

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2023

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2023 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Jake Kearsley, Gemma Cobby, Sarah Smith and Sue Farmer

Co-optees – Antoinette Drinkhill (Church of England Education representative) and Bernadette Nesbit (Diocese of Hallam Roman Catholic Church)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Debbie Hogg - Director of Corporate Resources

Faye Tyas - Assistant Director of Finance

Julie Crook - Director Corporate Services St Leger Homes Doncaster

Phil Holmes - Director Adults Health and Well-being

Dan Swaine - Director Economy and Environment

Rupert Suckling - Director Public Health

Lee Golze - Assistant Director for Partnerships, Early Interventions & Localities

Allan Wiltshire, Head of Policy Performance & Intelligence

		<u>ACTION</u>
34	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Hempshall, Majid Khan, Richard Jones and Councillor Gary Stapleton.	
35	<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 on the agenda.	
36	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	Councillor Jane Kidd declared that she worked for the voluntary sector.	
37	<u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD NOVEMBER AND 1ST DECEMBER 2022</u>	
	RESOLVED that:- the minutes of the meetings held on 3 rd November	

	and 1 st December, 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
38	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
39	<u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CONSIDERATION OF THE MAYOR'S BUDGET PROPOSALS 2023/24 - 2026/27</u>	
	<p>The Committee gave consideration to a report outlining the Mayor's Budget proposals 2023/24 to 2025/26 following its initial consultation on 26th January, 2023. The Committee used four specific lines of enquiry to assist with considering the basis and assumptions upon which the budget had been developed and how those proposals would be implemented.</p> <p>The four key areas considered were:</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 is able to contribute to the outcomes detailed within Doncaster Delivering Together 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? iv. To what extent are the challenges in delivering the savings within the timescales and the capacity to deliver services with reduced resources being addressed? <p>The Committee highlighted that the Council was continuing to operate in a challenging and volatile financial environment and that was having an impact on all the services it provides.</p> <p>The national changes that had taken place since a balanced budget in March 2022 were highlighted and the work being undertaken to propose a future balanced budget over 3 years, in line with the Corporate Plan, Delivering Doncaster Together priorities, Central Government policy and a challenging programme of service transformation and savings targets, was acknowledged.</p> <p>The Committee recognised that overall, the £10m funding gap for 2023/24 and £22m budget gap over the forthcoming 3-year period, the issue of rising inflation, energy prices and significant increases in pay were key pressures moving forward along with the challenge to deliver</p>	

key services within budget.

The Following areas were addressed in detail:

Housing Revenue Account – the proposed housing rent increase of 7%, was accepted by the Committee along with the assumption that it would fund the anticipated inflationary cost increases and support the acquisition of additional properties over 4 years to ease waiting list pressures.

The backlogs in service delivery following the Covid Pandemic, were noted, and were partly due to some difficulty with material shortage and recruitment in certain trades, for example, Electricians.

The Committee noted that there was an ambitious capital programme including external cladding, re-roofing and replacement boilers all of which would support reducing energy costs.

To conclude Members noted St Leger Home's balanced budget with a proposed 10 year delivery programme.

The Local Authority's income sources - including Council tax, business rates and fees and charges. The Committee supported the proposed Council Tax rate acknowledging that it continued to be one of the lowest nationally. With regard to fees and charges, the increase was accepted but highlighted that it generated a small amount of income. Therefore, the Committee accepted that further investigations to charge for certain non-statutory services would continue to be addressed, for example green waste collections, which would require a specific decision to be taken following full consultation.

Inflation and energy pressures – it was acknowledged by the Committee that inflation and gas prices were unprecedented and the impact across all service provision was something never experienced before.

Domestic Abuse – The pressure on Council teams was noted particularly with regard to the number of referrals and how quickly they were responding to provide support.

Partnerships – the good relationships held with partners were welcomed. The Committee acknowledged that partners delivered in different ways, with the need to rebalance occasionally ensuring delivery was heading in the same direction to provide positive results.

Homelessness – The Committee acknowledged the continued pressure but due to the hard work and commitment by St Leger Homes the number of people living in bed and breakfast accommodation had reduced. Therefore the cost had reduced. With regard to people with complex needs, this was continually monitored to provide people with good support to enhance their lives and reduce reliance on partnership

support services.

Adult Social care – the need to ensure people were being discharged from hospital and receiving appropriate support was highlighted. It was noted that the Adult Social Care reform changes had been deferred to 2025 with the Government redirecting the allocated funding to the Social Care Grant. Due to the discretion provided to local authorities on how they used the funding and allowing flexibility, using it to support the priorities and pressures, was noted. However, the long term risk and no certainty of funding after this point, was acknowledged.

The risk associated with home care capacity and the number of people wishing to work in this area had reduced therefore the need to build community capacity for people to remain and be cared for in their own homes, was acknowledged. However, “lived experience” had shown that process can be too bureaucratic when sometimes a simple information guide was all that was required to aid people to find the support they need.

The biggest risk highlighted was investing in care provision particularly home care capacity. It was noted that since winter 2022 the system had seen a reduction in the number of people working in this area therefore the need to build community capacity to support people living in their own homes for longer, was essential.

Public Health Grant – it was confirmed that the Grant allocation for 2023/24 had not yet been confirmed with budget analysis being undertaken on three separate scenarios, but in reality, it was expected to be along similar lines as in previous years. It was acknowledged that this was a real terms reduction in the value of the grant. The risks associated with this, were highlighted, including the Local Authority having to meet additional costs of possible increased pay awards for NHS staff who provided commissioned services.

The following areas were noted:

- With regard to short term funding for Covid, the Committee was reminded that this grant would cease by the end of March 2023;
- There was a caveat that funding could not be reduced for drug treatment services;
- Joint investment with health partners could create an income risk; and
- Service impact – it was essential that best value for money was being received through commissioned services.

With regard to assistance with funding from partners, it was accepted that it was everyone’s natural instinct to help however it was difficult to predict how budgets could be moved around the health system and utilised to their full potential.

Capital Programme – it was recognised that large investment had been

received through the Town Deals and Levelling up fund but the Committee expressed concern that due to the increase in costs in reality resources would not meet expectations. With regard to investment and programmes to ease / prevent future flooding, this was highlighted and welcomed.

Asset rationalisation and the co-location of services where possible – The challenge this presented was acknowledged with the process ultimately leading to less buildings. The nature of what community services in the same building could offer, for example, health benefits was highlighted but the need to ensure the buildings were structurally safe, operating costs reduced and that they operate efficiently, was supported. The Committee stressed that consultation with communities and ward Councillors about their community assets, was essential.

General efficiencies - reducing the capacity to deliver through post reduction was considered a challenge and high risk when service areas were already under extreme pressure, for example, streetscene services. The aging workforce was highlighted and that succession planning was essential.

Waste Collection – it was noted that Central Government was currently addressing new regulations which could result in additional costs relating to food waste and changes to green waste could ultimately have a knock on effect with contractors.

Damp and Mould – it was explained that Central Government had requested that local authorities undertake investigations into, not just Council house stock, but private sector rented accommodation across the borough. It was noted however that a stock condition survey had been commissioned to identify the level of risk and was established that approximately 14% of the 22,000 private rented properties would be within the category 1 hazard list. It was noted that the current team of 13 could only proactively address complaints and resources were not sufficient to address all of the issues, but may be able to undertake targeted interventions.

Children's social care - the wide variety of complexities, including foster care, out of authority placements, education, transport and agreeing what was best for a child or young person, was accepted. It was stressed that the landscape was the most challenging ever known and acknowledged by the Committee.

The Committee accepted the need to reduce high spend and deliver savings through in-house provision and fostering. The Committee wished to highlight a child's wellbeing was the first priority whilst bearing in mind monetary consideration and also accepted that when limited resources were available then the more acute services would be prioritised.

With regard to Early Intervention and Prevention, the Committee

understood that the Local Authority was maintaining funding, however due to the financial challenge, this was a difficult balance and if pressures continued it would be an area that may not be protected in future. Members understood the difficulties but maintained the commitment to protect where possible.

The Committee noted the increased confidence in delivering savings with the Local Authority now having more control and influence over the wider service provision. However, the need to ensure it was achieving value for money across the children's care spectrum, through cost reviews was imperative. It was acknowledged there would be an impact on cost reduction once the new family homes for children and young people were staffed, early help resources were being utilised and an increased in-house foster care service was secured.

The following areas, were noted:

- Consistency of social work staff and the reliance of using agency staff;
- Temporary closure of homes due to lack of staff;
- Foster care recruitment - extensive work was being undertaken with regard to financial packages to make in-house provision more attractive;
- Education – challenges continued, for example, speech and language and an increase in SEND plans which added pressure on existing teams with reduced resources;
- Out of Authority placements – it was noted that children were trying to be homed as close to their families as possible with out of authority placements being the last resort;
- Transport to school for children placed out of authority;
- Stronger Families Grant was on target and due to bring significant investment; and
- Partnership working across the region continued to be good with efforts to try and combine spend in certain areas to achieve better efficiencies.

Environment – The local authority was continuing to plant trees and hopefully 100,000 would have been planted by the end of calendar year, however, it was noted that it required a lot of officer resource to undertake the work.

Creativity with income and selling local authority services – It was noted that Local Authorities must deliver their statutory duties but it was noted that some areas could be co-ordinated with other local authorities and jointly provided but it could also expose a risk, with the impact of not achieving requirements and incurring additional expenditure.

Central Government Policy Pressures and Directives – the Committee:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognised the savings required and agreed the proposals were an appropriate response to Central Government policy, pressures, directives and national conflicts. • Acknowledged that all service areas had been addressed and continued to be reprioritised as a result of increased demands and reduced funding, and noted the Directors and Services Managers understanding of work required to ensure Doncaster’s priorities were met. <p>The Committee noted the existing and emerging pressures and challenges, which were addressed in detail by each Director, evidencing that the budget was appropriate to deliver services moving forward whilst understanding and managing the risks, and maximising the use of resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Mayor’s proposed budget, be supported; and b) The Chair be given delegated authority to prepare the response on behalf of the Committee, be approved. 	
40	<p><u>CORPORATE PLAN 2023-24</u></p>	
	<p>Prior to consideration by Cabinet and Full Council, the Head of Policy Performance and Intelligence, provided an overview of the revised Corporate Plan for 2022-23. He outlined how the Plan contributed 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>Here is a broad outline of the feedback provided from the discussion:</p> <p>Council’s key ambitions – The Committee acknowledged that the Corporate Plan 2022/23 included Great 8 priority areas for the Borough as well as an internal ‘Regenerative Council’ priority programme. It was set out that this internal programme was set against a framework that would ensure that the Council was fit for purpose in helping to deliver those priorities. It was explained that each year the plan takes on difference elements of prominence and that some priorities became more important than others and may change in the future depending on external circumstances such as cost of living. It was continued that coverage wise, the plan was linked into the Borough Strategy to make sure that the Councils contribution this year, alongside the budget, was undertaken correctly through the framework in place. The Committee noted that to support the pressures identified in the budget, it was important that there was also flexibility in place.</p> <p>Impact of Budget on Delivering Corporate Plan Objectives – The Committee noted areas of pressures arising from the budget that</p>	

included the Placement Strategy, Education Care and Health Plans, Public Health and waste. It was acknowledged that issues such as inflation played a significant part in creating further pressure on the delivery of the Corporate Plan's priorities. Members heard how those priorities worked as a driving force beyond the Corporate Plan, helping to structure service plans and identify and review targets in taking forward the work required.

How the Corporate Plan Supports Locality Working – Members were informed that there was a specific section in the Corporate Plan with steps to ensure that locality was being embedded across the organisation. This included what had been achieved with locality working this year and also the four or five key areas that the Council wants to drive forward. Reference was made to Great 8 priorities that also had their own set of actions relating to localities including Priority 6. Nurturing a child and family-friendly Borough and Priority 4. Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all. It was added that there was also mention of how locality working was going to be implemented within teams as part of a specific action.

In terms of partnerships, it was explained how the Doncaster Delivering Together 10-year vision, was set out through the Corporate Plan. Members heard that there was a separate partnership Team Doncaster structure and governance model using the same framework to help show how the Council was contributing to those partnership objectives. It was stated that this framework would be kept for the duration of the Borough Strategy to make sure that each year it showed how the Council was contributing wider.

Regenerative Council - It was recognised that cultural shifts were important moving forward alongside a robust process that sits underneath. Members were informed that work being undertaken to support this included developing a Workplace Strategy, reviewing how we benchmark across other areas, remuneration, forming recommendations arising from the Peer Review Action Plan and how that will support how we operate and embed the organisations values. Finally, mention was made to the Council's robust financial process in place enabling all these aspirations to move forward.

In terms of Team Doncaster, it was noted that there was a transition plan in place ensuring that we were working closely with our partners. Reference was also made to the Customer Experience Strategy setting out how customers will be interacting and what that experience will look like for us.

In respect of raising staff morale, the Committee was reminded about the staff Rewards and Recognition Portal, the continuation of the staff forum successfully engaging with 600-700 participants at its most recent session as well as the benefits of good management supporting effective feedback, encouraging positive interactions with staff and

	<p>making them feel valued.</p> <p>Members were told about the increasing level of regional working, for example, with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Authority and South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership ensuring that Doncaster was working at that level through influencing and shaping. Reference was also made to the value of Doncaster opening itself up to external visitors, such as the new Active Travel Commissioner to look at how services were being provided in Doncaster.</p> <p>The Committee also supported that scrutiny work planning should take into account the Great 8 priorities (and accompanying strategies and policies) outlined in the Corporate Plan 2022/23.</p> <p>RESOLVED that;</p> <p>(a) The Chair be given delegated authority to write to the Mayor with the Committee's comments and support for the Corporate Plan; and</p> <p>(b) That scrutiny work planning should take into account the Great 8 priorities (and accompanying strategies and policies) outlined in the Corporate Plan 2022/23.</p>	
41	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>RESOLVED that:- The Scrutiny Work Plan and Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions, be noted.</p>	