

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 5 January 2022

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS WAS NOT A FORMALLY CONSTITUTED MEETING, AND THAT THIS IS A 'NOTE' OF THE INFORMAL MEETING THAT TOOK PLACE.

PRESENT – Councillors Bell (Chair), Heslop, Layton, McEwan and Newall

APOLOGIES – Councillors Bartch,

ABSENT – Councillors Dr. Chou, Lee and Wright

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors K Nicholson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Elizabeth Davison (Group Director of Operations), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Assistant Director Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that Members give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022/23 to 2025/26.

In introducing the report, the Group Director of Operations reminded Members of the MTFP Briefing that was delivered to Members in December outlining the overall position of the MTFP, and advised that Members now had the opportunity to ask questions relating to the remit of this Scrutiny Committee and to forward any views or comments to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration at its meeting scheduled to be held on 20 January 2022.

The Group Director of Operations provided an update on the finance settlement which had been received subsequent to the draft MTFP.

It was reported that the Council Tax and Precept levels remained as expected at 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively; that the £1.5B additional funding announced in the Autumn Statement had been split into £822M Services Grant and £636M Social Care Grant; the Council would be receiving £1.579M from the Services Grant and £1.162M from the Social Care Grant, which was higher than the estimate included within the draft MTFP; and Members were advised that the Services Grant was a one-off payment whilst a further review of Local Government funding was conducted.

Members were also advised that the New Homes Bonus had been extended for a further year, and that this would net a further £1.4M above anticipated levels. It was reported that there were also a number of deductions from initial draft figures, however overall there

would be an additional £1.073M funding for 2022/23.

It was reported that the Public Health and Housing Revenue Account were the two main funding streams within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee; these were both ring fenced grants; that the 2022/23 Public Health Grant allocation had not yet been announced; and there were no specific pressures for Housing or Public Health in 2022/23.

Following a question, the Group Director of Operations advised Members that there were no anticipated reductions in the Public Health grant.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That this Scrutiny Committee has no comment to make on the MTFP 2022/23 to 2025/26.

(b) That the Chair, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Notes of this Meeting of the Committee, to enable the Notes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 20 January 2022.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenues submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that Members give consideration to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)– MTFP for 2022-23 to 2025-26.

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenue provided an update on the key decisions within the HRA for 2022-23 which included a proposed revenue expenditure of £25.448M, a proposed Capital Programme of £32.98M and a proposed rent increase.

It was reported that Councils had the discretion to inflate rents by CPI plus 1 per cent, which would mean a rent increase of 4.1 per cent for 2022-23. Members were advised that a number of options were considered at the Cabinet meeting held on 7 December 2021, taking into account the current economic pressures faced by tenants and balancing this with the need to deliver the Councils ambitious capital and energy efficiency programmes, an increase of 2 per cent was recommended which equated to an average £1.64 increase in weekly rents. Members were also informed that Cabinet recommended that service charges be increased by an appropriate inflationary amount.

Following a question in relation to the delivery of improvements to external wall insulation, Members were advised that all improvement work would be delivered as part of a programme; the Council were preparing to tender for a stock condition survey which would include insulation; and Members make Officers aware of any individual cases as required.

IT WAS AGREED – That this Scrutiny Committee has no comment to make on the Housing Revenue Account – MTFP for 2022-23 to 2025-26.