate Resources & Governance Scrutiny & Improvement Committee can properly scrutinise the health of the whole Council.

## Libraries Review

Member were referred to the report setting out the proposals following the review of the library services across the Borough.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following comments and questions were noted:

- Members expressed concerns regarding the narrowness of the review of the libraries, the focus of which was placed too much on the library service itself, rather than the service in the context of community involvement. Members were keen to better understand how the review would impact on the tourism and customer services offer in the community, how 'pop-up' services would be financed and connected to networks and the impact on other services if the 400k savings were not achieved. The review was felt to be 'unfinished', and the report should be delayed until a wider vision is achieved; **NOTED**.

## Quarter 3 Finance Report

This item was marked as 'Item 4' on the original agenda.

The Director of Finance referred Members to the report which provided a forecast year-end position for the Council as at Quarter 3 of the 2023/24 financial year. The following key points were noted:

- As the Council approaches the financial year-end, the updated Q3 forecast reports an overspend of £4.98 million – a worsening of £0.211 million against the Quarter 2 forecast overspend.
- Although inflation has dropped, the Council has faced difficulties due to persistently high inflation through most of 2022 and 2023.
- The rate of borrowing is significantly higher than it was in 2021/22
- During this financial year, the Council has had to take decisive steps to implement a package of spend control measures, focusing on staffing costs, optimising the use of grant funding, and reviewing the current policy on minimum revenue provision.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following questions and comments were noted:

- A Member asked for clarification of the cost-effectiveness of locally based solo placements and Members were advised that, in relation to market placements, which can be out of the

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Borough, it was a cost-effective option.

- A member asked what actions had been taken to reduce the costs of Home to School Transport. The Committee was advised that tackling inclusion in mainstream education would have the biggest impact, and that work with academies to improve inclusivity would reduce the need to transport children around and outside of the Borough. Children & Families Scrutiny & Improvement Committee were the body responsible for monitoring programmes and actions, It was **AGREED** that the Chair of Corporate Resources Scrutiny & improvement Committee to contact the Chair of Children & Families Scrutiny & Improvement Committee for an update on actions taken to address the issues outlined above.
- A Member asked questions relating to representation of the Reserves Position, the Council's Asset Strategy, how Members might contribute to discussions on business efficiency savings and what is being done to improve collection against business rate and council tax debt. Responses were provide by the Director of Finance.
- A discussion took place relating to waste management charges, the correlation between charging for waste disposal and fly tipping and monitoring of income as a result of the newly introduced charging regimes; **NOTED**.

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### **QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE UPDATE - TO FOLLOW**

The Head of Strategic Performance, Policy and Improvement provided a presentation updating Members on Quarter 3 performance across the Resources Directorate. The following key points were noted:

- An update regarding delivery of the Corporate Plan was provided.
- Governance and Financial Service Performance Metrics were reported.
- Performance statistics relating to workforce, customer and business processes were reported.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following comments and questions were noted:

- Members asked questions regarding sickness absence, employee turnover and FOI requests which were addressed by the Monitoring Officer.
- A Member asked if the Council had received reports of difficulties

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faced by residents when booking the green waste service online. A response would be sought from the Assistant Director for Strategic IT.

- A Member requested a presentation on using the Council website and intranet.
- A Member advised that more should be done to improve the rate of staff appraisals, given the level of staff turnover and sickness absence in some departments.
- A Member asked for greater clarification regarding service standards for service requests; **NOTED**.

44 **MOTION TRACKER**

- In relation to the Motion agreed at the meeting of Borough Council held on 29.02.24, the Managing Director advised Members that planning application (R/2023/0793/ESM) would be considered at a meeting of the Regulatory Committee on 3 April 2024.

45 **WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

The Chair referred Members to the report of the Governance Manager which provided an update on the progress of the 2023/24 work programme for the Corporate Resources & governance Scrutiny & Improvement Committee.

The Assistant Director for Corporate Business Support provided a verbal update on progress made by the Volunteer Strategy Task & Finish Panel.

The Finance Director provided an update on work relating to the impact of empty properties on business rate collection.

There were no further suggestions for the Work Programme; **NOTED**.

46 **OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATE**

The Chair invited updates from Members who had attended meetings of Outside Bodies that were relevant to the Corporate Resources & Governance Scrutiny & Improvement Committee.

The Chair further referred Members to the written update regarding the meeting of the Tees Valley Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee which took place on 22 February 2024; **NOTED**.

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47      **ACTION LIST**

The Chair referred Members to the updated Action List.

A Member asked when the report relating to Cat Nab car park would be considered by the Scrutiny Committee. The Managing Director advised that an update would be provided when active discussions with the Environment Agency had been resolved; **NOTED**.

48      **ANY ITEMS THE CHAIR CERTIFIES AS URGENT.**

There were no items certified as urgent.