



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY,
COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES)**

**MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM, TOWN HALL,
SOUTHPORT
ON TUESDAY 31ST OCTOBER, 2017**

PRESENT: Councillor Bradshaw (in the Chair)
Councillor Byrom (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Booth, Linda Cluskey, Daniel Lewis,
McCann, McKinley and Owens

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Lappin

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grace and Jamieson.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

22. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

**23. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES RESTRUCTURE -
PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation from Steve Smith, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager and Terry Wood, Environment and Consumer Team Section Manager, Regulation and Compliance on the service option to reduce the Environmental Service structure by £500k and the considerations given to the different ways of working that this has necessitated.

Mr Smith and Mr Wood indicated that:-

- Historical savings of £1.1million had been made between 2010-2017; that the current target for 2017-2020 was £500,000; and that this required that a full Service review be undertaken with the aim of achieving £400,000 and £100,000 savings in Phases 1 and 2 respectively
- The approach to achieve the savings would entail re-engineering processes, demand reduction and improving resilience and a fundamental review would be undertaken of Environmental Health

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and Trading Standards with efficiency savings being sought in
Local Licensing and Taxi Licensing

- The reduction in the demand for domestic and commercial services would be met by the introduction of thresholds, the development of self-help guides, training of Contact Centre staff and the streamlining of processes. Examples of demand reduction for the service were also provided
- Income generation would be investigated in the Pest Control Service, Food Hygiene advisory visits and the Dog Warden Service
- The advantages of the service option would be to improve service resilience, release resources to respond to complex technical issues and community resilience but that impacts would include reduced Public Health protection in respect of statutory nuisance and planning consultations thresholds and proactive health and safety at work and food safety and that response times would lengthen
- Phase 1 - £400,000 savings would be met by the reduction in the establishment of 9 FTE posts, new income generation of £38,000 and consumables savings of £20,000 whilst Phase 2 - £100,000 savings in year 2/3 would be met following a further management review

Members of the Committee asked questions/made comments on the following issues:-

- Problems caused by the setting on fire of building materials following demolition of buildings and a particular recent example of this was given at the former Kirkstone Public House, Litherland
- Private hire vehicles not displaying their company door signs
- Private hire fares varying for the same journey with the same company
- Cuts in Government grants have forced service provision to be diminished or ceased. As local politicians we should not be afraid to let our constituents know therefore the reasons behind such cuts in services. A communication strategy could be used to raise the profile of the correlation between government cuts and the reduction in public health standards
- Reduced Public Health protection statutory nuisance thresholds and in particular relating to noise nuisance from barking dogs
- Noise nuisance from the dock estate and what action was taken in this respect
- The potential for modelling to be undertaken to assess the negative impact of Government cuts on public health protection

RESOLVED:

That Steve Smith and Terry Wood be thanked for their informative presentation.

24. FINANCIAL REPORTS AND TERMINOLOGY - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from Stephan Van Arendsen, Head of Corporate Resources on financial reports and terminology.

Mr Van Arendsen focussed on the following issues:-

- Best Practice in Financial Management – The three key elements of financial management were Enabling Transformation, Supporting Performance and Delivering Accountability and that financial reporting was a key part of each of these and enabled informed decisions to be reached. The role of the Chief Financial Officer (Head of Corporate Resources) had the responsibility for “making arrangements for the administration of the Council’s financial affairs” and this included ensuring budgets were robust, the Council had adequate reserves, effective controls were in place and value for money was achieved
- The annual reporting cycle – Council, Cabinet, Audit and Governance Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) were the key elected Member bodies in the annual reporting cycle; and the distinctions between revenue and capital was described, namely that revenue related to transactions relating to the day to day running of Council services whilst capital transactions related to investing in buildings, infrastructure and expensive pieces of equipment;
- How Members engage - the Medium Term Financial Plan, normally covering 3 years, process was detailed where the aim was to identify forecast budget gaps (April – June); options were formulated that could mitigate budget gaps and linked to the Council’s Core Purpose, Framework for Change, etc. (Typically July – October); and that Members considered options and a budget package was developed (November – March); and that Budget Council agreed the annual budget for the following year and level of Council Tax (and possibly budget plans for future years) (late February / early March) and that the Budget was formally monitored throughout year – monthly starting in June and considered by the Executive Leadership Team, Strategic Leadership Board, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Aims of Financial Reporting – this was a circular process whereby the Council set out what it sought to achieve, what had been done so far e.g. what had been spent/delivered, what was anticipated to be done e.g. what did the Council think it would spend, what conclusions had been reached and what decisions need to be made
- Key Aspects – the Capital Process, Capital Programme Budget Monitoring, Council Tax and Business Rates processes were described

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Members of the Committee asked questions/made comments on the following issues:-

- A macro target for income generation
- Planning policies and procedures in place for when Government grant funding ends and the sole reliance on Council Tax and Business Rates

RESOLVED:

That Stephan Van Arendsen be thanked for his informative presentation.

25. SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND EFFECTIVENESS - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from Nicky Speed, Corporate Communications Manager on social media use and effectiveness.

Ms Speed detailed:-

- UK social media usage across the different platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter
- The forecast number of people within Sefton using social media and that this provided the Council with a big audience to tap into as people from all communities and all ages were using social media in Sefton and it was recognised as a great way to talk to our communities and to engage with them on the platforms they are using
- The ways Sefton Council was already using social media to promote our key messages/priorities, grow our audience/reach, encourage customers to self-service, signpost to events and activities, consult on plans and to share key partners' content
- That plans for the future included a social media audit, video content creation, a support channel shift and reduced calls, more focus on engagement, use for social listening, work with influencers/community groups and the provision of support for elected Members
- And concluded by requesting Members to follow the Council on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to help the Council reach customers, by sharing our messages and promoting Sefton when out and about; and that if Members were not using social media but needed help doing so then the Corporate Communications Team could facilitate this

Members of the Committee asked questions/made comments on the following issues:-

- Concern was raised about sections of the community who may miss out engaging in consultation exercises if there is an over-reliance on the use of social media; as not all people in our communities use

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social media. Furthermore for some members of our communities the cost of ICT equipment for social media use is prohibitive. Members were reassured that social media was one of a number of communications channels being used to engage with different audiences.

- Support from the Corporate Communications in the use of social media such as Facebook would be welcomed
- People expect instant responses to issues via social media; but concern was expressed that on occasions it is best to reflect on a response and obtain necessary facts before issuing a reply . Managing expectations is also important as people cannot always be on hand to answer instantly 24/7.
- Social media could be used, in a non-political way, to highlight the problems being experienced by the Council due to reductions in grants
- Sometimes it has been found that when complaints are made, via Twitter for example, the officer responding is not the officer from the service area that the complaint was about. Customer Services and the Communications team will try to answer queries on social media at the first point of contact if possible.
- A question was raised about whether frequently asked questions database existed on the website. It was recognised that FAQs are available for some services on the website where appropriate, but there was not a general FAQ.

RESOLVED:

That Nicky Speed be thanked for her informative presentation.

**26. COMMISSIONING AND THE PROCUREMENT POLICY -
PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation from Peter Moore, Head of Commissioning Support and Business Intelligence on Commissioning and the Procurement Policy.

Mr Moore detailed:-

- The Commissioning Support and Business Intelligence service's key aims of providing help with Strategy/Policy, Communications and Marketing and Change Management
- Key Work Areas in 2016-17 which included Review of CPR, Processes and Guidance, Framework for Change – PSR10, Re-focusing Performance and Intelligence and Business as usual performance and intelligence, commissioning and procurement activity
- Headline Projects in 2016/17 which included Remodelled Adult Community Day Care Services, Remodelling Supported Living Services Adult Social Care Market Analysis Exercises,

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Collaborative remodelling of Domiciliary Care Services, Dynamic Purchasing System for Children's Placements, Contract Register Improvements, Sefton People and Place Profile and Ward Profiles and Extra Care Housing Gap Analysis

- The Procurement Activity of the Procurement Team
- And the next steps which included implementation of the refreshed Commissioning Framework, Completion of Organisational Development work, Implementation of the Performance Framework, support of the Framework for Change Programme and Framework for Change – PSR 10

Members of the Committee asked questions/made comments on the following issues:-

- The Ward Profiles that had been produced was a great piece of informative work and very helpful to elected Members
- The use of Mosaic and the social value aspects of policy making
- The potential locally to ensure jobs and services were kept within Sefton

RESOLVED:

That Peter Moore be thanked for his informative presentation.

27. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2017/18

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Corporate Resources that advised of the current forecast revenue outturn position for the Council for 2017/18 as at the end of August and that this forecast would be informed by the latest analysis of expenditure and income due to the Council, in addition to the progress in delivering approved savings; the current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2017/18; and the current position of the Capital Programme.

The report indicated that Budget Council in March 2017 approved a 3 year budget package that would seek to address the funding shortfall of £64m that had been reported throughout 2016; that following a review of all financial assumptions and the proposals contained within the Framework for Change programme, savings of £24.922m were identified that would need to be delivered in 2017/18; that this position included a number of measures that were approved to phase the delivery of the public sector reform savings over the course of the 3 year period; and that an assessment of the forecast revenue outturn position for 2017/18 and the latest position on the achievement of the agreed Public Sector Reform savings for 2017/18 (£4.573m) were detailed in section 2 and Appendix A attached to the report.

With regard to Council Tax the report indicated that income was shared between the billing authority (Sefton Council) and the two major precepting

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authorities (the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner) pro-rata to their demand on the Collection Fund; that the Council's Budget included a Council Tax Requirement of £118.748m for 2017/18 (including Parish Precepts) which represented 85.8% of the net Council Tax income of £138.431m; and that the forecast outturn at the end of August 2017 was a surplus of £0.381m and that due to Collection Fund regulations, the Council Tax surplus would not be transferred to the General Fund in 2017/18 but would be carried forward to be distributed in future years.

With regard to Business Rates the report indicated that Since 1 April 2013 the Council had retained a share of Business Rates income and the share had increased from 49% in 2016/17 to 99% in 2017/18 as a result of its participation in the Liverpool City Region Business Rates 100% Retention Pilot Agreement; that the Government's share of business rates had reduced from 50% in 2016/17 to 0% in 2017/18 however, they continued to be responsible for 50% of the deficit outstanding at the 31 March 2017 and the Fire and Rescue Authority retained the other 1% and that the forecast outturn at the end of August 2017 was a deficit of £0.733m and as with Council Tax, due to Collection Fund regulations, the Business Rates deficit would not be transferred to the General Fund in 2017/18 but would be carried forward to be recovered in future years.

With regard to the Capital Programme the report indicated that the approved capital budget for 2017/18 was £26.610m and that this had increased by £0.523m from the previous month due to the addition of 2 schemes approved by Cabinet on 27 July 2017 namely, £0.455m for the first year of the new 4 year Sustainable Transport Enhancement Package programme and £0.068m that related to an Environment Agency Grant for a review of the Crosby to Formby Point defence strategy; and that as part of the monthly review project it was now anticipated that £24.135m would be spent by year end resulting in an under spend on the year of £2.475m on the whole programme with an overall delivery rate of 91%.

Members of the Committee asked questions/made comments on the following issues:-

- The Council's strategic investment in the Strand Shopping Centre and its effect on the Council's borrowing commitment; information was sought on when elected Members would be provided with full details of the costs of the purchase of the centre; and a comment was made about the income obtained from the Strand investment being included in the Council's budget

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the forecast deficit outturn position of £0.843m as at the end of August 2017 be noted;
- (2) the progress to date on the achievement of approved Public Sector

Reform savings for 2017/18 be noted;

- (3) the forecast position on the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates for 2017/18 be noted; and
- (4) the current progress in the delivery of the 2017/18 Capital Programme be noted.

28. LEVELS OF DISCIPLINARY, GRIEVANCE AND SICKNESS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Corporate Resources that provided information on the levels of discipline, grievance and sickness absence within the Council (excluding schools).

The report indicated that based on current records the total number of 'available days', from 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2017, was 151,508 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) days; that the total sickness absence, both long and short term, was 6,543 FTE days which equated to 4.32%; that this comprised 1.46% short term and 2.86% long term absences; and that the overall Corporate target was 4% (short term 2.2%; long term 1.8%), and that this was a reduction compared to Q1 2016 which was 5.07%.

Annex 1 attached to the report illustrated departmental performance for the Quarter 1 period; whilst Annex 2 provided data across a period of 12 months to 30 June 2017 and therefore provided a wider analysis of absence levels across departments; but however, organisational change within Sefton would impact on making direct comparisons across departments. Support was provided across all service areas and it should be noted that a number of service areas were showing a reduction in absence at this stage.

The report also provided information on the reasons for absence and referral to the Health Unit in Quarter 1 2017; indicated that the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) continued to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long term absence; the Sickness Absence Policy that operated in partnership with trade unions to manage employee absence; and with regard to Disciplinary, Grievance And Capability issues, Annex 3 attached to the report provided a breakdown of formal cases for November 2016 to September 2017.

Members of the Committee asked questions/made comments on the following issues:-

- Trends in the types of sickness absence i.e. mental health or musculoskeletal
- The financial costs to the Council of not meeting the corporate sickness absence target

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- (1) the report on the levels of discipline, grievance and sickness absence within the Council (excluding schools) be noted;
- (2) the latest information in respect of ongoing work be noted; and
- (3) the particular initiatives currently being implemented relative to the management of sickness absence be noted.

29. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

Further to Minute No. 12 (3) of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) held on 7 September 2017 the Committee considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance on the proposed procedure to be adopted by Overview and Scrutiny Committees when considering a decision that had been called in.

The report indicated that following consideration of a called-in item the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) resolved to refer the Procedure Note for “call-in” to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for consideration; that the Management Board considered the current Procedure Note, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, on 26 September 2017; and resolved that the amended Procedure Note, attached as Appendix 2 to the report, be referred to all four Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a recommendation to adopt the amended Procedure Note.

RESOLVED:

That the amended “call-in” Procedure Note, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, be adopted as the procedure to be followed by Overview and Scrutiny Committees when considering a decision that has been called-in.

**30. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18, SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPICS
AND KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance that updated on the draft Work Programme for 2017/18; topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by a Working Group(s) appointed by the Committee; and seeking the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan.

The latest Forward Plan covering the period 1 December 2017 to 31 March 2018 was published on 31 October 2017 and this was circulated to Members at the meeting.

Members were advised that in relation to the Digital Inclusion Working Group, the objectives of the ICT Development Programme were being finalised and thereafter they could be included in the Working Group’s Scoping Document. It was therefore recommended that the Scoping Document be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for approval.

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RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2017/18 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and
- (2) The Digital Inclusion Working Group's Scoping Document be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 16 January 2018 for approval

31. CABINET MEMBER REPORT – AUGUST 2017 TO OCTOBER 2017

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance that included the most recent report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services presented her report to the Committee.

Members asked questions/raised issues on the following matter:-

- The anticipated costs for the Eco Centre wind turbine repair/renewal and an indication when necessary works would be undertaken

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update report from the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be noted; and
- (2) Councillor Lappin be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.