

Minutes of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

19th February, 2020 at 5.18pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor L Giles (Chair);
Councillors E M Giles, Moore and Rollins.

Apology: Councillor Singh.

In attendance: D Stevens (Chief Executive);
D Carter (Executive Director – Resources);
L Hagger (Executive Director – Children’s Services);
S Lackenby (Executive Director – Adult Social Care,
Health and Wellbeing);
A Caddick (Director – Housing and Communities);
C Davey (Finance Business Partner);
S Lilley (Finance Business Partner);
N Phagura (Finance Business Partner);
S Sprung (Senior Lead Officer – Resources).

1/20 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2019 be approved as a correct record.

2/20 **Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23 Provisional Settlement**

The Cabinet, at its meeting on 5th February 2020, had referred the Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23 Provisional Settlement for consideration by the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.

Members were informed of the detail of the 2020/21 provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which had been announced by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 20th December 2019.

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The key headlines included:-

- an additional £1.5billion of funding for social care. £1billion of this was additional funding through the social care grant, which replaced the Adult Social Care Grant and Winter Pressures Grant. Councils were expected to fund the remaining £0.5billion through a 2% precept increase;
- revenue support grant and business rates baseline had been increase in line with inflation;
- the limit for which the Council must hold a referendum to increase Council tax had reduced from 3% to 2%;
- New Homes Bonus baseline continued to be 0.4% and a consultation would be held on the future of this funding;
- continuation of the Independent Living Fund.

The provisional settlement was broadly in line with the prudent planning assumptions set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

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

- The Council continued to work with Sandwell Children's Trust and a further report would be brought to the Scrutiny Management Board on an agreed medium term financial strategy.
- Special Needs transport remained a budget pressure.
- Due to its prudent financial planning, the Council was not required to make any cuts to services during the 2020-21 financial year.
- The Council would join the Local Government Association in lobbying the Government in relation to funding for Adult Social Care.
- The Government had not yet released details of funding arrangements for Public Health. When further details were known, they would be reported to the Scrutiny Management Board.

3/20

Corporate Plan 2020-2025 and Budget

The Chief Executive presented the draft Corporate Plan; Big Plans for a Great Place...For the People of Sandwell – the Sandwell Plan 2020-2025. The Plan set out how the Council would deliver its part of Vision 2030 for the next five years.

The Plan set out six strategic outcomes:-

- The best start in life for children and young people;
- People live well and age well;
- Strong, resilient communities;
- Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods;
- A strong and inclusive economy;
- A connected and accessible Sandwell.

It was acknowledged that the outcomes could not be delivered by one directorate alone, so would be delivered using a 'One Team, One Council' approach. This approach moved away from the previous system of individual directorate business plans and sought to unite the Council as one team to deliver on the strategic outcomes.

The Board was also informed that member workshops had been held to gather more views and feedback on the Plan. This would be reported to the Cabinet on 26th February, 2020.

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

- It was intended for Delivery Plans to be developed, which would include targets.
- Work on the Corporate Plan had begun in autumn 2019 in line with the established business planning cycle.
- The Council had also developed the Sandwell Deal, which was a collaborative piece of work involving partners and anchor institutions in the borough. This was due to be considered by Council at its meeting in March and would be the subject of a future report to Scrutiny.

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- The language used in the plan was aimed at officers, councillors and partners. The Scrutiny Management Board felt that there needed to be a version that would be easily understandable by, and relateable for, residents.
- Communication and engagement with councillors needed to be strengthened with increased opportunities to share ideas and experiences.
- There had been a number of achievements and successes since the launch of Vision 2030 and it was important to share these with residents and partners.

The Board made a number of observations that would be submitted to Cabinet when it considered other feedback on the Corporate Plan:-

- Highlighting was not consistent throughout the document of 'we will' statements.
- There was a need to ensure tangible, measurable targets were set so that success could be measured and Cabinet Members and senior officers held to account over progress.
- The Plan was too wordy and should be made more concise and relateable for residents.
- Language used throughout the Plan may not be easily understood by residents.
- Consider development of different versions of the Plan for different audiences.
- The successes and achievements since Vision 2030 was launched needed to be recognised and shared.
- Councillors had an important role as part of One Team One Council and this should be acknowledged.

The Chair thanked officers for attending the meeting.

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Resolved that Cabinet be requested to consider the comments and observations of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board in relation to Big Plans for a Great Place...For the People of Sandwell – the Sandwell Plan 2020-2025.

(Meeting ended at 6.46 pm)

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