

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillor A Hart (Chair)

Councillors C J S Atkins, J Davies, E Fallows, M Gledhill,
N Hawkins, B A Hughes, K J Jackson, J T Jones, L A Malyon,
I Plant, T Riley, P Routledge and D Shaw

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors F R Alcock, G Bentley, D A Hall and S E Ralphs

IN ATTENDANCE: P Trafford Member & Community Services Officer
CHazeldene Deputy Director and Head of Finance
A Stokes Executive Director (Transformation) & Chief
 Finance Officer
T Cooper Head of Organisational Development and
 Transformation

APOLOGIES: Councillors P Wilkinson and N Yates

20 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY**

There were no substitute members.

21 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

At this point of the meeting, Cllr. Jackson referred to Minute 10 and asked whether, in relation to the management of the car parks in Biddulph, an update had been received from the Internal Parking Board? The Chair and Andrew Stokes confirmed that no such response had yet been received and the query would be followed up.

DECIDED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2019 be **APPROVED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22 **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS, IF ANY (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN)**

There were no urgent items.

23 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:**

There were no declarations made.

24 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY**

Question from Councillor Atkins:

Q1. Following the very positive meeting between Leek Town Council and relevant District Officers regarding the use of the trestle market building for town events on Sundays, can I be reassured that the formal approval is being sought quickly, so that planning and marketing for these events can go ahead?

Response – Councillor Ralphs, Leader of the Council

“Leek Town Council requested a meeting with SMDC Officers to discuss the promotion of VE day activities, tourism promotion and use of the Trestle market building for Leek Town Council events and activities. The meeting was held on 31st October when officers explained the current restrictions regarding capacity for events and the cost implications for hiring the Trestle Market. Leek Town Council members were advised that this meeting was to gather information and the discussion would be presented to Cabinet for a decision.

Leek Town Council were asked to present details of the proposed events in writing for consideration by Cabinet. This has now been received and officers are considering the issues regarding capacity and costs before presenting the information to the Cabinet.”

Supplementary 1 - Cllr. Atkins stressed that events were booked months in advance and the need for a timescale of approval was evident.

Cllr. Ralphs explained that, once the refurbishment and redecoration process was complete, there would be specialised stalls in place around the perimeter, with some traders’ goods left in situ. The possibility of other organisations using the Trestle Market for entertainment would be virtually non-existent.

Supplementary 2 – Given the level of investment involved and the fact that the building was unused for most of the week, this was disappointing. When would a final decision be made?

Cllr. Ralphs confirmed that a report would be presented for Cabinet and an immediate decision would be made.

Question from Councillor Yates:

Q2. Considering the potential ongoing impact over the coming winter of heavy rainfall, and the fact that all local reservoirs are already at capacity, what additional resources are being deployed by relevant agencies including SMDC to ensure that stream beds, drainage channels and soakaways are being checked and adequately cleared?

Response – Councillor Ralphs, Leader of the Council

“A number of organisations are responsible for managing flood risk in the District. Staffordshire County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority which maintains a strategy for local flood risk management in the area. The Environment Agency is responsible for the main rivers in the District whilst individual landowners are responsible for maintaining reservoirs, ditches, watercourses and culverts etc. The

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District Council is responsible for Hales Hall Pool in Cheadle for which it has a management plan in place which is regularly reviewed.

The District Council is also ready to provide support in cases of localised flooding which is provided by our Forward Control team. Residents are urged to sign up to the Government's flood warning service for the latest information. This can also be done by telephoning 0345 988 1188.

Supplementary 1 – With regard to potential problems in Biddulph, were any direct conversations taking place with Staffs County Council?

Cllr. Ralphs confirmed that discussions were ongoing with SCC and a response would be sought as soon as possible for the next Resources Panel meeting.

At this point, as the original questioner was not present, it was felt best that any further supplementary question be deferred until Cllr. Yates was able to ask it. Members would then be notified of it and any response.

Question from Councillor Plant:

Q3. SMDC gave out funding in 2018 to commemorate the end of World War One. Will the Council be making similar funds available to towns and parishes in the Staffordshire Moorlands to help them mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day in 2020?

Response: Councillor Ralphs, Leader of the Council

"The Council is considering what type of support it may provide to town and parish councils in the District with regards to marking the 75th anniversary of VE Day in 2020. The nature of such support will be determined following discussions with the various stakeholders concerned."

Councillor Plant expressed his satisfaction with the response.

25 2ND QUARTER 2019/20 FINANCIAL, PROCUREMENT & PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The report informed members of the Council's overall financial, procurement and performance position for the period ending 30 September 2019 ("Second Quarter 2019/20").

The position was summarised as follows:-

Subject	Headline	Reference
Finance	<p>The headlines for the Second Quarter were:</p> <p><i>Performance against Budget</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">At the second quarter stage the General Fund projected outturn for 2019/20 was an underspend of £9,680. <p><i>Efficiency Programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The 2019/20 general fund efficiency target of £842,000 had been exceeded with	Appendix A

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	<p style="text-align: center;">£856,260 of savings achieved to date.</p> <p><i>Capital Programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised Capital Programme budget for 2019/20 was £5.8 million including the carry forward of capital underspends from 2018/19. The projected outturn for the year was £4.0 million. <p><i>Treasury Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash investments held at 30 September 2019 totalled £12.3 million. The Ascent loan and debenture currently stood at £19 million; • Council borrowing at 30 September 2019 totalled £10 million (related to the Ascent loan); • The Council's net interest receipts were projected to be £28,000 above budget. <p><i>Revenue Collection</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56.34% of Council Tax was collected by 30 September 2019 compared to 56.69% for the same period last year; • 55.57% of Business Rates was collected by 30 September 2019 compared to 56.77% for the same period last year; • At the end of the Second Quarter debt that was over 60 days old was £67,310 compared to £99,980 at 30 September 2018. 	
Procurement	<p>The headlines for the Second Quarter were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 procurement activities were completed; • The procurement forward plan included 67 procurement activities for completion in 2019/20 (either SMDC only or joint); • At 30 September 2019, 52% of procurement activity undertaken was on the forward plan and the Council paid 96% of its invoices within 30 days during the year. 	Appendix B
Performance	<p>The headlines for the Second Quarter were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance in respect of 82% of the key performance indicators was on target; • Of the 18 Priority Actions within the Corporate Plan, 2 were still to commence, 4 were rated 'Amber', 1 rated 'Red' and the remainder were classified as 'Green'; • The Council received 18 complaints, 29 comments and 15 compliments in the Second Quarter. Repeat complaints and response times both on track. 	Appendix C

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Queries were raised and clarification given on the following:-

- Electoral Services Overspend – any cost direct to SMDC? *(No, this related to the local election held in May 2019, with the total cost of £160,000 being spread over the 4 year term of a Council.)*
- The funding received for the Disabled Facilities Grants was £352,340 over the budgeted amount. Would this be carried over to future years if not spent? Also, what was the DFG waiting list time? *(Yes, the surplus would be carried over. Waiting list details to be established and forwarded on.)*
- When would the Brough Park Children's Play facility be built? *(This featured in the Medium Term Financial Plan and budget was being arranged.)*
- What was the 'Local Business Concordat'? *(Details would be forwarded to members.)*
- Whose responsibility was it to clean highways when construction work caused problems? *(It was the builders' responsibility as part of the planning conditions, though this highlighted a wider problem in that the Staffs County Council Gully Emptying Service was ineffective. Many gullies were blocked, exacerbating the situation. SMDC carried out street cleansing, but it would be preferable if we could take on gully emptying on behalf of SCC.)*

DECIDED: That the Panel **NOTE** the Second Quarter 2019/20 financial, procurement and performance position detailed in Appendices A, B and C and summarised in the report.

26 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE

The report presented the Council's finances over the 4 year period 2020/21 – 2023/24 and set out the context for the preparation of the 2020/21 budget which would be presented for approval by the Council in February 2020. All known factors had been taken into account but caution was expressed over a number of national issues:-

1. Fair Funding review – this had been going on for a number of years and was still pending;
2. Business Rates Retention reform – the Council already benefitted through its pooling arrangements with other authorities, but there were still major uncertainties;
3. New Homes Bonus – changes were still possible.

Significant local matters to take into account were:-

1. Substantial works to be undergone at Brough Park Leisure Centre, Leek as referred to in the question to the Portfolio Holder earlier in the meeting;
2. More general changes to take place in leisure provision within the Moorlands;
3. Climate Change – an Action Plan was to be developed;
4. Fees & Charges – proposals to be developed;
5. Reserves & Balances – review.

All the above matters were detailed in the Medium Term Financial Plan, which was appended to the report.

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Members queried matters as follows (*responses in brackets*):-

- When was the refurbishment of the Smithfield Bus Station toilets to take place? Maintenance and cleaning of toilets was generally not done well enough. Could we use local people to ensure our assets are better protected? (*The order for the refurbishment works was authorised the day before this meeting, so work was to start imminently. A trial was taking place with Biddulph Town Council to manage the toilets and Town Hall at Biddulph. Discussions were also ongoing with a parish council on similar lines. The arrangement with Derbyshire County Council was nearing an end. A report was due in the near future.*)
- Provision of “Changing Places” within public toilets should be encouraged as this was a ‘draw’ for disabled visitors. (*There was to be such a facility at Rudyard Lake, meeting the required specification.*)
- Leisure improvements – how would we monitor this? How much would SMDC be putting in? The proposals appeared to be merely ‘titivation’. (*The current Parkwood contract was for 5 years on a reduced fee to give time for full consideration. The report identified works as follows:-
Cheadle – replace the entire Leisure Centre
Leek – replace the Swimming Pool and refurbish the dry side
Biddulph – general investment was needed
The likely sum required for the works was £19m. Partnerships were being sought in the Health/Education/Private Sector/National Grant Funding fields. The existing Cheadle site could be used or an alternative location. Would we continue with a contract or would the centres be run by local Trusts?(Sports agencies looked upon Trusts far more favourably in terms of grant allocation). The HPBC contract was ending at the same time, so economies of scale could apply. It was clear at this early stage that external support (investment) was essential. Parkwood had to operate at a profit and were branding their Leisure Centres in a local way to increase the appeal.*)
- The Victoria Business Park was now almost full (1 unit left). Where would other new businesses go? Should SMDC take ownership of the last unit in order to refer businesses to the ‘Mill Quarter’? (*This information would be fed back to the SMDC Regeneration section.*)

DECIDED – That the Medium Term Financial Plan as appended to the report be **ENDORSED** with the recommendation that it should proceed to Cabinet for **APPROVAL**.

27

CORPORATE PLAN: COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK UPDATE

The Corporate Plan 2019-2023 was adopted at Full Council on 16 October 2019 and set out the high level aims and objectives for the district and the specific priority actions to be undertaken over the life of the plan. The report set out the proposed communication and engagement process for the plan and gave a progress update on work done so far to create new performance framework, together with the next steps for member engagement in the process.

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The Communication and Engagement Plan and New Performance Measures (gap analysis) were appended to the report and the intention was to bring both back to the Panel's February 2020 meeting, with a view to commencing performance recording in 2020/21.

DECIDED – That the Panel **NOTE** the report.

28 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Andrew Stokes advised that a report on the Empty Property Strategy would be presented to the February 2020 Panel.

DECIDED – That the Work Programme for the remainder of 2019/20 be **AGREED**.

29 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

DECIDED:-

That pursuant to Section 100A (2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that exempt information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 100I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the paragraphs indicated

30 **EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting closed at 11.20 am

_____Chairman _____Date