

**Minutes of the Budget and Corporate
Scrutiny Management Board**

**3rd April, 2019 at 3.30pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillors P Hughes (Chair);
Councillors E M Giles and Underhill.

Apologies: Councillors Ahmed and Rollins.

In attendance: D Carter (Executive Director – Resources);
R Griffiths (Strategic Finance Manager);
C Davey (Business Partner – Adults);
S Lilley (Business Partner – Finance).

6/19 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th February, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

7/19 **2018/19 Budget Monitoring – Quarter 3**

The Cabinet, at its meeting on 20th February 2019, had referred the Council-wide budget monitoring report for Quarter 3 for consideration by the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.

Details of the Council's revenue and capital expenditure as at the end of December 2018 were received by the Board.

At a service level, excluding Public Health and the Housing Revenue Account, there was a forecast year-end surplus of £3.652m made up as follows:

Corporate Management – balanced budget;
Resources – surplus of £1.656m;
Adults Social Care – surplus of £1.640m;
Children's Services – deficit of £0.138m;
Regeneration and Growth – balanced budget;

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Housing and Communities – deficit of £0.098m;
Central Items – surplus of £0.592m.

In addition, there was a projected year end surplus of £0.454m within Public Health that related to ring fenced funds carried forward from previous years.

The Board noted the reasons for the variances at the end of Quarter 3 for each service area.

The forecast outturn for individual directorates assumed the use of some Corporate Resources to support expenditure. This meant that the projected year-end surplus for the Council would be £2.832m.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

General Comments on Budget Monitoring

- The Council had a long-established approach for financial management involving teamwork between elected members and officers.
- There was a culture of strong financial control embedded through the Council, with finance business partners attending management teams and individual budget holders taking their responsibilities seriously.

Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

- The Council was planning to change the way in which it obtained Disclosure and Barring Service checks for private hire and taxi drivers. Previously, this was done every three years, but the Council intended to switch to automatically being informed of any changes.
- It was anticipated that the underspend within the main programme and grants/self-financing capital projects within Adult Social Care would be on target by year end.

Children's Services

- The reserve relating to the former Sandwell Safeguarding Children's Board (SSCB) had been released to the Children's Trust. The reserve was ring-fenced and could only be used on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements which had replaced the SSCB. The Executive Director – Resources

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undertook to liaise with the Chief Executive of the Trust about the safeguards that would be in place to ensure the effective ring-fencing of the resources.

- The Children's Trust was experiencing increased numbers of children in care, which placed additional pressures on the Trust.

Neighbourhoods

- There were planned restructures in Economic Regeneration and Planning Services. The Scrutiny Management Board asked for these to be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Board prior to any decisions being made.
- The capital programme Access Fund within Regeneration and Growth was required to fund any disabled adaptations that may be identified as required at various Council premises within the borough.
- The Scrutiny Management Board asked for a report on the difficulty being experienced in recruitment and retention of staff for the Contact Centre.
- The legacy plan for the Aquatics Centre and the Commonwealth Games was now starting to be developed and the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board had discussed the approach being taken at a recent meeting.
- Section 106 monitoring would be reported to quarterly town member meetings in line with a recommendation from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Resources

- Templink, the Council's temporary worker agency, was projecting a year-end deficit. The viability of traded services was being reviewed and it was anticipated that a report would be submitted to the Cabinet within the next 12 months. The Scrutiny Management Board asked for this to be brought back for scrutiny prior to the report going to Cabinet.
- The replacement of the E-Business financial suite was required due to the supplier informing the Council that the version it was running would cease to be supported. The Council was conducting an options appraisal and had sought advice from other local authorities that had recently replaced their systems.

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- The first phase of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) refresh project had been completed.

Housing Revenue Account

- When the Council refurbished tower blocks it was installing the require infrastructure for installing CCTV to enable future installation of such systems to take place.

The Board thanked officers for attending the meeting and for their hard work in relation to the Council's finances.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the following reports be included in the work programme for the relevant Scrutiny Boards to allow for pre-decision scrutiny of the topics:-
 - (a) restructures in Economic Regeneration and Planning Services;
 - (b) the outcomes of the review of traded services;
- (2) that the work programme for the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board include a report on the recruitment and retention of staff at the Council's Contact Centre.

(Councillor P Hughes declared a non-pecuniary interest in so far as he was a member of the Friends of Brunswick Park.)

(Meeting ended at 5.17 pm)

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