

## **Corporate Scrutiny Committee 21 June 2018**

Present: Councillor Mrs Smith-Roberts (Chairman)  
Councillors Blatchford, Coombes, Farbahi, Hall, Horsley, Hunt, Ms Lisgo, Reed and Mrs Tucker.

Officers: Andrew Stark (Finance Manager), Richard Doyle (Corporate Performance Officer) and Marcus Prouse (Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny).

Also present: Councillors Sully, Warmington and Williams.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 p.m.)

### **31. Apologies/Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Councillors Henley, James, Parish and Mrs Smith.  
Substitutions:- Councillor Horsley for Mrs Smith  
Councillor Hunt for James

### **32. Minutes**

The minutes of 24 May 2018 were signed and taken as read.

### **33. Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts declared a personal interest as the Chairman of Refugee Aid. Councillor Farbahi declared a personal interest as a landowner in the Borough of Taunton Deane. Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a Trustee of Taunton Heritage Trust. Councillor Lisgo declared personal interests as a Trustee of the North Taunton Partnership, Director of Tone FM, User of Tone Leisure Feelgood Factory.

### **34. Quarter 4 2017/18 Performance Report**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Quarter 4 2017/18 Performance Report.

Regularly monitoring the performance was a key element of the Council's Performance Management Framework. There were 34 individual measures which was reported within the Corporate Scorecard.

The TDBC Corporate Scorecard contained details of the Quarter 4 2017/18 position against the Council's key priorities, finance and corporate health indicators, it was stressed that this information was at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

Each action/measure was given a coloured status to provide the reader with a quick visual way of identifying whether it was on track or whether there might be some issues with performance or delivery or an action.

Further detail was provided concerning the 2 red measures for 2017/18

Reference	Description	Measure	Comments
HC4.16	Facilitate the delivery of the affordable housing development pipeline to achieve 200 new affordable homes in 2017/18 with at least 10% being new build council housing.	200 affordable housing units, 20 being new build council housing	92 Affordable homes were completed in 2017/18. Six schemes slipped in their completions into Q1 2018/19 including the Council Build.
6.2.4	Customer Complaints Responded to within 20 working days	90%	<p>Q1 = 76.59%            Q2 = 68.42%            Q3 = 79.16%  <b>Q4= 77.42%</b></p> <p>Responses to complaints have been consistently below target throughout the year. Work is being undertaken to understand the reasons for this and the specific areas where we are not responding quickly enough. This will be reported to the Joint Management Team and a report will be brought to the July Scrutiny meeting.</p>

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- Members of the committee were positive with the format of the report.
- Improvement in the payment of invoices was commended.
- Customer complaints were considered and the underlying reasons around this.
- The introduction of a member's case manager had proved successful in

dealing with casework and complaints that Councillors receive.

- The levels of employee change was a factor in the response to complaints. Communications needed to be more responsive to customers, more detail was requested over specific areas of the service receiving the most complaints. Housing and housing repairs area received the majority of complaints.
- The business Support team monitored complaints, figures had improved overall but it was recognised that work was still needed. Some areas had positive performances reported and had improved.
- Delays in planning applications and queries were discussed. It was recognised that performance in this area needed improvement.
- Concerns were expressed over the reduction in numbers of affordable houses built in contrast to previous years.
- Concerns were expressed in relation to housing stock and maintenance.
- The loss of staff and the subsequent impact on services was a concern from Councillors.
- Senior Management representation and Portfolio holder attendance was requested in future where there were issues with the performance reports.

**Resolved:-** The Corporate Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

### **35. Financial Monitoring Outturn 2017/18.**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Financial Monitoring Outturn 2017/18.

The report contained information relating to the Council's financial performance for the 2017/18 financial year. The outturn figures included were provisional subject to external audit review; the findings of which are to be reported to Corporate Governance Committee in September this year.

Monitoring the budget is an important part of the Council's performance management framework.

The revenue outturn position for the financial year 2017/18 was set out:

- The General Fund (GF) Revenue Outturn position for 2017/18 was a net underspend of £21k (0.1% of Net Budget), after proposed reserve transfers and carry forwards.
- The HRA is a 'Self-Financing' account for the Council's Housing Landlord function, which was budgeted to 'break even' (net of approved transfers to/from HRA Reserves). The HRA Outturn for 2017/18 was a net overspend of £446k (1.7% of gross income).

The capital outturn position for 2017/18 was set out:

- The total General Fund Capital Programme budget is £53.304m, including ongoing schemes from previous years and new schemes approved at the start of and during 2017/18. Of this, £13.883m had already been spent in previous years and a further £4.869m has been spent during 2017/18. The projected

spend in 2018/19 and future years is £34.259m (not including new 2018/19 budget approvals). A net underspend of £293k was being reported against the overall approved budget for the Programme.

The HRA approved Capital Programme at the end of 2017/18 was £18.839m. This related to schemes which would be completed over the next five years. The actual expenditure on the Capital Programme during 2017/18 was £10.126m with £8.713m for planned investment to implement approved schemes in future years. There were no reported variances against the total approved programme.

The General Fund reserves balance as at 31 March 2018 stood at £2.299m. The balance remained above the minimum reserves expectation within the Council's Budget Strategy (£1.700m).

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserve balance as at 31 March 2018 stood at £2.778m, which was above the minimum level (£1.800m) set within the Council's Budget Strategy and HRA Business Plan.

The total General Fund Earmarked Reserves balance as at 31 March 2018 was £21.615m, and for HRA Earmarked Reserves the balance was reported at £6.990m, representing contingencies and funds that had been set aside for specific purposes to be spent in 2018/19 or later years. This had grown largely in respect of funds committed to support growth and infrastructure development, future capital programme spending, the business rates funding volatility, creating a new council and funding set aside to support service restructuring and transformation projects. The majority of this was planned to be spent over the next two years, although experience showed this could be over a longer period.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- Figures of the HRA budget were considered.
- The variance of the DLO budget was discussed.
- An accurate figure of the transformation costings to date was requested.
- Additional information had been provided around the transformation project. A split was provided detailing what had been spent between both authorities.
- There were costs expected to be reported once redundancy figures had been ascertained. The budget was still based on the business case, it was recognised that the transformation would take a greater amount of time.
- Phase one had begun, however the costs of phase two were still to be determined.
- The business rates offset for car parking was considered. TDBC were required to pay business rates on car parks. The shortfall in income was due to less use of car parks in the borough.
- The bereavement services budget included all the graveyard areas and was based on levels of demand. A greater income than expected from this service was reported.
- Vacant properties located in Blackdown Business Park were questioned. Some of the units had proved difficult to let.
- In relation to Housing Enabling, housing around the Hinkley area included part of TDBC.
- Business rates was now one of the main sources of funding, this could move

to 100% by 2020/2021. Business rates retention had been positive in the financial year.

- The Medium Term Financial plan for the new council was difficult due to the variances of business rates and the potentially volatile nature of the Hinkley Point project.
- The first year's budget for the new council would be considered as accurate, beyond that there was a lot of uncertainty around changes to business rates along with the split between upper tier and lower tier.
- The DLO trading account was considered, concerns were raised that the figures each year remained the same.
- The total cost of the variable message signage was requested.
- Earmarked reserves were being reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team to be brought back to Councillors.
- The DLO relocation had come under budget, this underspend could be reallocated.
- There was no movement in the insurance reserve, more information would be provided on this.
- Departments that had overspends in previous years would still have pressure on them such as homelessness. Trends were taken into account in some areas to assist future budget setting.

**Resolved:-** The Corporate Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed recommendations to the Executive as followed:

- (a) It is recommended that the Executive noted the reported General Fund Revenue Budget underspend of £21k in 2017/18 and the General Reserves Balance of £2.299m as at 31 March 2018.
- (b) It is recommended the Executive recommends that Full Council approves General Fund Revenue Budget Carry Forwards totalling £1.195m (as set out in table 3 of the report).
- (c) It is recommended the Executive recommends that Full Council approves a General Fund Capital Programme Budget Profile totalling £34.259m in 2018/19 and Later Years (as set out in Appendix B).
- (d) It is recommended the Executive recommends that Full Council approves Housing Revenue Account Budget Carry Forwards totalling £344k (as set out in table 13 of the report).
- (e) It is recommended the Executive recommends that Full Council approves a Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme Budget Profile totalling £8.713m in 2018/19 and Later Years (as set out in Appendix D).

### **36. Corporate Scrutiny Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the proposed Forward Plan of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

An item on Frobisher Way will be reported at the July meeting.

**Resolved** that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.)