

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 2022

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 2022 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors John Healy, Majid Khan, Sarah Smith, Nigel Cannings and Tim Needham

Co-optees – Antoinette Drinkhill (Church of England Education representative)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Other Councillors;

- Councillor Martin Greenhalgh

Officers;

- Debbie Hogg, Director Corporate Resources
- Faye Tyas, Assistant Director Finance
- Dan Swaine Director of Economy & Environment
- Lee Golze – Assistant Director - Partnerships, Early Interventions & Localities
- Allan Wiltshire - Head of Policy Performance & Intelligence
- Rob Moore - Director of Corporate Resources & Company Secretary (DCST)
- Phil Holmes, Director of Adults Health and Well-being
- Rachael Leslie, Deputy Director of Public Health

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Hempshall and David Nevett.	
2	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	There were no items where the press and public should be excluded from the meeting.	
3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	

	There were no declarations made at the meeting.	
4	<u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 2ND DECEMBER 2021</u>	
	<u>RESOLVED</u> that the minutes of the meeting dated 2 nd December 2021, be agreed and signed as a correct report.	
5	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements.	
6	<u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CONSIDERATION OF THE MAYOR'S BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23 - 2025/26</u>	
	<p>Members received the Mayor's draft budget proposals 2022/23 to 2024/25, to consider and provide a response prior to the Mayor presenting her proposals to Full Council on 28th February, 2022.</p> <p>To ensure the Committee added value to the Council's budget setting process, discussions focused on the following four issues:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. To what extent are the Mayor's proposals in line with Central Government policy, pressures and directives? ii. To what extent will the Mayor's proposal ensure that the Council was able to contribute to the outcomes detailed within Doncaster Delivering Together and the Corporate Plan bearing in mind the constraints detailed at i. above? iii. To what extent do the Mayor's proposals demonstrate that the results of any consultation, research or other evidence have been taken into account? and iv. To what extent were the challenges in delivering the savings within the timescales. <p>The Committee questioned a number of key areas relating to risk and challenges, in addition to existing and emerging pressures, which were addressed in detail by Directors and Assistant Directors including the Finance and Section 151 Officer. Evidence that was provided during the meeting highlighted that the budget was adequate, however, it was recognised that the budget needed to remain agile and responsive with a less traditional approach in order to meet immediate concerns and longer term aspirations.</p> <p>A number of areas discussed are set out below:</p> <p><u>DMBC/Corporate Resources</u></p> <p>The Committee recognised that there would be significant challenge in</p>	

delivering the budget proposals due to those risks detailed within the various reports and the Chief Finance Officer's comments on the robustness of the proposals in the forthcoming budget. Members heard how the proposals had been developed as part of a lengthy and robust process. It was explained the proposals focused on delivering essential services such as Children's Social Care with £5.6m in additional funding to provide adjustments for those savings that were no longer deliverable. It was also acknowledged that the proposals included specific one-off funding such as that allocated for domestic abuse services. It was noted that in total, the service budget pressures were estimated at £19.0m in 2022/23, increasing to £22.1m by 2024/25.

It was explained that although a settlement had been reached for 1 year, there was a need to consider the environment being operated in. It was commented that following a challenging 2 years, there was a need to consider an approach that would act as a bridge to the longer term. Members heard that there was an intent around longer-term financial stability to provide a sound platform to come out of the pandemic and provide change across the organisation. It was noted that Government intention was to review the funding available to local government going forward.

Inflation - It was acknowledged that inflation had been identified as a particular pressure, which would need to be taken into account as part of the proposals (equating to £13.5 million in 22/23 and rising to £31 million over 3 years). Members were informed that inflation would be monitored closely, particularly certain high cost areas for 22/23. It was noted that there was some mitigations through some of the Councils contracts, that would help provide some stability.

It was outlined that one of the key areas impacted by inflation was the rising costs of placements, particularly children's placements which was not just a national issue but also a local issue with placements rising to around £12,000 per week. It was explained that regarding Adult Social Care, there would be an announcement around intent although the Council has not been able to prepare for what those changes might be (as no detail had yet been provided). Members were informed that preparations for this had commenced alongside the Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing.

Food and Fuel Poverty - Concern was raised around the impact of food and fuel poverty on families and individuals. The Director of Corporate Resources outlined what measures the Council had in place to support this issue. These included;

- Local Council Tax Support arrangements - Members were reminded of the Mayors priority with £25M from local council tax support arrangements supporting those residents on low incomes.
- Government resources for those suffering hardship providing an extra £100, which had been increased by the authority to £300. It

was noted that benefits had been seen as part of the collection basis. It was viewed important that those arrangements be continued as part of the 2022/23 budget proposals.

- Local Assistance Scheme – The scheme provided relief for specific circumstances for those in need and an additional £450,000 for this scheme had been included within the budget proposals.
- Household Support Fund - The Government had provided this funding for Doncaster Council to support households who would otherwise struggle to buy food, pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs supporting up to 20,000 households.

Members were also informed about a poverty workstream undertaken part of the Renewal Board. It was outlined that this work would consider a more blended approach as it was recognised that poverty occurred due to a number of issues.

Delivering Children Social Care – It was acknowledged that there were significant savings to be achieved in-line with placing children within the Borough. It was noted that there was additional funding and therefore mitigations from, for example, funding allocated for Domestic Abuse navigators, preventative services as well as for specific posts to support that permanence. It was acknowledged that savings needed to be delivered and value for money taken into account but it was also a risk in terms of the national position.

Reserves – Members were assured that the Council had reviewed the level of reserves available to ensure that it had sufficient funding available. It was explained that the balance on the uncommitted General Fund reserve for 2022/23 was estimated at £15.9m; which was not considered an excessive amount and would fund the Council for 11 days and cover risks identified. Reference was also made to the Council's earmarked reserves, which was set aside for specific purposes such as transformation of Council services.

Covid – It was noted that the authority was mindful around the ongoing issues relating to Covid. It was explained that this matter had been built into assumptions around services pressures and inflation in addition to the risk assessment around ability to delivery savings and overspending.

Fees and Charges – In terms of fees and charges, it was explained that current activity had been into taken account and a detailed analysis had taken place of all those services that generated an income. It was explained that an assessment had been undertaken on the likely income levels for the future across the board, which had identified a 3% increase on fees and charges delivering around £290,000 for 22/23 across all services. It was noted that there were specific pressures identified for certain income generating services such as car parking and others where income maybe increased such as trade waste.

Council Tax and Business Rates – This was acknowledged as a key income stream for council providing 42% of the Councils baseline funding.

The Committee were told how Council Tax income was based on the latest information available and tax base. It was explained that last year the collection rate had been reduced from 98.6% to 97% to take into account challenges with paying. It was continued that the collection rate had not been impacted as expected (although will continue to be monitored) and therefore the rate had returned to 98.6%. It was noted that this included some contingency, as the collection was still higher.

A Member expressed concern about the impact on council tax as a result of households experiencing increasing fuel, energy and food costs. It was acknowledged that there were challenges with collecting for the short-term, and this was the reason for payment arrangements and why the collection rate had reduced last year.

Members were informed that a number of direct debits had been cancelled before being reinstated and therefore the position had soon recovered. Members were informed that the top 50 businesses represented 70% of the council's business rates. An explanation was provided of the Business Rate Retention Scheme, the different components that formed part of the process undertaken and the balance that was sought when the baseline was set. Reference was made to the information in Appendix One of the report, which included an itemised account.

Delivering Doncaster Together - Members were assured that work would be undertaken collaboratively by working with partners and through a close connection across all sectors by going in the same direction and incrementally achieving what was set out in the Corporate Plan.

Consultation and Engagement – Members were told how the authority had been dynamic by recognising it was working within a different environment. It was explained that during the last couple of years, the Doncaster Talks brand had been used to gather a sense of how communities were feeling. It was noted that under the Team Doncaster website there was an engagement document that outlined the real strength of work being carried out which also translated into some of the budget proposals. It was considered that although more could be done, the partnership was becoming better at delivering on priorities. It was continued that the Council would have access to extra resources during the next 3/4 years. The Committee heard that the Mayoral Combined Authorities would be looking at its Investment Strategy and as a place, we would then benefit from that to deliver our priorities. Members were informed that there would be further one-off

resources to support certain priorities and be able to demonstrate our commitment as we move forward.

Localities Model – The Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing commented that the localities programme was about better outcomes and quality of life. It was stressed that the idea was about working closer to communities and making better use of resources by joining and working together.

Economy & Environment

The Director of Economy and Enterprise outlined proposals as part of the budget and welcomed investments put forward that demonstrated the Council's commitment to key corporate aspirations. These included;

- Revenue - £228,000 of proposed investment in the Tree Team to support the delivery of the Council's target to grow a million trees. It was commented that this also linked to the Council's aspirations around carbon neutrality reduction by 2030.
- Capital Investments - £6million towards road improvements and road safety enhancements. It was noted that funding received from Central Government for the highways network would not enable the authority to maintain it to the levels required.
- Capital Equipment - £600,000 on capital equipment within Streetscene to support environment work. It was recognised that there were certain challenges going forward around Council owned buildings, particularly in relation to Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and thermal efficiency.

Housing Stock – Members heard that an assessment undertaken on the Council's own housing stock indicated that £600M was needed to make the properties thermos efficient aligned with carbon aspirations for HRA stock. It was continued that this did not take into consideration the private rented sector or owner occupied properties. It was acknowledged that the Council's relationship with the ALMO was a positive one, however, it was viewed that the private sector was more challenging as it did not have that level of engagement. It was commented that more people were demanding housing from the HRA than there was capacity to deliver and therefore relationships with private sector and housing associations were pivotal.

Covid Funding Support/Doncaster's Local Economy And Economic Growth – It was acknowledged that there was a wider issue of Covid support and the exit from that. It was explained that there had been a number of funding streams provided to industry or small businesses. Concern was raised about the long-term impact of Covid on business due to increasing costs to households although

noted that there were positive results emerging from the town centre.

Members were reminded of the investment into Doncaster of around £60m of Government money through the 2 Town Deals and investment into the waterside and railway station.

Reference was also made to Government funding provided through the Transitional Relief and Supporting Small Business Relief packages, which had both been extended and that the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief, were all measures that would support businesses mitigate business rate liability for 2022/23.

Doncaster Delivering Together – It was considered that there was sufficient investment as outlined earlier in the meeting to support the delivery of Council key priorities and potential acquisitions around the town centre as part of the wider masterplan. Concern was raised that there were longer-term challenges such as reducing carbon neutrality by 2040 (85% by 2030) and funding flood resilience schemes. Reference was made to challenges resulting from the funding landscape from Government, for example, the City Region Sustainable Transport Scheme that included a rail link to the airport. Members were also informed about the challenges arising from joining-up funding schemes together and funding that placed certain pressures to deliver schemes such as cycle lanes.

Comments were raised around ring-fenced funding for specific purposes rather than having more flexibility to benefit Doncaster's residents and businesses. Reference was made to an ongoing reliance on Business Rates economy and Council Tax income. It was considered that there were green shoots in future settlements.

Doncaster's Local Economy and Economic Growth – Further to information provided earlier in the meeting, the Director of Economy and Enterprise outlined that there was nearly £5 million for acquisitions from the Government Levelling Up Funding (LUF), and 2 Town Deals in place. It was explained that this formed part of the masterplanning and reconfiguration of the areas demonstrating commitment to the local area and economy.

Children and Young People/Doncaster Children Services Trust

The Assistant Director for Partnerships, Early Interventions and Localities provided assurances to the Committee that the budget provided enough funding for both statutory and wider services. It was explained that Doncaster had seen investment into their Early Help Services over the last 2 years in line with the Council's vision and ambition around providing early support for families and children. It was noted that demand had increased and that the average spend per head per child in Doncaster was above the national and regional average.

It was reported that there had been significant and continuous investment made in the three big policy areas that included early help, children's social care (reflecting increased demand) and finally education.

It was noted that cost pressures had been absorbed into the proposed budget, with robust financial management systems in place across each of service area to help maintain financial stability and continue to provide essential services

The Director of Corporate Resources and Company Secretary at the Doncaster Children's Services Trust provided assurances that all existing statutory and non-statutory services have been included as part of the budget proposals and would also support increased demand through continued investment from the Council. Members heard how through one-off investment, that efficiency would be increased by progressing the Future Placements Strategy. It was explained that the strategy would support the acquisition of new homes in Doncaster to move children back closer to home and help provide the best outcomes for them with greater efficiency. It was added that investment had also been made into fostering.

Delivering Doncaster Together – Reference was made to the six beacons within Delivering Doncaster Together that all linked with children and families. It was felt that there were sufficient funding to deliver those priorities as part of the localities model. Reference was made to education and skills, early help, and vulnerable children along with the strategies and various work streams in place.

Concern was raised by a Member of the Committee about the rising cost of out of authority placements and whether the budget proposals were adequate to meet the requirements of this service. It was acknowledged that this was a risk and an area of volatility. Members was assured of the work taking place to address that would create greater efficiency and that the proposals were adequate to meet the needs.

Members were told about the importance placed around the safety of children and child protection across the Borough, particularly around the front door supported through the significant investment made in the Trust as part of the development and improvement plan funded by the Council. Reference was made to key measures regarding caseloads for staff, which have been reduced and were now deemed as manageable going forward. The Committee was informed about the success experienced in recruiting more Social Workers and a 60% reduction in the number of Social Workers leaving the Trust compared across 2020 – 2021 (as a result of investment into Social Worker pay). Reference was also made to the value of academy placements and 'growing our own' approach.

Regarding concerns raised around the 'front door', it was explained that although the number of referrals were high, those referrals made did not always meet the thresholds in place for statutory services. Members were informed that work was taking place with partners such as police and education around understanding those thresholds.

Reference was made to an independent review undertaken of the Front Door with six recommendations in place and what had been put in place.

Key Challenges and Risks – It was noted that key risks included;

- Increased demand for children and young people;
 - in households where there were vulnerabilities; and
 - with additional needs.
- Ongoing issues with Covid in schools and the impact on staffing and potential referrals.
- Children's Emotional Health and Well-being - reference was made to the Children's Mental Health Strategy and it was stressed that there would be a real focus on working through the priorities for the next year as that will impact on future years.
- High Placement Costs – reference was made to the work being undertaken around Future Placement Strategy and it was noted that staffing the homes would be needed.

Adults Health and Well-Being/Public Health

The Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing explained that there were certain aspects of financial stability that were outside the authority's control. An example of this being the new national policy in Adult Social Care (in relation to modelling the cost of care for care homes and home care, as well as the charging cap). It was noted that national funding had been set aside for this, but that there were no assurance that they would cover those commitments.

In relation to what was within the authority's control, it was explained that the budget proposals set out to fund sensible and progressive activity. An example of this was provided around increasing the grip on early intervention and prevention in communities and the capability of in-house services. Members heard how there was also a significant focus on supporting external care providers who deliver services for Doncaster people, including residential homes, supported living, domiciliary care or via direct payments.

In terms of public health, it was explained that the authority was awaiting confirmation of the national allocation of ringfenced grant. It

was noted that there would be a small uplift with certain caveats attached. Members were reminded how the Public Health grant helped to provide services that reduced the impact on other services.

Early Health and Intervention - There was a brief discussion around prevention and how a large proportion of new funds for prevention were being directed to NHS services.

Delivering Doncaster Together – The Committee heard that the budget proposals were considered as sufficient in delivering the relevant priorities although concern was raised around workforce fatigue.

Reference was made to the healthy compassionate area and how there was value around changing the culture and it was felt there had been a shift in thinking behaviours. It was noted that appreciative enquiries provided the opportunity to find out more as well as developing trust with communities.

Localities – It was noted that this would support the need to become closer to communities as a way to mitigate challenges around issues that had increased (such as domestic abuse, mental health, loss of independence and learning disabilities). It was viewed that the localities model would help reposition what we do and support staff by removing barriers.

Self-Referrals – There was a brief discussion around prevention and how local people would be supported to make self-referral more easily. Reference was made to the Adult Social Care national framework, 'Making It Real' with 5 key strands that included information and advice and people feeling connected in their communities. Reference was made to how this could be better undertaken and that it was important to get the foundation right.

Key Challenges and Risks – It was reported that the biggest challenge within adult social care was workforce, more specifically the risk of not being able to recruit and retain a stable and good quality workforce in light of wider market pressures. Reference was also made to the risk of compulsory vaccinations. It was explained that the other challenge around workforce was fatigue of existing colleagues and the implications of this. An outline of approaches used to address this issue was provided.

It was reported that the government recently published an Integration White Paper, that highlighted an opportunity of working closer with the NHS and specifically the development of shared career pathways. It was recognised that there was also the potential for the NHS to invest in adult social care, perhaps building on the recent support provided by the South Yorkshire Integrated Care System (ICS) increasing the amount paid to care providers this winter with the stipulation they pass

	<p>this onto front line staff. Reference was made to the Council’s Proud to Care campaign building on the Social Care Academy set up in 2020 to increase support to the care sector in attracting and training the best people.</p> <p>In terms of Public Health, specific risks identified included a lack of a national pandemic plan, expected additional health protection demands in local authorities, capital budgets around leisure trust effected by real supply chain issues and inflation.</p> <p>The Chair thanked officers in attendance.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the consideration of and support for the budget recommendations be supported; • the Chair be given delegated authority to provide a response by way of letter to the mayor on behalf of the Committee. 	
7	<p><u>CORPORATE PLAN 2022-23</u></p>	
	<p>Prior to the consideration by Cabinet and Full Council, the Assistant Director Policy, Insight and Change provided an overview of the revised Corporate Plan for 2022-23. He outlined how the Plan contributes to the Great 8 priorities in the Doncaster Delivering Together (DDT) Borough Strategy ensuring as an organisation it continued to deliver quality services.</p> <p>The committee addressed the following issues:</p> <p><u>Council’s key ambitions</u> – The Committee acknowledged that each Directorate had been consulted to ensure the Corporate Plan reflected the Council’s ambitions and contributed to shaping the well-being goals. The Committee noted the arrangements to monitor and ensure these were effectively delivered.</p> <p><u>Challenging objectives</u> – Members noted that the Corporate Plan focused on areas to be addressed over the next 12 months. It was also noted that some priorities were in a more advanced stage than others, with delivery plans and resources already in place. The main challenges highlighted were timescales and resources to deliver long term ambitions, particularly the environmental priorities including de-carbonising housing stock across all sectors. The Committee stressed it was essential to ensure incremental foundations were in place to build upon, year on year.</p> <p>To ensure deliverability, the Committee highlighted the importance of the Team Doncaster Partnership Model, being fit for purpose. Members noted that the principles of the Corporate Plan underpin how the Local Authority supports and was aligned to Doncaster Delivering</p>	

	<p>Together, ensuring it's approach was moving in the same direction as it's partners.</p> <p>It was also acknowledged that resources were sought at a regional level. For example, the Council was currently working closely with the Mayoral Combined Authority on the Investment Strategy and where fairness principles would soon be agreed in terms of a share of the allocation, to meet each authorities' needs.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that partnership working had significantly improved over the last few years, particularly whilst working on the Covid response, climate change, health and social care reform and the Levelling Up Fund.</p> <p><u>Locality working</u> – the Committee noted the way the Authority was thinking about it values and approach to ensure success through locality working. Members learnt that some issues had already been implemented, for example, the delivery of locality plans, approving lead roles for Directors and addressing how the Authority continues to engage with its communities.</p> <p><u>Links between the Council's different strategic plans</u> - the Committee was pleased to note the process to link the borough wide strategic objectives with the actions of individual employees at all levels ultimately through targets and Personal Development Reviews. It was emphasised that wider communication with staff, for example, through Team Meetings to familiarise employees with the final Corporate Plan content was essential to its success.</p> <p><u>Delivery of the Key Priorities 2022-23</u> – Members were reassured that progress towards delivering the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan's goals would be delivered and monitored through the Council's own performance management framework. In particular, this would provide Overview and Scrutiny with the opportunity to review progress when it considers the quarterly Finance and Performance Report. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee would receive the first quarterly report at its September meeting.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Chair be given delegated authority to write to the Mayor with the Committee's comments and support for the Corporate Plan.</p>	
8	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan and the Council's Forward Plan of key decisions for the Committee's attention.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That the report, be noted.</p>	