

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Meeting held 13 February 2013

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Ian Auckland, Penny Baker, Roger Davison, Gill Furniss, Helen Mirfin-Boukouris, Mick Rooney and Andrew Sangar

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where a resolution may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 3rd December 2012, were approved as a correct record, subject to the recording of an apology for Councillor Helen Mirfin-Boukouris at item 1 (Apologies for Absence).

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 *Cessation of the Provision and Fitting of Small Items of Daily Living Equipment Costing Less Than £50*

In response to a question submitted on behalf of the Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind, Councillor Bryan Lodge reported that this was just one of the many difficult budgetary decisions which the Council had had to make and added that this was an extension of the decision made in 1999 which, under the new proposal, would extend to items where there was an element of fitting required. He also indicated that support would be provided for those people with extreme difficulties.

Councillor Mick Rooney added that this issue would be included on the agenda of the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee at the earliest opportunity.

6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND REVENUE BUDGET APPROVAL 2013/14

6.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director, Resources, on the 2013/14 Capital Programme and the joint report of the Chief Executive and the

Executive Director, Resources, on the Revenue Budget 2013/14, which were to be considered by Cabinet on the afternoon of 13th February 2013.

- 6.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Bryan Lodge (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources), Councillor Isobel Bowler (Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure), Councillor Robert Murphy, Eugene Walker (Director of Finance), Allan Rainford (Resources Team), Joe Fowler (Director of Communications and Performance), Bev Coukham (Communities Portfolio), Mick Crofts (Place Portfolio) and John Doyle (Children, Young People and Families Portfolio).
- 6.3 Eugene Walker introduced the two reports and explained that this was the third year of budget reductions which now amounted to the cumulative sum of £180m and added that the year 2014/15 was likely to prove even more difficult. He also referred to changes in local government finance, the reduction in the Council Tax benefit grant and the difficulties caused by the late announcement of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. These factors had made it difficult to work out potential impacts, but a budget had been arrived at to enable Members to make the necessary decisions. He considered that this was a robust budget which contained a proper review of savings and reserves.
- 6.4 Councillor Bryan Lodge also referred to the late announcement of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and highlighted the difficulties in making these spending decisions.
- 6.5 In response to Members' questions, the following points were made:-
- The budgetary process for 2014/15 had not started yet and it was possible that some further level of efficiencies could be achieved. There were always changes in situations but it appeared that local authorities were being asked to cut furthest and fastest.
 - Members were looking at the structure of services and it was necessary to look at the best way of delivering these, but this was getting harder over the years. The level of officer strength and expertise was recognised.
 - It was important to note that the budget set the framework for service operation, with the exact detail of service changes being subject to consultation and discussion with the services involved. The Council had a process that interwove finance with policy and decision-making and its implementation could be monitored.
 - The grant settlement in relation to the transfer of the Public Health function from the Primary Care Trust had only been received in January 2013, and officers were currently assessing this. The settlement contained some relatively generous elements and a report would be presented to Cabinet to set out how this funding could be spent. It should also be noted that some of the grant was designed to help the Council achieve its own public health objectives.

- The transfer of the Public Health function to the Council, involved a not insignificant proportion of statutory services, but the Council had some discretion as to their provision.
- Members experiencing any conflict between their role as Members of the Council and the South Yorkshire Pensions Authority should obtain legal advice from the Pensions Authority.
- Where contracts had been transferred from the Health Service to the Council, the Council would consider its own priorities in relation to their implementation.
- It was not intended to give the impression that there was any slack in the system, it was just that the Council was a large organisation and could always improve. It was also possible that external circumstances could change, so it could never be said that savings could not be made.
- There had not been a national announcement in relation to the funding of care provision.
- The interdependence between the Primary Care Trust, the Teaching Hospitals and the Council was recognised, with each organisation having its own pressures.
- The budget set the financial framework within which the Council was to operate and decisions would have to be taken on the detail of the precise effect of the cuts which were having to be made.
- There were no proposals to increase car parking charges at local centres.
- Whilst the increases in allotment rents looked large, they were minimal in terms of the actual monetary increases.
- The Cultural Trusts had agreed a level of saving and had also come to an agreement regarding services and opening hours.
- The full detail of changes to the Early Years Service was awaited and it should be borne in mind that the budget set the framework for this Service with any proposals being set within this. A decision on this Service had been made at the Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and this would be presented to Cabinet later that day.
- There were to be some funding reductions to community groups, Sheffield Futures and in relation to Youth Involvement. More detail could be found on these in the Budget Implementation Plans.
- Discussions would be held with the appropriate Council service in relation to outdoor educational centres provision.

- There was a legal challenge in process relating to some of the VAT recovery in the Building Schools for the Future Programme, but it should be noted that the affordability gap had decreased. This gap would require funding and it was hoped to avoid borrowing and rely on capital receipts for this.
- Some funding from the Local Transport Plan Programme had been earmarked for use on initiatives such as the Better Buses Fund.

6.6 In response to questions from Councillor Robert Murphy, the following points were made:-

- Discussions were taking place with Health Service partners in relation to the provision of social care and it was acknowledged that the priority was what was best for the individual. The criteria for fair access to care was set at critical and substantial, and it was felt that if this was set at critical only then people would be put at risk.
- There were difficulties in looking at savings on external contracts due to their long term nature, but it should be noted that spending was lower on information, communications and technology than a few years ago and discussions were taking place in relation to savings on the Veolia Waste Management contract.

6.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report of the Executive Director, Resources, on the 2013/14 Capital Programme Budget, and the joint report of the Chief Executive and the Executive Director, Resources, on the Revenue Budget 2013/14, together with the comments made and the responses provided; and
- (b) recommends that the report of the Executive Director, Resources, on the 2013/14 Capital Programme Budget, and the joint report of the Chief Executive and the Executive Director, Resources, on the Revenue Budget 2013/14, be submitted to Cabinet without amendment.