

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 3 January 2024

PRESENT – Councillors Crudass, Dillon, Holroyd, Johnson, Mahmud, Pease and Mrs Scott

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baker, Layton and Mammolotti,

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Roche

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing), Ken Ross (Public Health Principal), Michael Conway (Mayoral and Democratic Officer) and Cheryl Williams (Programmes and Performance Manager)

HH24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH27 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Members received the report of the Assistant Director Resources presenting the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2024/25 to 2027/28, agreed for consultation on 5 December 2023 with the consultation period running until 22 January 2024.

A briefing was delivered to Councillors on 13 December 2023 which provided an overview and highlighted key points in the plan. It was noted that since the report had been published the Council has received the draft financial settlement for 2024/25 and an update was provided to Members highlighting the key points

- (a) The settlement is for 2024/25 only.
- (b) The Services Grant has reduced by approximately £800,000.
- (c) The New Home Bonus has been continued for 2024/25, we will receive approximately £400,000.
- (d) A number of figures are still to be confirmed, but at this point it is estimated that resources will decrease by approximately £250,000 for 2024/25 and further in future years if the New Homes Bonus ends.

A discussion was raised with regards to the Local Government Finance Settlement. Members stated that they had not had sight of this prior to the meeting. Officers clarified that the draft settlement was received on 18 December 2023 and that staff have been working through and interpreting the figures and that all settlement details will be included in an updated version of the MTFP. Some Members expressed the view that more time was required to consider the MTFP in view of the receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement and could not form a view on the MTFP until this was known.

A comment was made that questioned why the construction of energy efficient homes was not above the minimum regulations.

Members raised questions which included whether the Public Health Grant remains at a similar level as in the past, officers confirmed that the indicative allocation has an increase of just over £100,000. The Public Health Principal welcomed this increase but highlighted to members how some of that increase had to be spent on very specific things such as funding the NHS pay award in public health services provided by the NHS and for delivering new public health duties and responsibilities that have been placed on local authorities recently.

A question was asked relating to “intersectional issues”; if the council tackle issues early before they can cause increased spending at a later date specifically relating to maintaining and improving the health of the residents. Officers clarified that the Public Health grant invests in programmes across the authority to contribute to delivering on key Public Health outcomes and objectives and provided examples of programmes that are in place to tackle childhood obesity, weight management, exercise referral, school swimming as well work undertaken by Environmental Health colleagues such as eatery inspections.

A further question was asked as to the charges for hire of leisure spaces with Leisure colleagues confirming that charges for spaces are calculated at an hourly rate.

Members questioned why some charges are proposed to increase and some are not and the reasons for this. Officers clarified that some charges are nationally set and in other areas managers keep sustainability in mind and as such are conscious that increased charges could result in a reduction in demand and a net decrease in income. A question was raised concerning why car parking charges were not proposed to be increased and an additional point was added from members that charges from parking could be better utilised to improve parking enforcement.

RESOLVED –

- (a) Members noted the report and agreed that the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Scrutiny Committee, to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held on 18 January 2024.
- (b) That the minority view of this Scrutiny Committee, as expressed by Councillor Mrs. Scott on behalf of the Conservative Group is that they would not support the MTFP in its current form until fully appraised of the Local Government Finance Settlement.