

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5 March 2024 at Shire Hall, Warwick at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillor Milton (Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Collins, Falp, Luckhurst, Payne, Redford, Russell and C Wightman.

Also Present: Councillor Chilvers – Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Davison – Leader of the Council and Councillor J Harrison – Portfolio Holder for Transformation.

77. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Day and D Harrison.
- (b) Councillor Falp substituted for Councillor Barton and Councillor C Wightman substituted for Councillor Sullivan.

78. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

79. **Minutes**

The record of Budget Review Group meeting held on 7 February 2024 were noted and would be appended to the minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting 5 March 2024.

80. **Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 6 March 2024**

The Committee considered the following item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 6 March 2024.

Item 4 – Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

The Committee thanked officers for their hard work bringing the detailed and thorough report forward. The Committee was reassured by explanations around sensitivity analysis and the impact on Milverton Homes.

The Committee welcomed the initiative to bring forward more information on Treasury Management and affordability when decisions were being made on capital expenditure. It was pleased that the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Chilvers was keen to explore the initiative to set clear parameters to enable councillors to be confident in future borrowing decisions.

Item 13 – Q3 Budget Update wpw3/24

The Committee thanked officers for the detailed and comprehensible report. The Committee supported the Finance Team's strategy to work

with budget managers to improve budget management to smooth volatility and reduce peaks. This would result in a more measured view of what was going on.

Item 6 – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Review 2024

The Committee did not scrutinise this report at the meeting but made comments to Cabinet.

Members were keen to see maximum attendance at training sessions so asked that these, where possible, avoided holiday periods. However, to mitigate for this, the Committee requested that training sessions should be recorded (whilst also appreciating that external trainers might not be open to this request).

The Committee also requested that when HRA reports were to be considered in future, this should always be accompanied by a briefing to Members in advance.

The Committee intended to add this report to the Overview & Scrutiny workplan in line with dates for further training.

Item 14 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

The Committee did not scrutinise this report at the meeting but made comments to Cabinet.

The Committee expressed concern about the lateness in signing off the AGS which the Head of Finance explained was linked to the delay in signing off the Council's Statement of Accounts and he explained how this would be overcome in the future with a backstop date being agreed.

The Committee requested that the AGS should be produced sooner in order to support a strong focus on governance.

Item 11 – Change Programme – Case for Change

The Committee was keen to see that Customer Services was baselined and tracked to ensure that these reflected the commitment made in the Corporate Strategy to improve Council services.

The Committee requested a specific update on Change Programme progress following the Programme Board meeting scheduled in June.

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that all Members received regular communications from the Members Advisory Group detailing outcomes, outputs and actions.

81. Work Programme, Forward Plan and Comments from Cabinet

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2024/25 as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report as well as the responses Cabinet had made to reports the Budget Review Group had scrutinised at its meeting on 8 February 2024.

The Chair advised the Committee that:

- The Digital Strategy Update had now been encompassed into the Case for Change programme that was going ahead and therefore could be removed as an item from the Committee's Work Programme.
- Future High Street Funds Update report – this had not gone to Cabinet as had previously been scheduled and was now expected to be considered in April. The Committee Services Officer was asked to circulate an email to all Committee Members that the Business Manager, Projects and Economic Development had sent to the Chair giving a brief update on the current position. One of the reasons the Committee had requested regular updates was because of the deadline of the end of March placed on using the Government funding; this deadline was had now been extended to the end of September 2024.
- The annual report on the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership had been due for the 5 March 2024 meeting but the Chair had agreed that this could be postponed to the June meeting because of annual leave within the relevant department.
- The Significant Business Risk Register was now expected for the April cycle of Cabinet.
- The 26 March 2024 meeting would be discussing what Members would wish to see in a report on the Leisure Services Provider contract before it was put out to tender. This would create a brief for the report and the Chair asked Members to consider this ahead of the meeting.
- The Committee's End of Term report would be presented to the Committee at its April meeting. The Committee gave consent for the normal report template to be used for this report rather than the Committee's own specific report template because the report would then be presented at Council.
- Homelessness would be added to the Committee's Work Programme for the next convenient non-Cabinet meeting, to discuss what the Committee would wish to see in a report.

The Committee noted Appendix 2 to the report – Comments from the Cabinet.

(The meeting ended at 7.57pm)

CHAIR
13 May 2024

Appendix 1 - The record of the Budget Review Group meeting held on 7 February 2024 and noted at the meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee 5 March 2024

Budget Review Group

Record of the meeting held on Wednesday 7 February 2024 at Shire Hall, Warwick at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillors: Barton, Collins, R Dickson, Hales, and Milton.

Also Present: Councillor Davison, Leader of the Council; Councillor Chilvers, Portfolio Holder – Resources; Andrew Rollins, Head of Finance; Steven Leathley, Strategic Finance Manager; Philip Clarke, Head of Place, Arts and Economy; Andrew Cornfoot, Planning Policy & Major Sites Delivery Manager; and Sophie Vale, Principal Committee Services Officer.

5. Appointment of Chair

Councillor Hales was appointed to Chair the meeting.

6. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Browne, Day, Falp, Luckhurst and Tangri.

Members present requested that the Chair write to Group Leaders to encourage them to remind their Group that the Budget Review Group meeting was important, and therefore they should make every effort to attend.

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

8. Cabinet Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Thursday 8 February 2024

Item 5 – General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25

The Group thanked officers for their hard work in putting together the report.

The Group explored the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the impact on reserves. They were keen to see the upcoming change management strategy and the assumptions underpinning it.

Members requested that communications material be made available detailing all of the grants that the Council had access to, and information be provided so that residents could see what was being delivered with those grant funds.

Item 6 – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2024/25 (including Housing Rent Setting)

The Group acknowledged the need for greater general awareness of the details of the Housing Revenue Account across the Council and requested that a briefing be organised to ensure Councillors' full understanding.

They noted the report and awaited answers to the questions asked about the Council's social rent rates in comparison to other Councils across Warwickshire.

(The meeting ended at 7.15pm)

CHAIR OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 March 2024

CHAIR AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
27 February 2024