
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Revenue Outturn 2014/15

2. We had a special meeting on 16th July, 2015, to consider the revenue outturn for 2014/15 which had been considered by Cabinet.
3. We were advised that the draft year-end position showed an improvement of £2.533 million from the opening balance projections as reported in the MTFP 2015/16 to 2019/20 report, with improvements seen across a number of areas and that the out-turn figures were welcome, especially as a number related to the early delivery of savings. This did, however, need to be considered against a background of £12.067 million of savings to be delivered by 2019/20.
4. Areas which we discussed further related to the improvement of a number of departmental resource projections in relation to waste disposal and collection and the reasons for that, whether there were any increased costs as a result in fly tipping, and, if so, whether they were included within those figures; the savings achieved in relation to Adult Social Care as a result of the reduction in admissions to residential care homes; improvements in relation to the car parking budget; and the increase in income received from Housing Benefit overpayments as a result of improved systems.
5. In considering the report we agreed to congratulate the Officers on the efficiencies and savings achieved to date and to continue to closely monitor the budget position to ensure that savings were achieved despite the pressures.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16 – Quarter 1

6. At the same meeting in July, we also considered the quarter 1 revenue budget monitoring report 2015/16.
7. We were advised that the latest projections, following a rebasing exercise, showed an overall improvement of £4.573 million, of which £2.533 million related to balances carried forward from the 2014/15 outturn and that following a detailed review of budgets following out turn and the subsequent clawback exercise the in-year improvement, compared with the MTFP for 2015/16 was £2.040 million. This was to be welcomed, particularly as £0.812 million had been identified as on-going savings which would assist in achieving the savings targets in the MTFP and also

contributed to reducing the funding deficit for future years.

8. We were advised of a forecasted underspend of £0.656 million in the Looked After Children external placement budgets which was based on current placements remaining for the rest of the year and this is a budget which both our and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committees have undertaken work in the past. In view of the volatility of that budget, and, in some cases, the high costs associated with the packages, it is intended to watch that position closely over the next reporting period prior to a decision being made on whether that budget should be reduced.
9. Savings are being achieved as a result of vacant posts within the Authority and we have asked for more information in relation to this to be provided to a future meeting.

Sickness Absence

10. Information on the outturn sickness absence figures for 2014/15 has been reported.
11. It is disappointing that the figures for 2014/15 are higher than the outturn figures for 2013/14, however, on a positive note, the overall attendance rate was 95.8 per cent for the period 2014/15, with 45.2 per cent of staff having no sickness absence during that period.
12. The three highest reasons for absence during the period were stress, depression and mental health, musculo-skeletal and operations/hospital treatment. There is a high cost to the Authority of sickness absence and for the period 2014/15 this was £1,530,195, however, we were assured that there was a robust monitoring process in place and Managers will continue to review and monitor sickness absence to try and reduce absence levels whilst continuing to provide support to those staff who needed it.

Procurement Board Update

13. At the request of a Member of our Scrutiny Committee, we received a report which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 7 July, 2015, in relation to a number of decisions taken by the Procurement Board to waive Contract Procedure Rules.
14. The Procurement Board is the main Officer Forum for strategic procurement decisions and has the power to waive Contract Procedure Rules in specific circumstances where it is not possible to follow an ordinary tender process and a direct award needs to be made.
15. The Cabinet report covered those decisions made for the period 23rd to 29th May, 2015 and detailed the circumstances and the reason why the Contract Procedure Rules had been waived by the Procurement Board.

16. We will continue to monitor the decisions made by the Procurement Board as they are reported to Cabinet.

Corporate Health and Safety Report 2014/15

17. Information on the authority's performance in terms of health and safety for the financial year 2014/15 has been reported. Health and Safety continues to be a high priority for the Authority and the performance results which were presented to us show improvements are again being made. The objectives for 2015/16 will also ensure continual improvement is achieved and embedded into all of the Council's activities.

Management of Change

18. We were provided with an update on the current position in relation to the management of change programme as at August 2015. The update provided us with a brief summary of work progressing under the developing change programme aiming to provide both assurance in terms of progress as well as an indication of the future timetable of approvals.

Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee