

## **ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 1 September 2022

**PRESENT** – Councillors H Scott (Chair) Crudass, Harker, Lee, McEwan, Mills and Paley

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Boddy, L Hughes, Mrs D Jones and Wright,

**ABSENT** –

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** –

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Mark Ladyman (Assistant Director Economic Growth), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Luke Swinhoe (Assistant Director Law and Governance), Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Brian Robson (Head of Capital Projects), Shirley Wright (Democratic Manager) and Michael Conway (Mayoral and Democratic Officer)

### **ER11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### **ER12 MINUTES**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 30 June 2022.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

### **ER13 PROJECT POSITION STATEMENT AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2022/23 - QUARTER 1**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) together with a report (also previously circulated) scheduled to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 6 September 2022 giving a summary of the latest capital resource and commitment position to inform monitoring of the affordability and funding of the Council's capital programme, together with an update on the current status of all construction projects which were currently being managed by the Council.

It was reported that the Council had a substantial annual construction programme of work which was delivering a wide range of improvements to the Council's assets and more critically to Council services and that there were currently 48 live projects being managed with an overall projected outturn value of £186.911 million and that the majority of the Council's projects were running to time, cost and quality expectations.

Following questions by Members, Officers confirmed that regular monitoring was undertaken given the current financial pressures and that both fixed cost option contacts and inflation indices were used when estimating contracts to provide an element of security.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted and that Cabinet be advised that this Scrutiny

Committee has no further comments to make on the submitted report.

#### **ER14 COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS ANNUAL REPORTS 2021/22**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) together with a report (also previously circulated) which was scheduled to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 September 2022 in relation to the 2021/22 Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports (also previously circulated).

It was reported that the Council constantly strived to ensure an organisational culture in which complaints were accepted, owned and resolved as quickly as possible and one in which learning from complaints was used to improve services. It was also a statutory requirement for the Council to produce annual reports in respect of representations received under the Adult Social Care, the Children's Social Care and the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures.

The submitted report set out the number of complaints, compliments and comments which had been received during 2021/22 and it was reported that 739 complaints had been received, an increase from 628 in the previous year, 217 compliments had been received, a decrease from 309 in the previous year and that there had also been a decrease in the number of comments which had been received from 178 to 127.

Information giving some examples of organisational learning resulting from complaints was also included in the submitted report.

Members felt that although the number of complaints had increased slightly over the last year, the increase was minimal given the pressures the Authority and its services had faced during the pandemic.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted and that Cabinet be advised that this Scrutiny Committee has no further comments to make on the submitted report.

#### **ER15 COMPLAINTS MADE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated together with a report (also previously circulated) which was scheduled to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 September 2022 in relation to the outcome of complaints which had been determined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HOS).

It was reported that during the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, 16 cases had been the subject of decision by the LGSCO and two cases had been the subject of the HOS. Further details of the cases and outcomes were included in the submitted report.

The LGSCO's Annual Review Letter which contained information on the Council's performance in relation to complaints was also contained within the submitted report.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted and that cabinet be advised that this Scrutiny Committee has not further comments to make on the submitted report.

## **ER16 INVESTMENT FUND - UPDATE**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) together with a report (also previously circulated) which was scheduled to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 September, 2022 outlining the progress against the agreed investments which were being funded through the Investment Fund.

It was reported that the Investment Fund had been established by the Council in November 2016 to use for innovative investment opportunities beyond the traditional Treasury Management Strategy in order to achieve greater returns given the returns on investments and that the total amount of the fund had been increased in 2018 to £50 million.

The Assistant Director Resources reported that although the pandemic had had an impact on the joint venture schemes construction timescales, they were now all back on track and sales were buoyant and details of the nine schemes currently being funded were detailed in the submitted report.

It was reported that the agreed investment fund had a commitment against it of £33.48 million, leaving balance of £16.52 million and that Officers were actively looking at schemes which could be agreed, subject to approval, to utilise the fund for wider economic benefits.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted and that Cabinet be advised that this Scrutiny has no further comments to make on the submitted report.

## **ER17 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the work programme of this Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of this Municipal Year.

Discussion ensued on the current financial pressures which were impacting on both residents and the Council and requested that a piece of work be undertaken to monitor this and consider what the Council could do to support and signpost communities to financial advice.

It was also requested that information be provided to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on the administrative processes around the payment of the Government's Council Tax energy rebate which had been administered by the Council and the resource implications it may have had on the delivery of other services.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be received

(b) That the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee be requested to look at the advice and support available to residents and investigate how this council could further signpost communities to financial advice.

(c) That a report on the payment of the Government's Council Tax energy rebate be submitted to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.