

## **Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Ollerhead - in the Chair  
Councillors Ahmed Ali, Barrett, Cookson, Connolly, Davies, Karney, Lanchbury, Pritchard, Siddiqi, A Simcock, and Strong

Councillor B Priest, Deputy Leader  
Councillor Flanagan, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources  
Councillor Battle, Executive Member for the Environment  
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Culture and Leisure

**Apologies:** Councillors Lone, Ollerhead and Russell

#### **RGSC/17/11            Appointment of Chair**

The Committee Support Officer advised that the Chair had given apologies for the meeting and asked for nominations for a Chair. Councillor Lanchbury was nominated which was seconded and approved.

#### **Decision:**

To appoint Councillor Lanchbury to Chair the meeting

#### **RGSC/17/12            Minutes**

#### **Decision:**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2017

#### **RGSC/17/13            Budget Reports 2017-2020**

The Committee received a report of the City Treasurer, Deputy Chief Executive (People, Policy and Reform), the City Solicitor, Strategic Director (Development) and Chief Information Officer which provided an update on the Council's financial position and sets out next steps in the budget process, including scrutiny of the Executive's draft Budget proposals and Directorate Budget and Business Plan reports and accompanying delivery plans by this Committee. The Committee was asked to consider and make recommendations to the Executive on those draft budget proposals which were within its remit and to comment on draft Directorate Business Plans and Delivery plans which were designed to ensure the Council delivers high quality services and outcomes for residents, as well as a balanced budget, across the three financial years 2017/18-2019/20. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources introduced the report. He thanked officers involved in the budget process and to the Council's Communications Team for the changes they had made to the public consultation process. He explained that Executive had considered the budget options proposed by officers, the responses from the public consultation, and the comments made by all scrutiny committees in formulating its draft budget

proposals. He expressed regret that the Council had to make cuts adding that this was because the funding provided by government was not sufficient. He said that the Council would be lobbying government and a procession was planned for 25 February 2017.

Members expressed disappointment that Council's were being asked to raise additional funding for adult social care through increases to Council Tax and that Manchester would be increasing its Council Tax by just under 5% in 2017/18; of which 3% would be used to pay for adult social care. A member said that Manchester would be petitioning the government on this. Member discussed that Surrey Council were holding a referendum since they were proposing a 15% increase to their Council Tax to help pay for adult social care and asked why Manchester were not doing this. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources said that whilst Manchester had needed to increase Council Tax he was mindful of the impact this would have on residents. The City Treasurer clarified that were a referendum required Council Tax bills would need to be issued based on current assumptions and then re-issued should the proposals be agreed following the referendum causing additional costs. Members agreed they would like to ask the Leader of Surrey Council to a future meeting to discuss the rationale behind their proposed increase. Members agreed that whilst all local authorities were under increasing pressures it was important not to make direct comparisons between local authorities with very different demographics. Members discussed pressures unique to northern cities and towns and a member suggested the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources explore the possibility of judicial review.

Members discussed the public consultation and had been provided with comments from other scrutiny committees including the Neighbourhoods and Environment and Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committees. In response to members queries the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources and the Strategic Head of Communications explained the efforts made with different groups including black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, older people and younger people. Members' suggestions had been acted upon; the Executive member for Culture and Leisure had engaged with the Youth Council and the Council had used community radio and local press to engage BME communities. Members noted that residents from all wards across the city had engaged. A member who was also a ward councillor for Harpurhey said that the petition to save Harpurhey markets, which was the largest petition ever for that area, was proof that local residents cared about their community.

Members welcomed the improvements made to the budget consultation process and requested that a full evaluation be carried out and consideration given to how the process could be improved further in future years. Members suggested the evaluation include how many responses were paper or online, the use of alternative formats or communication methods including large print, pictorial language and sign language and consider the comments of the other scrutiny committees. Members were keen to encourage more residents to participate in consultation exercises and felt that many residents did not fully understand how the Council worked. A member suggested that a long term aim for the Council in line with its 'Our Manchester' Strategy should be to explore how to make the Council more accessible to residents, perhaps by using social media and videos.

Members discussed the budget proposals themselves. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources referred members to Appendix 3: The Executive's Draft Budget proposals (consolidated schedule) and explained that those in white had been taken forward, those in grey had not, and those in lilac had changed in response to members comments. Members acknowledged that their previous comments had been incorporated and were broadly supportive of the Executives proposals. The Chair added that she welcomed that members' comments had also been taken into consideration in respect of the Council Tax Support Scheme.

### **Decisions:**

1. To invite the Leader of Surrey Council to a future meeting to discuss their proposals to increase Council Tax by 15%.
2. To welcome improvements made to the public consultation process and to request that a full evaluation be carried out including consideration of how the process could be improved further in future years. To recommend that the evaluation includes:
  - a) how many responses were paper or online
  - b) the use of alternative formats or communication methods including large print, pictorial language, sign language and community languages
  - c) completion rates, length and complexity of questions
  - d) the role of members in promoting engagement
  - e) year on year response rate comparisons
  - f) the resource available to carry out consultations
  - g) how response rates from under-represented groups could be improved in future consultations
  - h) having a clear process to communicate with the public what had happened following the budget consultation to demonstrate that their views had been listened to
  - i) the use of networks such as the Age-Friendly Manchester Board and tenants' and residents' associations to engage with local residents.
3. To request that the Head of Strategic Communications, in line with the 'Our Manchester' approach explore how residents understanding of the Council could be improved and the Council made more accessible through the use of social media, videos and new technologies. To receive a future report on this at an appropriate time.
4. To broadly support the Executive's draft budget proposals and to welcome that the comments of scrutiny and the public consultation have been taken into account.

### **RGSC/17/14            ICT Update**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Information Officer. The Committee has requested updates on ICT to include key projects; the B Heard Survey (high level feedback), and the financial position for the service. The Chief Information Officer introduced the report across its main themes. He described the progress so far with the Google Early Adopter Groups, for which the Committee had received training the previous day. He explained that printing had been brought under ICT

from December 2016 and described the issues around the Council's Sap system and how he was working to address these.

Members welcomed the progress made by ICT. The Chair welcomed the news that the issues around achieving the Public Services Network (PSN) accreditation had been resolved. She emphasised the importance of this to facilitate the changes required by the Council Tax Support Scheme and thanked officers for their work on this.

A member asked how confident the Chief Information Officer was that 'business as usual' would be maintained during the refurbishment of the Town Hall. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources advised members that he was confident that the refurbishment of the Town Hall would not negatively impact on the Council's ICT systems. The Chief Information Officer added that he had been involved in the planning process for the refurbishment for some time and his team were working hard to identify and mitigate any potential impact this may have.

Members discussed the google training they had received as 'early adopters' and welcomed this. A member commented that the training was fantastic and he was excited by the possibilities of future technology. Members praised the ICT department for the commendation received from the Cabinet Office that Manchester was a forerunner within local authorities of ICT activity. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources and the Chief Information Officer thanked the City Treasurer for her support in enabling improvements to be made to the Council's ICT systems. The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources thanked members of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee for agreeing to become 'early adopters'. In response to members' queries as to how achievable it was that the Council could enable all of its employees to become 'google ready' the Chief Information Officer advised that the early adopter group represented more than 10% of the Council's workforce; adding that they comprised 10% of every operational group across the Council. This was so every team had a point of contact and support. He added that google email (Gmail) was the most popular email service worldwide and many staff would already be familiar with using google products in their personal life. The Chief Information Officer reminded members that the Council's ICT Service Desk was award winning and he advised that a dedicated team would be set up within this to respond to google related queries. He said that over 600 drop in opportunities would be offered to Council staff along with other support such as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's).

In response to a members query regarding archiving the Chief Information Officer explained that he was working closely with officers within the City Solicitors Department to align new systems to the requirements of the Council's data retention and archiving policy. He added that further information would follow regarding this. In response to a members query regarding ceasing the use of Citrix the Chief Information Officer confirmed that this would be replaced over the longer term.

Members discussed the use of technology for supporting people in receipt of health and social care and stressed the importance of this. The Chief Information Officer advised he was now the Chair of the Information Management and Technology Group so he was focussed on helping to lead improvements to health and social care technology; adding that in Manchester demographics was an issue.

**Decisions:**

1. To note the report
2. To thank the City Treasurer, the Chief Information Officer and the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources for continued improvements to the ICT.

**RGSC/17/15            Overview Report**

This report contained the details of the key decisions due to be taken within the Committee's remit and updates on the recommendations of the Committee. The Committee's work programme was included as an appendix. The report also included details of any key decisions that the Chair would be asked to exempt from call in.

The Chair noted that Executive receive quarterly updates on the departments business plans and requested that these also be provided to Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. She also asked whether a timescale could be provided for the report requested regarding the Corporate Core Review. The Chair reminded members that a visit had been organised for members of the Committee to the Corporate Communications Team following the meeting.

The Delivery Plan Corporate Core (Appendix 7 of the Budget Reports 2017-2020) was received late as it was awaiting sign off and was published in a supplementary agenda.

**Decision:**

To agree the work programme, subject to the above comments.