
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. At the request of the Scrutiny Committee, I as Chair, have met with the HR Officer (Policy and Strategy) to look at the Authority's current sickness absence policy and am satisfied following that meeting that the current policy is fit for purpose. The Policy has only been in operation since 2013 so I have suggested to the Scrutiny Committee that we review the Policy again in a couple of years to ensure that this is still the case. We will continue to monitor sickness absence levels as part of our work programme in the meantime.

Medium-Term Financial Plan

3. Scrutiny has given consideration to the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2017/18 to 2020/21. As Members will be aware there are no major proposals contained within the proposed Plan and Cabinet is consulting on a proposed Council Tax increase of 1.99 per cent, with a two per cent levy, agreed by the Government to fund Adult Social Care for 2017/18 and subsequent years, the current schedule of charges and the use of capital receipts to assist in funding the MTFP.
4. We were advised that, although work was still on-going to implement the proposals contained within the 2016/17 Plan, on the whole, the savings which had been identified would be achieved, with the exception of the Library, which, at the time of our meeting, and, again as Members will be aware, had been deferred by Cabinet. A member of the public also attended our meeting and spoke against the proposals to re-locate the Library.
5. Delivery of the MTFP is still a challenge and there are a number of significant on-going pressures which have been identified over the next four years. Additional pressures of £3.9 million over the life of the MTFP have been identified, together with a proposal by Cabinet to use capital receipts to off-set these.
6. We did discuss whether the use of capital receipts to support the MTFP would have an effect on Economic Growth as this may lead to reduced funds being available for capital schemes and although, this was accepted, however, Cabinet felt it appropriate to use these receipts given the priority of delivering a sustainable MTFP.

7. Scrutiny was also updated on a recent decision by the Government to allow Council's the flexibility to increase its Adult Social Care precept by an additional one per cent in 2017/18 and 2018/19 (from two per cent to three per cent) on the condition that the total increase to 2019/20 did not exceed six per cent and we were advised that Cabinet would be further considering this. We also discussed the reduction in the number of new houses being built which had an effect on the Council's income in relation to both Council Tax income and the New Homes Bonus; and the position in respect of the monies received from Section 106 Planning Agreements, when developers did not meet their requirements in relation to affordable housing and where those monies were shown within the Statement of Accounts. As a Scrutiny Committee we have previously done some work in relation to Section 106 Planning Agreements and were satisfied with the findings.
8. All Scrutiny Committees will be considering the proposals within the MTFP and will report back to our Scrutiny Committee in due course.

Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee