



Doncaster Council

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Tuesday, 26th February, 2019 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Friday, 1st March, 2019

The end of the call in period is 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 12th March, 2019 and therefore, the decisions can be implemented on Wednesday, 13th March, 2019.

Present:

Chair - Mayor Ros Jones (Mayor of Doncaster with responsibility for Budget and Policy Framework)

Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities)

Cabinet Member for:

Councillor Nigel Ball	Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Leisure and Culture
Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services
Councillor Rachael Blake	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care
Councillor Nuala Fennelly	Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
Councillor Chris McGuinness	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment
Councillor Bill Mordue	Portfolio Holder for Business, Skills and Economic Development
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio Holder for Customer and Corporate Services.

PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS

Public Questions and Statements

There were no public questions or statements made at the meeting.

Decision Records dated 12th February, 2019, (previously circulated) were noted.

DECISION 1

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

6. 2018-19 Quarter 3 Finance and Performance Improvement Report and 'Delivering for Doncaster' Booklet.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet:-

- (1) noted the Quarter 3 performance and financial information, including the changes to the Strategic Risk, as detailed in paragraphs 42 to 45 and Appendix B to the report;
- (2) approved the new additions to the Capital Programme, as detailed in the Finance Profile at Appendix A to the report;
- (3) gave approval to provide £0.6m funding to the Doncaster Children's Services Trust, based on the projected overspend for 2018/19, as detailed at paragraph 34; and
- (4) approved the carry forward of one-off staffing underspends in Corporate Resources to 2019/20 for temporary staffing of critical technology projects, as detailed in paragraph 36 of the report.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Mayor Ros Jones introduced a report which focused on the Quarter 3 financial and performance information, providing the Council's current monitoring position in 2018/19 and also provided an overview of the Council's performance as at the end of December 2018.

The Mayor reported that this quarter saw the organisation in an enviable position, with both a balanced financial position for 2018/19 and consistently good performance. At Quarter 3, the Council was forecasting a £0.0m break-even position at year-end. This was an improvement of £0.3m compared to the Quarter 2 forecasted budget position, which was good news. However, she highlighted that the Council still faced significant financial challenges within Social Care, which was a position that was consistent with the outlook nationally. The Mayor stated that the Council was currently managing this situation by using one-off funding, but emphasised that this was not a sustainable plan and that financial planning for future years remained a challenge for the authority. She made reference to the Children's Services spending, which was in excess of its budget.

The Mayor stressed that it was time for central Government to act accordingly and stop raising the Council Tax, putting the burden on those people who were less able to afford it.

Cabinet recognised that there were some 'green shoots' emerging, with an improved and rising wage rate, which was welcomed, however, it was acknowledged that this indicator could and did fluctuate.

The Mayor advised that given the wider economic position, the Council must remain on plan as economic conditions were becoming increasingly challenging. National figures showed that the UK GDP growth was at its lowest since 2012. The Council also faced the uncertainty of Brexit, which had implications for both the national and the local economy. The Council's new Inclusive Growth Strategy helped provide the Council with direction to build upon existing strengths of Doncaster's economy.

The Mayor also recognised that there were societal challenges in relation to educational attainment and attendance, which the Council's creative approach to learning and inclusion, with the 'Big Picture Learning' project, would help to target. She emphasised that the Council cannot fix such issues alone, so must work closer with its partners, schools, academies and its communities, to get the best outcomes for young people, which would lead to better jobs, housing and improved economy for the Borough.

To conclude, the Mayor was pleased to observe that the Council was performing well on the issues that could directly influence, however she highlighted that there were more complex performance issues which required both innovative and combined partnership solutions, which were deep rooted issues and the Council could not solve them on its own and emphasised that strong partnership work was essential.

The Mayor invited questions from Cabinet Members.

Councillor Joe Blackham questioned the performance indicator "the percentage of pupils accessing 'good' or 'better' education", which he believed was inconsistent with a 7% improvement highlighted in the report narrative.

The Director of People, Damian Allen explained that the Council performance indicator tracks improvement in schools which have recently had an OFSTED inspection. This can prove misleading as all recently transferring academies have not had an inspection so this skew the figures unfairly.

Councillor Joe Blackham asked for local indicators to be provided in future reports, which was agreed.

Mayor Ros Jones referred to the overspend forecast in Children's Services and in noting the additional high costs for temporary placements outlined in the report and asked whether this was a temporary position. The Chief Financial Officer advised that the Council was meeting with the Children's Trust on a monthly basis to ensure that the costs of any placements were reflected in the figures in future. At the year end the figures were stable and improvements would be tracked across the Care ladder modelling.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones was pleased to note that the average resident-based weekly wage rates had increased by £39.60, from £480 in 2017/18 to £519.60 in 2018/19, which was to be welcomed. However, he sought assurance as to the accuracy of the figures as presented which was provided by officers explaining that all Local Authorities use survey data to determine these figures.

Whilst the figure was volatile, the Mayor was pleased that wage rates were moving in the right direction and spoke of the need to get a higher skilled workforce.

The Chief Executive, Jo Miller referred to the current level of funding the Council has compared to previous years, commenting that Doncaster and local authorities in the north had been treated unfairly compared to other local authorities in the country, which in her view was mendacious. She highlighted her concerns in terms of future performance of the workforce, partners and volunteers, as more and more people were volunteering their support in Doncaster. She commented that there was something special about how Doncaster people were responding during these difficult times. She reported that recent independent research had shown Barnsley, Liverpool and Doncaster were the three worst hit places in the country. The Chief Executive paid tribute to everyone for being determined and steadfast. She emphasised that the challenges for local authorities were becoming increasingly difficult but that Central Government appeared to have no long term plan for local government finances. The Chief Executive paid tribute to all for their contributions to date but emphasised that Councils could not continue in this precarious way.

In summary, the Mayor spoke of the difficult funding position Doncaster found itself in due to Central Government cuts and changes. However, she advised that the Council would continue to work closely with Doncaster businesses to stimulate Doncaster's economy.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

There were no other alternatives considered or rejected.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt.

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources.

DECISION 2

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

7. SLHD Performance and Delivery Update: 2018/19 Quarter Three (Q3)

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet noted the progress of SLHD performance outcomes and the contribution SLHD made to supporting the Council's strategic priorities and agreed to the alignment of tolerances with Doncaster Council for 2019/20.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered the St. Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) Performance and Delivery Update for 2018/19 Quarter 3, introduced by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, Cabinet Member for Housing and Equalities.

It was reported that 8 key performance indicators were green (on target), 3 were Amber (within acceptable tolerance levels) and 2 were Red (below target). Tolerances for Amber differed from similar DMBC KPIs. SLHD had been asked to bring their tolerance measures into line with the Council and these would be brought into line for the 2019/20 reporting year, as it was not efficient use of time to change $\frac{3}{4}$ the way through the year and doesn't enable consistency for measuring quarter against quarter.

The Deputy Mayor reported on the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and summarised those areas performing well, those below target and those within tolerance levels:-

KPI 1: Current Rent Arrears against Annual Debit

Rent arrears continued to show red against a very stretching target of 2.95%. An increase in arrears was forecast around Christmas time, and pro-active measures were taken to minimise this, including the sending of 4,500 letters, texts and emails to those who didn't pay at the same time last year and for the first time, debit-card payments were taken over the phone by the repairs technical support team during main office closure resulting in an additional 97 transactions worth £22k. The transfer on to Universal Credit (UC) remained higher than originally forecast by the Department of Works and Pensions and SLHD now have nearly 3,000 tenants on UC and this year are having to collect an extra £9m in rent that previously would have been paid direct through Housing Benefit.

KPI 2 and 3: Void Rent Loss and Re-let time

Is on target (green) and continues to perform well but has slipped slightly due to the Christmas break.

KPI 4 - Use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B)

The number of households in B&B reduced in Q3 compared to Q2 but remained high despite the increase in dispersed general needs accommodation to 82 units distributed throughout the Borough.

KPI 7 - Complaints

There was a 20% increase in interactions with tenants in Q3 compared to Q2 with there being a total of 97,000 interactions, out of which there were 240 complaints of which 79 were upheld, which was a slight increase in complaints. Work had been undertaken with the teams in consultation with the Unions and remained on track to achieve the year-end target.

KPI 8, 9 & 10

Repairs continued to perform well.

KPI 11 - Days lost to sickness

Remained red and SLHD were forecasting 9.05 days against a target of 7.9 days. It was noted that stress and anxiety was the biggest reason for sickness, with work related stress being the reason for 9.7% of absences, personal stress 15%

Cabinet was informed that SLHD was currently undertaking a review of their Sickness Policy, in consultation with the Unions. To conclude, the Deputy Mayor advised that overall, despite a series of stretching targets, SLHD continued to perform well.

Cabinet Members were invited to ask questions in relation to the report.

Councillor Joe Blackham referred to the percentage of current rent arrears (KPI 1) and the problems created due to the roll out of Universal Credit. It was observed that more people were moving on to Universal Credit, which was problematic for the Council and the rent money being collected by SLHD currently stood at £9m. Councillor Blackham asked whether in future the monies SLHD would have to collect would increase to £24m which would create difficulties collecting rent, despite the efforts being made to deal with the problem.

The Chief Executive for SLHD confirmed that by the time Universal Credit had been completely rolled out, SLHD would have to collect an additional £24m in rent. He advised that SLHD had put in place additional resources and support for affected tenants, with a Tenancy Sustainability Team to support those tenants who were at risk of being unable to pay their rent, and providing money management help and assistance back into work through the “World of Work” programme.

Mayor Ros Jones emphasised that the Council would continue to work with tenants to help sustain people in their homes, where possible. She reported that the Council aims to utilise Housing Revenue Account funding to bring about more social housing and to build the right type and calibre of housing, to help to address homelessness.

The Mayor wished to place on record her thanks to both DMBC and SLHD staff for their hard work and efforts to achieve the strong levels of performance highlighted in the reports.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

There were no other alternatives considered or rejected.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Paul Tanney, Chief Executive Officer, St. Leger Homes of Doncaster.

Signed.....Chair/Decision Maker