

POLICY AND CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 December 2022

PRESENT – Councillor Humphrys, in the chair, Councillors Connor, Fielding, Liddle, Floyd, N. Slater, S. Hussan, Taylor.

ALSO PRESENT:

Vicky McGurk, Executive Member for Finance and Growth.

Paul Fleming, Strategic Director for Resources.

Dean Langton, Director of Finance,

Martin Eden, Director of Place.

Nathan Richards, Democratic Services

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillors Rawat and Fazal

2. Minutes of the meeting held on the 29th September 2022

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2022.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4. Digital Strategy

The committee received an update and presentation on the progress of the Council's Digital Strategy. The Strategic Director for Resources, Paul Fleming, outlined the progress made on the BwD Digital Strategy 2021-2024, which was approved at Executive Board in April 2021.

Paul Fleming outlined the progress on the 4 outlined work streams, which were:

- Digital First for our Services
- Enable Transformation for our Staff

- Data Driven Organisation
- Secure and Resilient Technology

The Strategic Director highlighted how Blackburn with Darwen had invested in the people, skills and infrastructure to provide 21st century public services, which enabled the Council and its services to work in new ways. He also told the group that as the Council embarked on its latest vision for digital and technology it had done so with strong foundations, albeit after a prolonged crisis with the Covid-19 pandemic in which the pace of technological change rapidly increased.

Paul Fleming also outlined the next steps for the Digital Strategy within the Council. He highlighted that they will continue to deliver planned work with existing investment across the four work streams and work in accordance with the six principles set out in the strategy. These were:

- Customer Centred Design
- Secure by Design
- Cost and Quality Effective
- Digital First and Inclusive
- Data driven
- Open, flexible and Cloud First

Going forward, the Strategic Director discussed the potential risk to delivery in the medium term if existing revenue and programme funding is limited or scaled back. He also highlighted the seriousness of the risk of Cyber Attacks if the Council does not continue to invest in work stream 4 of the Digital Strategy.

The committee raised a number of questions. These included the risk of leaving behind those who are technologically illiterate, the cost effectiveness and value for money of the Digital Strategy project, and the safety of the Council from cyber-attacks.

RESOLVED:

- That the Strategic Director Of Resources be thanked for his presentation
That the committee notes the activity to date.
That the Committee supports the continuation of delivery of the digital strategy.

5. Update on the Accommodation Strategy

The committee received an update and presentation from the Director of Place, Martin Eden, on the Accommodation Strategy.

This presentation outlined the scope of the strategy, with the following buildings being covered:

- Blackburn Town Hall
- Duke Street
- One Cathedral Square
- The Bungalow at Davyfield Depot

- Tower Block

The Director of Place outlined the Accommodation Principles, which were:

- **To adopt** a planned and structured approach to determining our future office accommodation needs
- **To manage** office buildings as a corporate resource to drive down cost, and maintain safety and security.
- **To invest** in the repair and maintenance our key office buildings to reduce maintenance backlog.
- **To maximise** use of fewer assets, through smarter working '**work is what we do, not a place we go**'
- **To achieve** carbon reduction through environmental improvements and adaptations. (BEIS)
- **To promote** joint working and explore opportunities for shared use of assets with partner organisations to improve collaboration and reduce costs.

The Director of Place informed the Committee of a number of options to raise finances from the Council's accommodation. This included the potential for shared use of office spaces, or the selling of Council land/ accommodation.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. Revenue Monitoring

The committee received an update from the Executive Member for Finance and Growth. This report detailed an Executive Board Decision from November 2022, which provided an update on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2022/23 on the basis of a budget monitoring exercise undertaken at the end of September 2022.

The Executive Member for Finance and Growth highlighted what the Executive Board were asked to do with this report. This was to:

- a. give approval to the Portfolio Cash Limit Adjustments as outlined in Appendix 1;
- b. note the General Fund Budget Summary position as at 30th September 2022;
- c. in view of the forecast overspend of £7.590m, the Executive Board request Portfolio Holders to review their budgets for the remainder of 2022/23 with a view to addressing the issues identified and limiting the amount of monies that would be required to be taken from reserves at financial year end;
- d. note the Earmarked Reserves and General Fund Balance position as at 30th September 2022.

The Executive Member summarised that with the predicted overspend, work must be done to improve the efficiency in all portfolios.

Members of the committee asked a number of questions. These included how the Council is dealing with the Cost of Living crisis, and the possibility of using other streams of income to balance the overspend.

RESOLVED -That the Committee note the report.

7. Work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The representatives from both the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked the Chair to provide a written update at a later date. The Chair agreed that this would be acceptable.

Resolved – That the representatives from the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee would provide a written update to the Chair at a later date.

Chair at the meeting where the minutes were signed.....

Date.....