
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.

Work Programme

2. In addition to our agreed work programme, following an update Scrutiny received in relation to sickness absence within the Authority, I, and Councillor K Nicholson, will be meeting with the HR Manager (Policy and Strategy) to look at the Council's current Sickness Absence Policy and will be reporting back to Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of that if needed. We have also received a request to seek clarification in relation to highway maintenance contracts and procedures and this is currently with Officers to discuss with the Members concerned. Again, if it is felt input from Scrutiny is needed, this will be added to our work programme.

Revenue Budget Quarter 2 Monitoring Report

3. Scrutiny have looked at the Quarter 2 forecast of the 2016/17 revenue budget outturn and noted that, overall, the projected General Fund reserve position at 31st March, 2017, is £15,386 million, which is £0.099 million worse than the planned balances in the 2016-20 Medium-Term Financial Plan. Although the People Group are forecasting an overspend of £2.217 million with significant pressures in Children and Adult services, departmental and corporate savings of £1.001 million and £0.845 million respectively are currently offsetting this.
4. Two of the major budget pressures which contribute towards the £0.099 million are within Children's Services and relate to interim management costs which had been put in place following the Ofsted inspection and were a one-off pressure and the cost of agency staff within that service. We were advised of some regional work which was being undertaken to look at recruitment strategies to try and ease the pressures in relation to agency staff and to a recruitment and retention policy which was being developed for Darlington.
5. There are also additional pressures in relation to the Looked After Children budget due to the increased number of children in placements and increased costs due to the complex nature of a small number of placements.
6. As mentioned above, other departmental resource projections are forecasting an underspend in a number of areas and, although the anticipated savings in adult social care are not expected to be fully achieved in 2016/17, there is a comprehensive transformation programme currently underway and it is expected that the savings will be back on target and are expected to be achieved from

2017/18.

7. The individual Scrutiny Committees are monitoring the budget pressures within their own individual remits and we will continue to monitor the overall position.

Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee