

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

15 February 2024

PRESENT:

Labour Group

Councillor R Pearson (Chair), Councillor L Singh (Vice-Chair) and Councillors S Harrison, A Haynes (substituting for Councillor B Stuart), G Rhind, M Mulgrew and S Taylor.

Conservative Group

Councillors D Corbin, M Fitzpatrick and P Watson (substituting for Councillor S Meghani).

Liberal Democrats

Councillor G Andrew.

In Attendance

Councillor N Atkin
Councillor A Tilley
Councillor A Wheelton

FM/91 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that apologies had been received from Councillors B Stuart and N Tilley (Labour Group) and Councillors M Ford and S Meghani (Conservative Group).

FM/92 **TO RECEIVE THE OPEN MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETING:**

The Open Minutes of the Finance and Management Committee meetings held on 09 January 2020 and 23 November 2023 were noted and approved as a true record and signed by the Chair. The Open Minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee held on 06 December 2023 were received.

FM/93 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Committee was informed that no declarations of personal interest had been received.

FM/94 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the public had been received.

FM/95 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the council had been received.

FM/96 **REPORTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Committee was informed that no reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been received.

FM/97 **PROPOSED CONTINUATION OF BANDED COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2024 -2025**

The Head of Customer Services presented the report to the Committee and sought approval of the recommendations, including that a forthcoming review would be undertaken.

Members considered the report and supported the officer's recommendations.

RESOLVED:

1.1 The Committee supported the continuation of a banded Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age recipients for 2024/2025, as well as other changes proposed, including:

- ***Uprating to the applicable amounts in line with the prescribed scheme but with the exception of non-dependent deduction for working age which was to remain at £5.00 for 2024/2025 year for all cases.***
- ***Adopt any other changes within the prescribed scheme in accordance with the statutory instrument due to be published in January 2024.***
- ***Undertake a review of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2024 to allow time to implement any potential changes for the 2025/2026 scheme following consultation.***
- ***Continue current funding of £20,000 for hardship cases.***

FM/98 **COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS 1 APRIL 2023 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Head of Customer Services presented the report to the Committee and outlined the key changes going forward that would assist to improve the position regarding complaints received.

Members raised concerns regarding the increase in the number of complaints and sought clarity regarding types of complaints received.

The Head of Customer Services informed the Committee that work is underway to enhance complaints reporting, and trends within service areas would be included in future reports alongside further comprehensive data analysis.

RESOLVED:

1.1 The Committee considered and noted the comments, compliments, complaints, and FOI requests, as detailed in the report.

FM/99

CONSOLIDATED BUDGET REPORT 2024-25 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN TO 2028-29

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to the Committee and noted that there were no changes following the consultation period which had included an added feature of online consultation.

Members commended the report and discussed the officer's recommendations. Councillor D Corbin raised concern regarding the level of consultation.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) informed the Committee that the consultation with the public was discretionary but it had gone above and beyond that of other councils and had included areas that residents were concerned about such as rents and Council Tax.

Councillor Fitzpatrick raised queries regarding the sustainability of the budget in light of being asked to approve the 5 year position which utilised future reserves.

The Chair addressed the Committee and noted how the introduction of the financial workshops had allowed all Members to be involved with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and input into how to achieve budget sustainability.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) explained that the statutory budget was set for one year and the Medium-Term Financial Plan was presented for information only, not approval. The forthcoming Medium Term Financial Strategy would set out how the Council will deliver an ongoing balanced position.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the Committee:

1.1.1 Noted the Section 151 Officer's statement on the robustness of budgetary estimates and the adequacy of reserves as set out in section 14 of the report.

1.1.2 Recommended to Council an increase in Council Tax by the maximum referendum limit of 2.99% from the options set out in section 6 of the report.

- 1.1.3** *Following approval of 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 recommended to Council the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2024/25, subject to any final adjustments as may be required for Council, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.*
- 1.1.4** *Recommended that Council approves the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, and following resolution of the Housing and Community Services Committee at its meeting on 1 February 2024 in respect of the council housing rent increase for 2024/25 of 7.7%.*
- 1.1.5** *Recommended that Council approves the proposed fees and charges as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report.*
- 1.1.6** *Recommended that Council approves the Capital Programme of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 6 to the report.*
- 1.1.7** *Noted the indicative Capital Programme for 2025/26 – 2028/29 and recommended that Council approves the Fleet Replacement budget for 2025/26 to allow for the effective ordering of replacement fleet due to long lead-in times.*

FM/100 **CAPITAL STRATEGY, TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS**

The Head of Finance presented the report to the Committee outlining the key points within the report.

Members commended the report and supported the officer's recommendations.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1** *The Committee recommended to Council the approval of the:*
 - 1.2.1** *Treasury Management Strategy (as per Appendix 1 of the report)*
 - 1.2.2** *Prudential Indicators (as per Appendix 2 of the report)*
 - 1.2.3** *Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (as per Appendix 3 of the report)*
 - 1.2.4** *Capital Strategy (as per Appendix 4 of the report)*
 - 1.2.5** *Non-Treasury Investment Strategy (as per Appendix 5 of the report)*

FM/101 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report.

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and approved the updated work programme.

FM/102 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

TO RECEIVE THE EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETING:

The Exempt Minutes of the Finance and Management Committee held on the 09 January 2020 and 23 November 2023 were received.

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11

The Committee was informed that no questions had been received.

PREMISES IN NETHERSEAL

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the recommendations of the report.

REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS TEAM – ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE SERVICE UNIT)

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the recommendations of the report.

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES STAFFING

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the recommendations of the report.

CORPORATE RESOURCES DIRECTORATE RESOURCES

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the recommendations of the report.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the recommendations of the report.

The meeting terminated at 19:25 hours.

COUNCILLOR R PEARSON

CHAIR