

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

held at

The Council Chamber

Symington Building, Adam & Eve Street, Market Harborough, LE16 7AG

on

19th January 2023

Commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Rickman, Chairman

Councillors (Panel): Critchley, Frenchman, Graves (from 18.33), Knowles and Mahal

Councillors (Panel) joining remotely: Mrs Page (ex-Officio) and Mrs Wood

Councillors (invited): Hallam and King

Councillors (invited) joining remotely: Bateman, Nunn, Mrs Wood

Officers present: K. Aitkin, D. Atkinson, S. Baldwin, C. Bland, and C. Mason

Officers joining remotely: L. Elliott, V. Jessop, and C. Pattinson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATIONS OF SUBSTITUTION

None were received.

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL

It was noted that Councillor Knowles and Mahal's attendance was not recorded on the Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel held on the 17th November 2022. This was corrected prior to the meeting and the Chairman informed the panel.

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel held on the 17th November 2022 be adopted as a true record.

REPORT 1: LEICESTERSHIRE RESOURCES AND WASTE STRATEGY 2022-2050
REPORT

The report was presented by the Head of Environmental Services. He drew the panels attention to the two appendices to the report. He highlighted that this report replaces the previous and sets out how we will manage waste with the change in legislation. It is based on the overall strategy for England shown in Appendix 1 to the report. He explained that it is a collaborative approach between the District and County Councils and that the response rate to the consultation within our district was high. He drew the panels attention to the main pledges, referring specifically to pledges 5 and 11. He explained that food waste collections will be forthcoming and that this would be a statutory requirement for the Council and as there was no current information from the government on how this would be funded, he has caveated this in the report with ‘total ongoing government funding.’

The Head of Environmental Services went on to explain pledge 7 regarding garden waste collections and informed the panel that although it was previously thought these would not be chargeable, it would appear the Government have relaxed this approach due to the cost implications for District Councils, however further information is awaited around this.

He explained that the Local Government Financial Situation Statement within the main strategy document has been caveated with the financial issues that could arise. He also raised the concern he has around financing and availability of the fleet required to facilitate the food waste collection service.

The following questions were asked by the panel and the Head of Environmental Services responded:

Question	Response
<p>Waste sent to landfill : Item 12 referred to stating the County Council will reduce waste sent to landfill to less than 5%. Is there any information about the current situation, including the associated percentage ? are we at now?</p>	<p>The County Council has already started moving District Councils around so a new site has been created North of Leicestershire in Whetstone and a Coventry Waste to Energy Plant rather than relying on waste going into landfill sites. Information on the current percentage has been requested from Leicestershire County Council.</p>
<p>Why is the percentage of waste sent to landfill in our district so high compared to the national average, will this improve by</p>	<p>We are reliant in Leicestershire in landfill and we are moving away from this. We</p>

<p>23% because of the alternative disposal of food waste?</p>	<p>need to look at our operational fleet including the distance times included in the contract etc. Whetstone would be an ideal facility in its location. Trials of food waste collection in Lutterworth and Broughton Astley were very successful which led to the proposal to the County Council for this service across the district. Improvements on the rolling out of the service have been noted due to previous concerns noted in the trial.</p>
<p>Disposal of Paint/Food Waste: How can people can dispose of paint other than taking it to Whetstone tip?</p> <p>Are HDC already in negotiations regarding the type of fleet needed for food waste collections?</p>	<p>You can place empty cans of paint in the black bin, if wrapped in a bag. Otherwise it is only Whetstone Tip that will accept these operated by LCC.</p> <p>This will form part of the tendering of the new contact starting in April 2023.</p>
<p>Sofa Disposal/Repair Shops- The detail on collection of Sofas is missing from the report.</p> <p>There is no mention of the new repair shops that are available for repair and recycling of electric goods.</p>	<p>This will be added later as more national legislation comes up along with other things to be implemented, however this is being facilitated currently.</p> <p>This is in the main strategy report. The County Council are also looking into this. Supporting community-based projects that do this will also be included too.</p>
<p>Garden Waste- Regarding the garden waste collection service, is there any national guidance on the disposal of biodegradable grass? This is picked up from the curb side and could be put into smaller sites for green waste.</p>	<p>No legislation to stop this. In 2016 we began charging for bi-weekly collections of garden waste. The contract is with the County Council so this would need to be discussed with them. We are promoting home composting and providing information on how to do this safely. It is better for our carbon footprint to have one service that transports this than individual people transporting it themselves.</p>
<p>Harborough Waste Depot- There is no mention of Harborough having a depot of it's own, are there any plans for this?</p> <p>Are the bags of rubbish collected by the 'Wombles' Group sorted into food waste and recyclables?</p>	<p>This is still being looked at and working on this as a project currently.</p> <p>Not currently. These bags are taken to a tip site. We may be able to look at this, but it is time consuming. Some of this waste is very old also and may not be able to be recycled.</p>

The panel made comment on the unsuccessfulness of the food waste containers previously distributed by the Council. It was highlighted for the need for our recyclables to be traceable so that the Council remain accountable for this. The panel emphasised that the mentality and perception around food waste can be dealt with by effective communication with the community. The Chair highlighted how well we do as a district with the collection of fly tipped waste and how quickly this is dealt with.

The Chair thanked the Head of Environmental Services for his report and it was;

RESOLVED that the comments be taken to Cabinet to adopt the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy as set out at Appendix 1 and the report be noted.

REPORT 2: QUARTER 2 2022-23 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The report was presented by the Business Planning Officer. She drew the Panels attention to Appendix A to the report which outlines the progress in the key activities of the Corporate Plan and Appendix B which demonstrates the Strategic Performance Dashboard. the KPI's contained in the report and appendices including the following:

Red Targets:

- 60% of major planning applications to be determined in 13 weeks,
- 90% of payment to creditors within 30 days.

Changed to annual targets:

- New affordable housing completions in a year-
- Number of interventions carried out with owners of empty properties to bring them back to use.

The panel were given the chance to ask questions regarding this report. The Chair asked when the report on new affordable housing completions would be available to the panel. The Business Planning Officer confirmed that 15 houses were built in the last year with a target of 45 and that this would be looked at annually. The Chair highlighted the importance of keeping applicants of planning for these up to date. The Business Planning Officer confirmed that there was good communication with applicants in the Planning department.

The Chair asked Head of Financial Services for an update on the target to pay 90% of creditors within 30 days. She confirmed that the red status had moved to an amber status in Quarter three and that it was improving.

It was therefore;

RESOLVED that the comments of the Panel and the contents of this report be taken to Cabinet to consider and the report be noted.

REPORT 3: 2022.23 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 2

The report was presented by the Head of Financial Services. She informed the panel of the comparisons between Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 and explained that the large overspend of £810,000 was due to three main themes and their breakdown:

- Inflationary variances
 - Pay award impact
 - Increase in energy costs
- Underachievement of savings & potential mitigations
 - Capital Programme underspend of £70,000
- Normal operational items

A member of the panel asked whether the underachievement of savings became an achievement of savings in future? The Head of Financial Services confirmed this would be discussed in the Budget Report to be presented later in the meeting,

A question was asked about the figure of £350,000 used to keep on members of the Senior Management Team, and what would happen in the future given that the Strategic Partnership will no longer take place. The Head of Financial Services explained that the savings of £350,000 have now been delayed, this is now forecasted that only £49,000 will be in 2022/23 and that this also would be addressed in the Budget Report. It was therefore;

RESOLVED that

- a. **The comments and recommendations of the Performance Scrutiny Panel of the financial performance of the Council against its budget for the half year to 30 September 2022, as set out in the budget monitoring report attached at Appendix A be provided to Cabinet and this report be noted.**

The Chair thanked the Head of Financial Services for her report. He also informed the Panel that Councillor Nunn and the Business Planning Officer had left the meeting.

REPORT 4: DRAFT BUDGET 2023-24 & MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2024-25 TO 2027-28)

The report was presented by the Interim Deputy Chief Executive (& s.151 Officer). He explained the Cabinet report section by section. The panel were given the opportunity to ask him questions as he explained each of the sections.

The panels attention was drawn to page 131 of the report to the Executive Summary and a point highlighted about the surplus generated by the MTFs and that the deficit would mean that they broadly cancel one another out. A question was asked about what would happen after this and whether HDC keep using their reserves in the same

way? The Interim Deputy Chief Executive explained that these issues would be addressed as the Panel go through the MTFs period and that the MTFs is to give a forecast of where HDC is going.

Members of the panel commented on the wording in the Executive Summary regarding the Strategic Partnership not being passed. The Leader highlighted that he felt the point being made by this paragraph needed to be made and that it was important. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive explained his reasons for the wording being as such and the risk caused to the Council with the Strategic Partnership not being in place. The Director of Governance and Law & Interim Monitoring Officer also made comment on the discussion of this and the suitability of this being raised in a public meeting and reminded the panel of the Member/Officer Protocol held to raise issues.

Questions were asked about whether HDC are applying the 10% increases to the car parking charges and whether it has been factored in that members of the public may drop out of the garden waste scheme, affecting this forecast? What interest rates is this information based on? The Interim Deputy Chief Executive explained that the car parking charges are an exception and were not subject to the 10% increase, any changes to charges would follow the strategic review of parking currently being carried-out. He also explained that all these numbers are estimates, but there was no evidence to suggest a 'drop-off' for the garden waste scheme as seen when the charges was increased a couple of years ago. He also confirmed that this advice was taken in light of current bank base rates and advice from the councils treasury advisors.

A question was asked about the remaining 81% of savings referred to in the report and whether this is budgeted to be saved in 2023/24. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive confirmed this was correct.

The Leader explained that in respect of the Development Management Income, that in May 2022 the Government suggested a significant increase in planning fees that could be charged by local planning authorities. However this had not been implemented yet and but the District Councils Network is lobbying to bring this into action. He informed the panel that the settlement for this will not be made until later in the month.

A question was asked about employment on page 141 whether the figure given for the pay award is an estimate or what is suggested to be given locally. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that this percentage was an estimate.

A Member of the panel referred to Table 2, page 137 of the report regarding the FCC contract 14% increase and asked whether there is any more information on how this has happened and how £610,000 goes through to the figure of £205,000 - where has the difference gone? The Head of Financial Services explained the calculations of the MTFs and the difference in these figures.

The Interim Deputy Chief Executive informed the panel that further information on how this was calculated would be distributed to all members of the panel.

A question request was asked for an explanation of the NDR Reset and Fair Funding Review and why this would take money from HDC. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive explained this to the panel.

A Member of the panel queried the figure given for the 3% funding guarantee as it does not match the 10% rate of inflation. He also queried the figures shown in the HDC Council Tax Surplus and Deficit. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive explained that this was looking at last years figures and guaranteeing a 3% increase on that figure specifically. He also explained how HDC have a surplus and deficit in this area.

A question was asked about the projected income around Council Tax and asked if it was possible to look at this monthly rather than annually. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive advised that it is optimal to look at this in Quarter 3 and then re-model before the final budget, and that it is important that this forecast is realistic.

The Leader highlighted that there has previously been a surplus in the Council Tax Collection Fund and that it is important to be prudent and ensure that this never goes into a deficit.

A further question was asked about where the £3.5 million reserve figure comes from and expressed concern that he was not aware of this large figure being identified previously. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive referred to page 149, Appendix 1 of the report and explained how this was calculated. The panel discussed this surplus.

The panel discussed the New Homes Bonus Scheme and how this affects the budget.

The Leader discussed the proposal to add a fund to support community events for the Kings Coronation of up to £20,000 which is not included in the budget. He explained to the panel that this was discussed at Cabinet and that he will discuss this with the Interim Deputy Chief Executive about including this in the budget. The Leader also explained that there is also a proposal to bring forward an Environmental Capital Fund from the £70,000 remaining from the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Fund and add £210,000 for Community Capital Schemes to support environmental improvements to help with microprojects such as climate change prevention.

The Interim Chief Executive advised the panel that the bid that HDC put forward for access to the Levelling-Up Fund was not successful and advised that overall, there will be some change to services in the future.

It was therefore;

RESOLVED that the comments of the Panel on the Draft Budget 2023/24 & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2024/25 to 2027/28) (Annex 1) be

provided to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 6 February 2023 and the report be noted.

ANY URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

The Meeting ended at 20.48