

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Monday 10 November 2014 at 7.30pm at Salvation House, 2 Sterling Court, Mundells, Welwyn Garden City, Herts.

PRESENT: Councillors G.Michaelides (Chairman)
D.Bell (Vice-Chairman)

M.Birleson, S.Chander, T.Crump, G.Dowler, S.Markiewicz,
J.Nicholls, A.Prest, S.Roberts

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Director (Governance) (B.Baldock)
Head of Resources (K.Ng)
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)
Client Support Services Manager (F.Cantel) (for items 17-19)
Human Resources Manager (K. Patel)
Senior Performance and Strategy Officer (C.Jauncey) (for items 17-19)
Finance and Technical Accountant (D.Williams)
Management Accountant – Capital and Revenue (J.Ing)
Governance Services Manager (G.R.Seal)

17. MINUTES:

The Minutes of the meeting on 8 September 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. STERIA CONTRACT PERFORMANCE:

Report of the Director (Finance and Operations) providing Members with an analysis of the service performance for Steria against contractual key performance indicators and service level targets for benefits, council tax, business rates, information communication technology, contact centre, reception and switch board.

It was noted that the target for responses to IT Steria helpdesk calls had not been met in the second quarter and that this was due to a key member of staff leaving and the need for the recruitment process to take place. This had now been addressed and it was considered that there were sufficiently robust arrangements in place.

The target for national non domestic rate collection had also been missed and this was due to a legislative change which meant that businesses could now make payments over a twelve month rather than a ten month period and the target would be reviewed in line with the expected cash flow reduction from this.

RESOLVED:

That the Steria contract performance information for the second quarter of the 2014/15 financial year be noted.

19. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT – RESOURCES:

Report of the Director (Strategy and Development) and accompanying presentation by the Senior Performance and Strategy Officer providing the Committee with all performance indicator data collected essentially for those services that fell within its remit for quarter two of the current financial year.

Having regard to sickness days due to both short and long term absences, Officers explained to Members the policy in place and the processes used by managers. There had been cases of long term sickness in the quarter resulting in ill health retirements which were certificated by an independent medical practitioner qualified in occupational health medicine in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations.

RESOLVED:

That the performance indicator data collected for quarter two of 2014/15 reported to the Committee be noted.

20. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2014 (MONTH 6):

Report of the Director (Finance and Operations) presenting the revenue, capital and Housing Revenue Account budget monitoring position as at the end of September 2014 (month 6) for the financial year 2014/15 analysing the reasons for changes between the original budget and forecast outturn as considered at the Cabinet meeting on 4 November 2014 (Minutes 89 and 90 refer).

In noting that the forecast draw down from reserves on the General Fund had now reduced from £602,000 to £11,000, Members, whilst pleased with this under spend asked whether the budget process and these variances needed to be reviewed.

In response, the Head of Resources assured Members that the budgetary system in place was robust, which included scoring 3 out of 4 in the Use of Resources assessment. In addition to this, regular monitoring and scrutiny took place with both Members and Managers in service areas, but changes did occur and some issues were unknown at the time of setting the budget.

The under spend on the current year's budget would be considered as part of the budget setting process for next year.

Members asked Officers to check the reasons for falling tonnage in recycling material which reflected on the budget.

Members requested that the mix between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account for the Affordable Housing capital budget be made clear in the capital report.

It was noted in reply to Members' questions that the annual repayment of the Government self financing loan was £9.95M as against the previous negative housing subsidy payment of £18M per annum.

Finally, it was noted that Members had been informed at the Committee's last meeting that the amount shown in the original General Fund useable receipts reserves budget was for a receipt that had been anticipated for the Finesse Leisure King George V relocation football pitches loan in the current financial year, but that no actual receipt had been received to date and discussions were taking place with Finesse about how to get the work done and the pitches useable as soon as possible.

It was noted that this would now be considered as part of the 2015/16 budget setting process.

RESOLVED:

That the financial position of the Council's revenue budget, capital budget and Housing Revenue Account be noted.

21. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15:

The programme which had been updated since the last meeting to enable forward planning of items to be considered was submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme as submitted be agreed.

Meeting ended 8.30pm
GS