

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
9 FEBRUARY 2023

Minutes of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, 9 February 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Richard Jones (Chairman)

Councillors: Bill Crease, Chris Dolphin, Alasdair Ibbotson, Allan Marshall, Vicky Perfect, Kevin Rush, Jason Shallcross, Sam Swash and Linda Thomas

SUBSTITUTE: Councillor: Rob Davies (for Bernie Attridge)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts (Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure), Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing), Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion & Resilient Communities), Councillor Billy Mullin (Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services), Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager and Strategic Finance Managers

Senior Manager, Safeguarding and Commissioning - for minute number 78

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and team

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

75. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2022 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillors Linda Thomas and Bill Crease.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

76. ACTION TRACKING

The Democratic Services Manager presented an update on actions arising from previous meetings.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Kevin Rush and Jason Shallcross.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the progress which has been made.

77. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager presented the current forward work programme for consideration, including items to be allocated to future meetings.

Following suggestions by the Chairman, a report on the review of earmarked reserves would be scheduled for September 2023. A report to clarify statutory and non-statutory requirements as part of budget-setting would also be scheduled.

The recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors Bill Crease and Chris Dolphin.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme, as amended, be noted; and
- (b) That the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

78. JOINT FUNDED CARE PACKAGES - UPDATE REPORT

The Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) presented an update on current long-term debt with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) in respect of the delivery of NHS Continuing Health Care packages in Flintshire since the last report in December 2022.

A breakdown of the position at the end of January 2023 showed outstanding invoices totalling £0.666m which included £0.127m due to be repaid within the coming weeks. Since December 2022, the independent arbitration process between the Council and BCUHB had proved successful in recovering £0.114m of long-standing debt, leaving £0.327m to be discussed through arbitration arrangements which would shortly recommence following a temporary delay due to absences. The remaining operating debt level of £0.211m was a 15.65% improvement from that reported in December.

In welcoming the progress, the Chairman thanked officers and the Committee for their participation in reaching this position. However, he highlighted the £0.327m as a potential risk, should the arbitration process be unsuccessful in resolving those invoices.

His comments were echoed by Councillor Bill Crease.

Councillor Paul Johnson acknowledged the role of the Committee in raising awareness of the matter and paid tribute to the officers and BCUHB for their input.

The recommendation was moved and seconded by Councillors Jason Shallcross and Kevin Rush.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the continued proactive budget management of outstanding invoices raised by the Council for payment by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

79. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2022/23 (MONTH 9) AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 (MONTH 9)

The Strategic Finance Managers (Corporate Finance) presented the 2022/23 month 9 position for the revenue budget monitoring for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

Revenue Budget Monitoring

On the Council Fund, the projected year-end position - without new actions to reduce cost pressures and/or improve the financial return on efficiency planning and cost control - was an operating deficit of £0.117m. This would leave a contingency reserve balance of £6.464m at year-end (after the impact of final pay awards) and including £2.432m transferred from the additional Revenue Support allocation received at the end of 2021/22, as reported at month 8.

Significant movements across portfolios from month 8 were summarised along with a carry-forward request for replacement server equipment for schools and a request for funding from the Contingency Reserve to cover costs on a significant legal case within Children's Services. Whilst the tracking of in-year risks reported the current position with Council Tax collection levels and pay awards, the impact of increased demand for Out of County Placements and school transport were being monitored closely for the medium term impact. Emerging pressures such as winter maintenance costs and the potential Waste Recycling Infraction Charge were highlighted, along with projected year-end balances on earmarked reserves.

On the HRA, projected in-year expenditure of £3.208m higher than budget would leave a closing un-earmarked balance of £3.266m, which was above the recommended guidelines on spend.

In response to concerns from Councillor Bill Crease about the projected reduction in school balances at year-end, the Corporate Finance Manager explained that these were based on local knowledge of officers working with schools and could be impacted by late grants, however specific amounts would not be known until closure of the accounts.

The Chairman acknowledged the varying movements contributing to the positive movement of £0.235m from month 8. In response to questions, officers agreed to respond separately on the movement of short-term care costs from the Regional Integration Fund and the balancing of minor variances shown in the report.

In response to the Chairman's question on managing the risk around Out of County Placements, the Chief Executive and Councillor Christine Jones explained that investment at Ty Nyth Children's Assessment Centre and Bromfield Park formed part of a wider strategy to develop in-house provision and would contribute to reducing those pressures.

Capital Programme

The revised programme for 2022/23 was £71.565m taking into account all carry forward sums and savings transferred back to the programme. Changes during the period were mainly due to the introduction of grant funding streams across portfolios and budget re-profiling. The projected outturn position totalled £68.505m leaving a £3.060m underspend recommended to be carried forward for the completion of schemes in 2023/24 as detailed. The update also reflected two additional allocations identified to be funded from within the current 'headroom' provision and Health & Safety provision, along with one-off savings to be released back into the programme. The overall funding position of approved schemes reported a surplus of £4.258m prior to the realisation of additional capital receipts and/or other funding sources.

Councillor Paul Johnson thanked the officers and teams responsible for collating the detailed information.

The recommendations were moved and seconded by Councillors Kevin Rush and Bill Crease.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That having considered the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23 (month 9) report, the Committee confirms that there are no specific issues to be raised with Cabinet; and
- (b) That having considered the Capital Programme Monitoring 2022/23 (month 9) report, the Committee confirms that there are no specific matters to be raised with Cabinet.

80. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 10.45am)

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Chairman