

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 2016

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 2016 at 1.00 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor John Mounsey
Vice-Chair – Councillor Charlie Hogarth

Councillors John Cooke, Richard A Jones, Jane Kidd, Craig Sahman, Kevin Rodgers and Jane Cox

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Steve Mawson, Assistant Director of Finance

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rachel Hodson, Tony Revill, Neil Gethin and Cynthia Ransome

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	Councillor Richard Allan Jones declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) by virtue that he was a member of the St Leger Board. Councillor Jane Kidd declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Revenue Budget report by virtue that she worked for a Voluntary Sector Organisation (SYCIL).	
2	<u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 16TH SEPTEMBER AND 10TH DECEMBER, 2015 .</u>	
	<u>RESOLVED</u> that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 16th September and 10th December, 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
3	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	

	<p>Mr Ivan Stark made a statement raising his concern with regard to safeguarding and the effect the budget cuts have had in relation to Housing. The Chair, Councillor John Mounsey stated that Mr Stark was referring to the Council's key outcomes highlighted at page 136-137 of the Housing Revenue Account report and pointed out that this was a key Mayoral priority albeit the pressures that had been placed on the budgets. He stated that the 1% reduction would have an effect on this but there was a need to recognise those pressures. Mr Stark was thanked for his statement.</p>	
4	<p><u>2016/17 BUDGET PROPOSALS - OSMC CONSULTATION (REPORT TO FOLLOW)</u></p>	
	<p>The Committee considered a report which would assist members in agreeing its response to the Mayor's draft budget proposals for 2016/17 and to enable the Mayor to take account of these when presenting the proposals to Council on 1st March, 2016. It was noted that in agreeing its response, Members would consider the views and comments expressed at the budget session held on 27th January, 2016. Members had received a copy of the Budget reports which were due to be considered by Cabinet on the 16th February, 2016.</p> <p>It was reported that prior to receiving the Mayor's budget proposals, the Committee had agreed that its focus would be reviewing the evidence base for the proposals and their alignment with Borough priorities. It was noted that this would assist in helping to focus on the outcomes and impact that the budget sought to achieve, how services would be delivered in the future and whether the Council was achieving value for money.</p> <p>The three key areas for consideration were:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do the proposals conflict with the Borough Strategy priorities in any way? 2. Is money being put into the areas that were originally proposed?; and 3. What consultation had been undertaken and were the proposals deliverable? <p>Since the report had been published, it was reported that there had been some changes following the Ministers Speech which were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final settlement had been issued although there was no change to the figures for the Revenue there were some changes happening nationally i.e. rural transition grant. It was highlighted that the Council did not have any investment in this scheme; and 	

- The Public Health Grant would be reduced by £243,000. It was noted that this would be reflected in the final report for Council.

The Chair stated that each report would be taken in turn and Members would be afforded the opportunity to make comments and ask questions.

Members raised a number of questions and sought assurance and clarity on the following:-

Revenue Budget

- Future year proposals now the Council were in the 3rd year of the 3 year Strategy. It was advised officers would be working with the Executive and had set a meeting for the 21 March to start looking at proposals for the future years.
- Funding for DIAL and staff redundancies - It was pointed out that DIAL was not a grant but was a commissioned service. Members were advised that they had received a 6 month extension and were currently still out to tender on the current service. With regard to redundancies letter, this would be investigated and reported back.
- The Governments offer of a 4 year funding settlement - It was reported that this decision would fall within the Executive/Section 151 officer responsibility. It was advised that the Council would not be worse off if they were to take the offer. It was noted that the details would be checked before reporting back to Members.
- Adult Social Care overspend and the proposed 2% levy for the service effecting the increase in Council Tax
- Consultation and engagement with the public etc on service transformation
- National Living Wage
- Slippages – It was recognised that the biggest challenges were presented through Assets and Adult Social Care. In respect of how slippages could be avoided for future years – It was reported that there was funding set aside for slippage but it was important that if managers identified areas of slippage they were to advise finance in order to deal with the issue as soon as possible.
- Digital Council Programme – Members were advised that the function had now been strengthened and was delivering positive results.
- Children’s Trust overspend and associated risks. It was advised that the overspend had been monitored closely and through the Annual Review Process, it was important for all to be aware of and understand the ‘care ladder’. It was stated that some services such as fostering/adoption were perceived to be

cheaper which would minimise what spends were made. It was expected that further work would be needed. In relation to the risk share, it was envisaged that would reduce to nil for the Council as it would reduce overtime.

- Loss of funding of 1% per year for social rents

Fees and Charges

- Inflation on Bereavement charges – It was advised that as far as possible changes would not be made over the 3 year period but it needed to be noted that this was an income generator for the Council.
- Inconsistency with Car Parking Charges – Concerns were raised with regard to inconsistencies and whether this was the result of slippage. It was advised that there had been some slippage and concerns had been raised in relation to the Carpark at Mexborough. It was advised that the Council were working with the traders to address the problem. It had been deemed that it wouldn't be appropriate to increase Car parking fees as the car park was not fully utilised. If the carpark was brought back into proper use then a fee would be introduced. With regard to Home Care/Day Care car park, the Council would subsidise that cost and overtime that subsidy would be removed. It was advised that the 2016/17 cost had not been negotiated as yet.

Capital Programme

- Expenditure on the Safer Road Initiative – A query was raised with regard to the expenditure for the initiative and whether it had been implemented. It was advised that Capital monies was a one-off expenditure which can be spread out for various schemes.
- Capital Investment for specific schemes – In relation to specific schemes a prioritisation method is used and the funding goes towards where it is most needed. There is a need to manage with the resources we have available and provide better routine maintenance. It also provides greater flexibility across the Borough.
- Road and Highway Maintenance – It was advised that market testing was carried out but often in-house providers were better. It was advised that PFI Scheme can be used for road maintenance but this ties councils financially for future years.
- Investment for Community Buildings i.e. Libraries – It was advised that the funding would come from a combination of Capital/Revenue.
- Business Rates retention
- Borough Investment Fund /Minimum Review Position - A brief summary was provided to members with regard to the Borough Investment Fund/Minimum Review Position and it was

highlighted that this was explained further within the Treasury Management Report submitted to Cabinet and for final approval at Full Council on the 1st March 2016.

Following the detailed discussion in relation to the above points the Committee agreed its recommendations as follows:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) Opportunities for growth within the borough arising from Capital investment are maximised particularly promoting job opportunities, upskilling and addressing low wages;
- (2) Key risks to the delivery of the budget continue to be identified and effectively managed, in particular within Adult Social Care, to make sure they do not adversely impact on the Council's ability to meet its savings target;
- (3) Subject to the agreement of the proposal to include a further increase to Council Tax through the new 2% Social Care levy, consideration be given to a review being undertaken to identify what benefits would be passed on to Doncaster residents as a result of the monies raised;
- (4) It was acknowledged that when developing and agreeing savings targets consideration be given to how the delivery of services would impact on the most vulnerable residents in the Borough. Members therefore supported a continued and robust approach to meaningful consultation and engagement with the wider public and other stakeholders where major service transformation was taking place, to ensure any decisions were well informed. OSMC recognised that consultation had taken place on a number of key areas such as residential homes, Digital Council, modern workforce and Early Help and should remain a key feature of any decision making processes;
- (5) The Committee recognised the need to ensure effective horizon scanning to ensure the Council respond appropriately to future changes nationally and locally. In particular Members recognised the uncertainty and risks for the Council from 2020 with 100% Business Rate retention and reduction of central government funding. Members requested they be kept informed of the emerging issues arising from changes to Business Rate retention and the impacts this would have on the Council and its ability to deliver services;

	<p>(6) It was acknowledged there was a need to ensure effective plans were in place to reduce overspends in Adult Social Care and to control the amount of spend over coming years by redesigning services and modernising;</p> <p>(7) The Committee support the view that where possible those employed within social care contracts would receive the Government’s National Living Wage, and influence their employer to use the national living wage following its introduction from 1st April 2016 for those aged 25 and over;</p> <p>(8) The Committee recognise the need to build up and carefully monitor reserves, to support essential transformation of services and address any slippage or key risks that may arise;</p> <p>(9) Concern was raised about the significant loss of funding arising from changes to social rents (a reduction of 1% per year for the next 4 years) and how this would significantly reduce the Councils plans for building social houses by approximately 3000 properties; and</p> <p>(10) The Committee recognised that this was year 3 of the original three year budget strategy and plans to meet savings targets had been identified. Members fully appreciated the difficulties in achieving these savings whilst delivering services and meeting the Borough’s stated priorities. It was acknowledged that significant plans would need to be in place to deliver substantial savings during the period 2017-2021 and Members identified they should have a key role in helping to inform and contribute to this overall strategy.</p> <p>In conclusion, the Chair took the opportunity of thanking Steve Mawson, Assistant Director of Finance and the public for attending the Committees budget review sessions, answering questions and providing clarification on issues raised by the Committee.</p>	
5	<p><u>REVIEW AND REFRESH OF THE CALL-IN PROCESS</u></p>	
	<p>The Committee received a report requesting that Members consider revisions to the Call-In process and the Overview and Scrutiny Protocol to ensure that it remained robust and fit for purpose.</p> <p>Members were advised that to promote good governance was essential that checks and balances exist within the decision making process to enable decision makers to be publicly held to account. It was also advised that the Constitution also encourages regular review</p>	

of processes and procedures such as Call In to ensure they remain appropriate.

The proposed changes within the report take into account comments and views expressed over the last municipal year to strengthen current arrangement and ensure there was clarity and understanding of what was required from all parties involved in the process. The report also took into account of the number of Members able to trigger Call In following a reduction of elected Members from 63 to 55. The most significant changes were identified within the body of the report and summarised within the table attached at Appendix A. It was also noted that the proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Protocol were also attached at Appendix B of the report.

It was noted that the changes regarding the change in the trigger for Call-In would need to be approved by Full Council.

Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions/raise comments.

The Committee welcomed the report and agreed that the trigger for Call-In needed to be revised. It was suggested that a simple flow-chart following the process for be produced for members guidance.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the Committee recommend to Council the proposed amendment to Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9(d):-

At any time the call-in period any 4 Members of the Council (provided that not all the Members are from the same Political Group), or any 5 Members of the Council from the same Political Group, may trigger a call in by satisfactorily completing and signing a form approved by the Council for this purpose and delivered to the Monitoring Officer within the required timescales. The Monitoring Officer would rule on the validity of the Call In; and

- (2) the proposed revisions to the Call In protocol and process detailed at Appendix B to the report be agreed.