

**Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee held on
23 January 2018 at 6pm in Meeting Rooms G3/4, Addenbrooke House,
Ironmasters Way, Telford**

Present: N A M England (Chair), K S Sahota, C F Smith and D G Wright
Co-optees: Mrs C Mason-Morris and Mr R Williams

Also Present: Councillors L D Carter, Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships & Commercial Services and A R H England, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Older People

In Attendance: K Clarke, Assistant Director Finance & Human Resources; C Jones, Director Children & Adult Services; J Eatough, Assistant Director Governance, Procurement & Commissioning; D Lloyd, Interim Assistant Director Early Help & Support; and T Smart, Finance Manager Schools and Care Services

FESC-06 Apologies for Absence

Councillors S Bentley, N A Dugmore and R Mehta

FESC-07 Declarations of Interest

None.

FESC-08 Service & Financial Planning Strategy 2018/19 – 2019/20 (Draft Budget Proposals)

The Chair introduced the item on the draft budget proposals and the further information requested by the Committee at its meetings on 15 January 2018. The purpose of the meeting was to agree the response to the Administration's draft budget proposals.

A Capital Receipts Summary had been provided which contained exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act. The press and public were asked to leave the meeting for the item on business grounds. The summary provided Net Capital receipts on the Council's assets by site from 2017/18 – 2020/21. Members acknowledged that the information did not allow for comparison of projections with Net Capital receipts on completions. It was noted that this was due to commercial sensitivity and that it was the Cabinet only that was informed of this detail. Members who also sat on the Audit Committee assured that the External Auditors always gave a clean bill of health.

Press and public were returned to the meeting at 6.14.pm.

Members considered the additional information provided on business rates appeals and noted on average over the past 3 years, 41% of appeals resolved were successful. The reduction in NDR, including back-dated element was shown in the

table. The Committee sought clarification on whether the 41% successfully resolved appeals meant that they had been successful for the Council or the Appellant.

Further information on the Council's approach to equality under the Public Sector Equality Duty was noted. A breakdown of the Council Tax Support Grants payable to Parish Councils in 2018/19 had been provided. It was noted that these were calculated using the consistent methodology from the introduction of local council tax support schemes in 2013/14. It was acknowledged that the grant was decreasing year on year.

Further information relating to the ICT savings associated with the server room at Abraham Darby Academy had been provided. The strategy proposed an investment in the purchase of a generator from the existing capital allocations which would therefore mean no further payment of rental costs and would allow for electricity and servicing savings plus a reduction in server maintenance as some equipment had been replaced.

A summary had been provided on the budget engagement sessions that took place in December 2017. The new approach to consultation was targeted to service users and stakeholders with a particular interest. It was noted that Cllr Lee Carter, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development had been present at the engagement sessions with Town and Parish councils and the voluntary sector and he had been open to questions. It was noted that 21 representatives from the voluntary and community sector had participated. Committee Members involved in voluntary groups such recounted that there had been some feedback, that groups such as the Senior Citizens Forums which were well attended, could have participated to a greater extent if smaller individual sessions had been held, and also that greater numbers of members would have attended. It was agreed that this feedback would be provided to Officers.

It was noted that the Customer, Community and Partnership Scrutiny Committee was due to review the Council's third party engagement process as part of its work programme in 2017/18.

A breakdown of the Adult Social Services projected overspend for the current year had been provided. It had been reported in the Financial Management report to Cabinet on 4 January 2018 that this was just over £1m. The Chair noted that the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee monitored the progress of the Adult Social Care performance, budget and savings and progress against the cost improvement plans and that efforts would be duplicated if it was also monitored by Finance & Enterprise scrutiny.

The Chair reminded the Committee that it was their task to report the Committee's findings to Cabinet. The Committee agreed that there was nothing contentious in the budget this year as it was a two-year budget, which had been scrutinised thoroughly in 2016/17 and that the Committee's recommendation at the time, that the Adult Social Care precept should be implemented at a rate of 2% a year for three years (2017/18-2019/20) had been accepted and implemented.

The Committee agreed to the Council's proposal to invest in Adult Social Care and safeguarding only and not in anything else. The Council's approach to savings was supported and the use of one-off balances was felt to be appropriate. The Committee had sought additional information to understand the current position on Single Status.

It was noted that a response to Cabinet would need to be finalised by Friday, 26 January 2018.

The meeting ended at 6.25pm

Chairman:

Date: