

## Minutes of the Corporate Review Committee Meeting held on 2 November 2018

Present: David Brookes (Chairman)

### Attendance

Charlotte Atkins	Stephen Sweeney
John Francis	Martyn Tittley
Johnny McMahon	David Williams (Vice-Chairman)
Jonathan Price	Susan Woodward
Bob Spencer	

**Also in attendance:**

**Apologies:** Colin Greatorex, Jeremy Oates and Ian Parry

### PART ONE

#### 27. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 28. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2018

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 29. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2018/19

The report was a Quarterly Integrated Performance Report providing an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan.

At the end of Quarter 2, the overall assessment on the council's performance and financial position was reported as being Amber. Areas of risk were in Adult Social Care and support for Staffordshire's most vulnerable children, together with organisational challenges in terms of the capacity to deliver both in 2018/19 and future years. Further details were included in the report and its appendices.

The latest revenue forecast outturn showed a forecast underspend of £1.578m (0.3%), a better position than at Quarter 1, where there was a forecast overspend of £3.210m (0.6%). At Quarter 1, it was agreed that £2.160m of contingency would be used to support Children's Services, reducing their forecast overspend. This reduced the centrally held contingency from £3.5m to £1.340m.

In terms of the longer term financial position, the Medium Term Financial Strategy paper that was presented at Cabinet in September 2018 outlined the plans to bridge the £35m funding shortfall and deliver a legally balanced budget in 2019/20, while still delivering

the County Council's Strategic Plan. One-off resources would be required to balance the budget in 2019/20 and some of these will come from any underspend achieved in 2018/19.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and reminded Members that the Council had received a share of the additional £240m (£3.5m for Staffordshire) for Adult Social Care to help to relieve pressures on the NHS such as supporting people in their homes. The report was published before the government budget. The longer term funding of social care still needs to be addressed.

As at September 2018, the Economic Growth Programme had created/safeguarded just under 7,000 jobs and delivered 301 houses. Completed development sites were providing over £9m in business rates. Given the financial pressures faced by the council this financial return was becoming increasingly important.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, informed the Committee that the report was a positive update compared to quarter one. The year-end underspend was predicted to be £1.6m however there was concern that circumstances can change quickly, and we needed to continue to limit non-essential spend. The Council would also continue to lobby government for the additional funding needed to provide social care.

A Member asked a question on the pressures created by looked after children. It was estimated that costs would remain the same but as numbers fluctuated and cost increased, did this mean that we had underestimated and is this the reason for the overspend. In response, the Cabinet Member informed the Committee that numbers had stabilised at 3.5% and there was some underspend as we were trying to recruit more staff, and this was proving difficult.

A question was asked on the impact of issues around social care such as a reduction of community services use of £1.2m what is behind that and there are talks about pushing down the cost of care beds and is there any idea of the percentage of beds in a care home we procure and does a high number create greater fragility in the market.

A Member stated that the Lichfield Day Centre had been threatened with closure for 12 years and yet people were still there and there is a potential overspend. It was asked what was happening in Disabled Services to pull things together. The response was that there had been a delay in closure for various reasons and there will be alternative provision.

A question was asked on the Culture and Communities historical debt and why didn't we know about this before they became overspent. In response, Members were informed that some of the budgets had been handed over to trusts e.g. Shugbrough and things were only now coming to light.

The Chairman of the Safer, Stronger Select Committee agreed to raise the two items of Looked after Children and the costs of placements and Adult Social Care Provision at their Committee.

Following a question of the main reasons for debt, the Cabinet Member for Finance explained that their relationships were being established with health care operators

which was reducing the levels of long term debt. Most of the debts would be paid and not written off, but this is a quarter 2 report, so some level of debt was expected.

There was concern that there were spikes in the number of looked after children and the Leader was asked if he was happy that our inclusion criteria were right and are we doing enough to recruit social workers. In response, the Leader explained that the criteria had been signed off by Ofsted so was fit for purpose and that we had come out of the West Midlands recruitment procedures as there seemed to be a bidding war between authorities to get people to their areas. We were also doing work with universities to attract people. The Cabinet Member for Finance explained that savings were being identified but at the same time pressures are increasing so we needed to look at everything and if we can do things differently.

A question was asked as to why the Corporate checklist in the report stated that the Health and the Community Impact Assessment screening was not needed for this report. It was felt that this doesn't help when we are asking all services to consider the impact of health on every service. The Leader explained that the main drive is the economy as if people are working they tend to be better, but the elderly population is increasing so there is an impact.

A Member asked what "prisoner related care activates" meant and was informed that even when in prison the Council had a responsibility for the ageing population.

Concerning Education health care plans, a question was asked on why there was a delay in assessments and care provision given there was an overspend and what were the mitigating actions if numbers continue to rise. In response, the Committee heard that they were managing this difficult situation and that we need to meet with the School Forum in the autumn.

In response to a question on what would replace the European skills programme, the Committee were informed that the new UK shared prosperity fund would be available, and Universities were already looking at this and planning for up to 2023

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee receive the report and note the action taken to address the budget issues.

### **30. Customer Feedback and Complaints Service – Annual Report 2017-2018 Corporate Services**

The report provided information about corporate complaints activity during the twelve months between April 2017 and March 2018. The report contained information about the nature of complaints received together with responses provided and their handling by the Council. It is important that the Local Authority uses the evidence available from Complaints and Representations to inform service improvements.

The report also provided information about how complaint investigations are used to identify specific themes, where service improvement can then be addressed and highlights where the County Council is providing quality services to customers which

may be identified from compliments received. This was in line with the Strategic Plan, to use Customer Insight to develop high quality services which meet customer needs.

The Committee asked why there had been a sharp rise in the number of complaints in the last year. Officers responded that when services change there is often an increase in the number of complaints. Regarding the 28% increase in social care which is specific to the couple's financial reassessment and the change in home care service provider.

Is there any evidence that we are learning lessons from the complaints? In response, the committee were informed that the report did set out how lessons had been learnt and that the Local Government Ombudsman monitored this activity to ensure that things do change as a result.

It was noted that Stafford town seemed to have the highest number of complaints. Officers responded that there always seems to be higher numbers from Stafford residents.

A Member of the Committee asked how many of the complaints were taken on board by the leadership e.g. the planning of road works. In response, the complaints seem to be physical things that people can see such as grit bins or the placement of media boxes etc, and we have learned to communicate and prevent complaints.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee notes the Corporate Annual Report of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, of 2017/18.

### **31. Work Programme**

The Committee considered the work programme. A Councillor raised the issue of the question Highways department introducing a policy on HGV's and no wait on all A roads. It was requested that this was brought to the Committee for consideration. The Scrutiny Manager believed this would fall under the remit of the Prosperous Select Committee. The Scrutiny Manager agreed to discuss this with officers and report back

**RESOLVED:** That the report be received.

**Chairman**