



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

BURNLEY TOWN HALL

Wednesday, 28th June, 2017 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT

MEMBERS

Councillors A Tatchell (Chair), M Brindle (Vice-Chair), J Cunningham, B Foster, R Frost, J Greenwood, T Harrison, M Johnstone, A Kelly, T Martin and P Reynolds

OFFICERS

Rob Dobson	– Corporate Policy and Projects Manager
David Donlan	– Accountancy Division Manager
Alison McEwan	– Democracy Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Heginbotham, Malik and Newhouse.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings

The Chair introduced the Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings, noting that due to the timing of meetings within the cycle, the next iteration of the document was almost due for publication. Alison McEwan was asked to circulate to members once published. This document could be a useful tool in deciding on additions to the work plan, or in formulating ideas for Scrutiny Review groups.

Members discussed the following:

- Play Strategy – hadn't the Council recently approved a new Play Strategy? No, the strategy had been in development for some time, but would be submitted to the Executive for consideration in July. The previous version dated from 2009.

- Business Rates Relief scheme – was this to be removed? Alison McEwan to make enquiries with the relevant officers.

4. Year End Performance Report

Rob Dobson introduced the report, and highlighted areas of strong performance, which included:

- Sickness Absence which was (on average) 5.09 days per employee against a target of 6 days. This gave Burnley the lowest average figure of all Northwest district councils.
- Streetscene missed bins –the number of missed bins was now at 32 per 100,000, against the target of 40/100,000.
- Number of planning applications processed within target time. Members attention was drawn to the fact that the Peer Review team last year had highlighted this an area which might benefit from additional focus. In Q4, 100% of major applications, 97% of minor applications, and 85% of 'other' applications were processed in time, against targets of 60%, 65% and 80%. Comparatively, this put Burnley above the Northwest average for all measures.

One area of weaker performance was drawn to the attention of members – IT business critical system availability. Two major incidents occurred in Q4, causing disruption for officers and members of the public. These were resolved, and Liberata have made investment in hardware, and continue to make improvements to infrastructure.

IT

WAS

AGREED

That the report be noted.

5. Annual Treasury Management Report Review of 2016/17 Activity

David Donlan presented the report which was required so that the Council fulfilled its obligations under the CIPFA regulations.

Highlights of the report included over £150k savings being made on predicted interest payments due to proactive management of cash flows, slippage in capital spending and lower interest rates payable.

The report also drew members attention to the higher than expected returns on investments, which had resulted in an additional £37k in interest being received by the Council.

Members questioned whether alternatives to the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) had been explored, as their rates seemed to be higher than commercial loans. It was confirmed that although alternatives to the PWLB had been proposed, no new scheme had been realised.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

6. 2016/17 Final Outturn Position

David Donlan introduced the report which detailed the position of the Council's 2016/17 budget at year end.

Members discussed the following:

- At paragraph 8, were additional pension costs ('pension strain') costs included within the 'employee redundancy costs' heading. This was confirmed to be the case.
- The total held in reserves was circa £8million. This was almost 50% of the revenue budget, why was this? Within the total reserves, the majority of funding was committed for specific projects and budgets.

Members were reminded of a Member Workshop on 19th July which would be focussed on the Draft Statement of Accounts.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

7. Scrutiny Review Groups

The Chair updated new members of the committee on the reviews that had been undertaken so far.

The Railway Review Group was still underway, and confirmation of the date of the next meeting would be issued as soon as confirmation received from the external agencies.

Members had been sent proposal forms to suggest additional topics for future groups. These were to be returned by 14th July, so that potentially a special workshop could be held to work through and choose topics prior to the next full Scrutiny meeting in September.

Members discussed some possible topics, and agreed to submit any suggestions in writing.

8. Work Programme 2017/18

Alison McEwan informed members that this was the latest information received for the work plan, but that this could be added to if new projects and reports were brought forward.