

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

Held remotely on

28th January 2021

Commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Rickman, Chairman.

Councillors: Bannister, Frenchman, Graves, Knowles, Mahal, Mrs Page (ex officio) and Mrs Wood

Cabinet Members (guests) Councillors: Bateman, Dann, Hallam, King and Whelband

Officers: D. Atkinson, C. Bland, S. Green, G. Keeping, C. Mason, G. Oliver, N. Proudfoot,
J. Smith and V. Wenham

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

MINUTES

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel held on 10th December 2020 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

CORPORATE PLAN AND CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN, 2021/22

The Panel was presented with revised versions of the Corporate Plan and Corporate Delivery Plan for the period 2021/22, as set out at Appendices A and B to the report.

The Corporate Delivery Plan identifies high-level expected outcomes of the Key Activities, which will add depth to what the Critical Outcomes will mean for communities in the District. It also contains the headline performance measures for each Key Activity. The number of Key Activities proposed in the revised Corporate Delivery Plan is thirty-two.

The Corporate Delivery Plan is a dynamic document and the development of the Key Activities is an iterative process. For this reason, elements of the Corporate Delivery Plan will continue to be developed and may change as a result of further review and target challenge sessions. Any proposed changes to the content of the Corporate Delivery Plan, including revisions to targets, will be reported to the relevant portfolio holder, the Cabinet, and Scrutiny, as appropriate.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
<u>General – Scrutiny:</u> the Corporate Plan did not contain any references to the Scrutiny function. Scrutiny is essential to the work of the Council and should be included.	It was AGREED that suitable wording on Scrutiny would be added.
<u>General – Typos:</u> it was noted that the draft Corporate Plan included some typing errors, which should be corrected.	
<u>General – over ambitious outcomes:</u> in some places, the Corporate Plan and Corporate Delivery Plan include outcomes that cannot be delivered by the Council itself and run the risk of appearing unrealistically ambitious.	
<u>General – timescales:</u> the Corporate Plan and Delivery Plan do not contain specific timescales. Should they be more precise? If precise dates cannot be given, could an indication of priorities be included?	It was too early to allocate hard dates to actions at the moment. The allocation of time and resources can be expected to change during the lifetime of the Plans. The TEN system allows for real-time monitoring of all activities. It was AGREED that training on the use of the TEN system would be made available to both Scrutiny Panels.
<u>Fly-tipping Campaign Award:</u> the Council's recent success in winning the Campaign of the Year category at the National Recycling Awards 2020 should be reflected in the Corporate Plan.	It was AGREED that reference to the Tip Off campaign and award would be included, possibly in the introduction to the Corporate Plan.
<u>Rural Strategy and Young People's Strategy:</u> it was noted that extra funding had been identified, related to Covid-19 recovery, which links to these two policies. Was the receipt of this funding dependent on the two Strategies being included in the Corporate Deliver Plan?	The Panel was assured that work on these two items would be undertaken next year. The Strategies do not need to be in the Corporate Delivery Plan at this stage. The funding is secure, but needs to be allocated by the end of March 2021. There is then a period of one year for it to be spent.
<u>KA.01.03 – Review of the Community Safety function:</u> what are the six-monthly highlight reports referred to in the report and can they be circulated to Members?	The Community Safety Partnership provides six-monthly reports against all the indicators. Yes, the reports can be circulated to Members. It was AGRRED that they could be circulated more widely.
<u>KA.01.04 – Develop the Local Visitor Economy:</u> why is the pandemic not listed among the risks listed against this item?	Coronavirus is mentioned in the 'Key Activity' column for this item. It was AGREED that the economic activities would be revisited to see if there was a need to further reference Covid-19.
<u>KA.01.05 – Continue the programme of review of Conservation Areas:</u> what is the current situation with this?	This work relies on site visits and research in libraries and archive offices, which have been affected by Covid-related closures. Work has had to pause, but will re-start as soon as possible.
<u>KA.02.01 – Encourage entrepreneurial SME economy:</u> why is the pandemic not listed among the risks listed against this item and others?	Coronavirus is mentioned in the 'Key Activity' column for this item. It was AGREED that the economic activities would be revisited to see if

there was a need to further reference Covid-19.

The Panel RESOLVED that these comments and questions be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.

BUDGET 2021/22 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2022/23 to 2024/25)

The Panel was presented with a report and appendices proposing a draft budget for the period 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25. In introducing the report, Councillor Hallam took the opportunity to thank Clive Mason and the Finance Team for their work in producing the draft budget.

In February 2020, the Council had approved the 2020/21 that included a service net expenditure of £14.3m and a Council Tax (Band D) of £167.97. To balance the budget, this required a net contribution from revenue reserves of £1.8m. When approving the 2020/21 budget, the Council did not approve a MTFS, however, since the early summer of 2020, the Council had been developing a four-year MTFS model (2021/22 to 2024/25). At the time that this modelling was undertaken, the MTFS was indicating that the Council was facing a considerable financial challenge with an annual budget gap of around £4m; if this situation was not immediately addressed, it was expected that the Council would cease to have any revenue reserves by 2023/24.

To meet this challenge the Council embarked on a Zero-Based Budgeting exercise; Budget Challenge 2025 (BC25). The aim of this exercise is to “transform” services, ensuring that limited financial resources are allocated to key priority areas, based on new service standards. In addition to the budget challenge, the Council had been severely impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic (CV19). The Council had had to deliver services in new and innovative ways to ensure that it could continue to serve its local community. This change had brought with it a significant financial cost; the gross service cost was currently £2.3m, which has been partly met by direct government support. At this time, it was estimated that the net cost to the Council was in the region of £976k (excluding the impact of Collection Fund losses).

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present to be considered by the Cabinet and the following were recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
<u>Savings on Service Costs</u> : will these result in a reduction in levels of service delivery?	The intention is to maintain standards of service delivery, but in some cases a reduction cannot be ruled out.
<u>Planning, Environment & Waste (summary budget)</u> : in Appendix 2 to the report, it appears that there may be reductions in the budgets for Street Cleaning, Recycling Collections, Fly-tipping and Environmental Enhancements. Is this indeed the case and what will be the implications on service delivery?	There is no anticipated impact on services. The smaller changes are savings that were identified in the BC25 process as a year-on- year underspends. For Recycling Collections, £250K relates to the increased charge for garden waste. A further £20K of savings have been made from efficiencies in introducing new technology to identify who has paid for the Green Bin service. In relation to Environmental Enhancements, there have been underspends in the previous three years which have been reallocated for a Local Plan base budget.
<u>Special Expenses</u> : why are items relating to the un-parished area of Market Harborough not shown separately in the report?	Items relating to unparished areas are identified by “S.E.” in the current report. In the final budget report to Cabinet, Special Expenses items will

	be grouped together and reported separately. At Council, Special Expenses will form as separate part of the decision-making.
<u>Lotto</u> : the report indicates that the income from Lotto is to increase. How does this work?	The Council is allowed to take an administration fee, but has not done so previously. It is recommended that from 21/22 onwards, the Council banks this income from the Lotto. In addition, the Council will be seeking to grow the Lotto, which will allow more money to be given to the community through grants.

The Panel RESOLVED that these comments and questions be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.

MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY

There were none.

The Chairman thanked members of The Cabinet for their attendance at the meeting.

The Meeting ended at 8.29 p.m.