Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 6 December 2022

Present:
Councillor Simcock (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Davies, Lanchbury, B Priest, Rowles and Wheeler

Also present:
Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development
Councillor Stanton, Deputy Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor H Priest, Member of the Housing Advisory Board
Christine Leyland, Co-opted Member of the Housing Advisory Board
Safeena Rather, Co-opted Member of the Housing Advisory Board

Apologies: Councillor Good and Kirkpatrick

RGSC/22/53 Urgent Business

Upon opening the meeting, the Chair informed members that meetings of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee would be held on Thursday mornings from the start of the new municipal year in May 2023.

RGSC/22/54 Minutes

Decision:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 8 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

RGSC/22/55 Housing Advisory Board

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director – Neighbourhoods, which provided an update on the new governance arrangements in respect of the Council's housing stock. The new Housing Advisory Board provided oversight of Manchester City Council Housing Services, which was formerly Northwards ALMO, and was a key contributor to empowering tenants and ensuring that North Manchester residents helped to shape and held the Council's Housing Service to account.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- In January 2021, Manchester City Council agreed to bring the ALMO Northwards Housing back in house and the transfer of the ALMO took place on 5 July 2021;
- The Housing Advisory Board began meeting in July 2022 and the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee was instrumental in its formation;

- The purpose of the Housing Advisory Board and the key responsibilities of Board Members;
- The Board meets bi-monthly and was made up of 5 local residents/tenants, 6 elected members (including the Chair, Exec Member for Housing and Development) and 3 co-opted housing professionals;
- The recruitment of the resident members to the board received a very high response, with over 300 residents expressing an interest. Officers remain in contact with all applicants to ensure a diverse network to engage with on future plans and current performance;
- Deep dive sessions on areas of particular focus and interest, such as the Housing Revenue Account, Zero Carbon and the Social Housing Bill, are undertaken as part of the Board's collective learning and development; and
- There are two audit recommendations to fully implement over the remainder of the financial year, which relate to learning and development and further equalities reporting.

Key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussion included:

- A previous recommendation made by the Committee for all Housing Advisory Board agendas to be circulated to all members, and why this had not happened;
- Whether the Board's remit required revision to include private finance initiative (PFI) properties;
- How the Board could encourage residents to remain engaged; and
- The number of voids - when a property is unoccupied for a period of time – and what was causing such a high level.

In introducing the item, the Executive Member for Housing and Development advised the committee that the Housing Advisory Board had met three times and that the governance of the Board was robust.

Members of the Housing Advisory Board, including a local elected member and independent co-opted members, attended the meeting and provided their insights into the work of the Housing Advisory Board. They explained their motivations for joining the Board and their role in holding the Board to account.

The Director of Housing Operations responded to members' queries and committed to sharing all past and future agendas for the Housing Advisory Board to members.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development acknowledged a local gap in the governance of PFI properties and welcomed members' feedback.

In response to a member query on further engagement with residents, the Director of Housing Operations confirmed that this would continue and highlighted the significant engagement with a strong network of residents. He also highlighted new tenant satisfaction measures, as part of the Social Housing Bill requiring statutory tenant engagement. There was much to collaborate with residents on and the Housing Advisory Board would oversee a systematic approach to this.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development also suggested the possibility of undertaking tenant scrutiny panels as the Board progressed.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development explained that the Council had inherited a high level of voids from Northwards when the council housing stock was brought in-house. This was largely due to the Covid pandemic which had caused a backlog of repairs and labour and issues in accessing properties, which was a challenge faced by the housing provider sector as a whole. The issue of voids had been considered at every meeting of the Housing Advisory Board with a deep dive undertaken at the last meeting.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development explained that the number of voids was reported at the last Board meeting as 178, which was a reduction but remained significant. He commented that the Council strongly sought to reduce the overall number of voids, particularly given housing need in Manchester. Work was being undertaken to assess the relet programme, handover of keys, use of contractors and void standard in order to reduce the number of unoccupied properties. He also advised members that there was a target of less than 100 voids by April 2023.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/22/56 Housing Revenue Account

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, Strategic Director – Growth and Development and Strategic Director – Neighbourhoods which provided an update on the ongoing work being undertaken to finalise the 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget. The final proposed budget would be brought back to Members in March as part of budget approvals.

The report also outlined the current assumptions for the 2023/24 HRA budget and the impact of the proposals on both the HRA and tenants, given the current economic climate and cost-of-living pressures.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The HRA is a ring-fenced account and must, in general, balance on a year-to-year basis, so that the costs of running the Housing Service, can be met from HRA income;
- The Government stipulates that registered providers may not increase rents by more than Consumer Price Inflation (at September of the previous year) plus one percentage point in any year, although the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the November 2022 Autumn Statement that social housing rents would be capped at an increase of no more than 7% due to current high inflation rates.

- HRA reserves are forecast to be around c£90m at the end of the current financial year (2022/23) and are forecast to reduce to around £44m by 2026/27;
- As of October 2022, the HRA is forecasting that expenditure for the current year will be £17.7m higher than income and this would be funded through the use of reserves
- The HRA budget was being modelled on the basis of a 7% rent increase to all tenants with effect from April 2023 and if this increase is approved by members, it would produce an average weekly rent (based on 52 weeks) of:
    - General Needs £83.88 (£5.49 increase)
    - Supported Housing £76.45 (£5.00 increase)
    - PFI Managed £98.15 (£6.42 increase)
- Housing benefit levels had not been capped and any approved rent increase would be covered in full for those residents in receipt of 100% Housing Benefit entitlement or Universal Credit (housing element).

The key points and queries which arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Whether the government would fund the difference between the 7% rent cap and 11.1%, which would have been the proposed increase had the rent cap not been applied;
- Work undertaken to mitigate inflationary pressures and 'bad debt', including non-payment of rent;
- The extra work required to address voids and issues with damp and mould in properties;
- Whether any flexibility was built into the budget regarding heat charges, given that the energy price cap will end in March 2023;
- How the Council was ensuring deliverability on the contract with Equans, who were commissioned to bring voids back into use;
- Seeking clarification as to whether the Council had assumed an annual 3% rent increase from 2024/25 onwards;
- Types of hardship funds and cost-of-living support provided by other Registered Providers in Manchester;
- Residents' views on the level of voids in Manchester, and whether there were any particular "hotspots" for these;
- The viability of the Right to Buy scheme, and the impact this has on the Housing Revenue Account;
- Emphasising that the 7% rent cap is a limit and not a requirement, and that a 7% rent increase would have a significantly detrimental impact on many Manchester families.

In introducing the report, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources explained to the committee that a decision was still to be taken on the Council's rent increase for 2023/24. He explained that the government had undertaken a consultation on whether to impose a rent cap of either 3%, 5% or 7%, which contrasted with the national rent policy which allowed social housing rents to be increased by up to the consumer price index (CPI) plus 1% and would have meant next year's rents increasing by 11.1%.

He advised that a 7% cap had been imposed but acknowledged the inflationary pressures facing the Housing Revenue Account, which was required to balance for a 30-year period.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources also confirmed that the government would not fund the difference between the 7% rent cap and the 11.1% based on CPI.

The Head of Finance for Corporate Core and Strategic Development advised that a provision of 1% per annum based on rental income had been built into the business plan for bad debts and this would be kept under review. However, previous experiences indicated that concerns over the introduction of Universal Credit leading to an increase in non-payment of rent were unfounded and this was largely due to work undertaken by Northwards previously and the Council presently in building relations with tenants and promoting early intervention.

The Director of Housing Operations explained that removing damp and mould was part of the Council's repairs programme and that this had been prioritised lately given recent events surrounding the death of a child due to mould in social housing elsewhere in the country.

In response to a member query around heating charges, the Head of Finance for Corporate Core and Strategic Development explained that the previous year's budget included a 20% cap for heating charges and increases in the Ofgem price cap and heating charges had resulted in an in-year deficit within the HRA. Officers were working through the impact of this for 2023/24 and this would be brought back to the committee in February 2023 as part of the budget approval process.

Regarding the work of Equans, members were advised that the contract began in April 2021 with 6500 outstanding repairs jobs, of which 2000 remained. The number of voids had decreased from 260 at the commencement of the contract to 178, and a plan had been devised for March and April 2023 to get the number of voids back to the pre-pandemic figure.

Assurances were provided by both the Executive Member for Housing and Development and the Director of Housing Operations that the Council was doing all it could within the current contract to reduce the number of voids and outstanding repairs sand to ensure value-for-money for residents and the HRA.

The Head of Finance for Corporate Core and Strategic Development clarified that calculations of the surplus and deficit of the HRA's 30-year business plan were based on implementing either a 3%, 5% or 7% increase in 2023/24 and reverting to usual practice of an increase based on CPI plus 1% in subsequent years.

The Head of Strategic Housing also committed to providing additional information on the types of hardship funds and cost-of-living support provided by other Registered Providers in Manchester following the meeting.

In response to members' queries around residents views on the number of voids, the Executive Member for Housing and Development explained that the Housing Advisory Board had undertaken a 'deep dive' into the issue of voids at its last meeting and residents expressed strong views on the issue. He emphasised the moral responsibility of the Council in helping those in temporary accommodation and on the housing register. The Director of Housing Operations also advised that engagement had been undertaken with residents during the summer with over 500 responses as to what residents wanted from the service. Many comments were centred around increased visibility in the community and repairs.

It was noted that hotspots for voids could be identified by tenure type, particularly around older stock. The Executive Member for Housing and Development endeavoured to look into geographical hotspots and provide an update to members.

The Head of Finance for Corporate Core and Strategic Development provided assurances around the impact of the Right to Buy scheme on the HRA and explained that assumptions on housing stock were built into the 30-year business plan. It was noted, however, that expenditure would need to be reduced to offset any reduction in rent income as a result of residents utilising the scheme. The Executive Member for Housing and Development also highlighted the Council's progress in building more social housing to offset any reductions and expressed his desire for the Right to Buy scheme to be either scrapped or fundamentally reformed to ensure financial sustainability.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources recognised the hardships which residents were facing and urged residents to take advantage of the Hardship Fund offered by the Council.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/22/57 Capital Programme - Impact of Recent Market Changes and Budget Process

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an update on the impact of recent changes in the financial and construction markets on the capital programme and provided an update on the proposed capital budget process for 2023/24.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The current forecast for the approved capital programme over this year and the next 3 years is £1,037.8m;

- The Council has seen costs rise across the programme since the start of 2022 and some projects have sought budget increases given the severity of the cost increases;
- Whilst the forecast over the medium term is for inflation to subside, the price increases are not expected to reverse;
- The cost of debt available to the Council from the Public Works Loan Board has on average more than doubled since December 2021, resulting in increased ongoing revenue costs associated with additional borrowing;
- The current approved programme remains affordable and the Council has budgeted for capital financing costs across a number of years and built up a capital financing reserve from funding including underspends in the historic annual capital financing budget to smooth the effects of potential increases in interest rates;
- A set of principles were proposed to ensure that the limited capital resources are prioritised to achieve best value for money. Projects should demonstrate that they support corporate priorities, including both low carbon and social value, and will be supported to proceed if:
    - the project is fully funded by external grants and contributions;
    - the project generates additional capital receipts to the Council, so the impact on resources is minimal; or
    - the project will generate a robust net income stream or revenue savings that is sufficient to meet the associated capital financing costs and therefore be funded on an invest to save basis
- Additional borrowing will only be considered for funding a project as a last resort, if there are no other funding sources available and the project is of critical importance to the Council;
- Proposed changes to the approval process for capital expenditure, to ensure it remains fit for purpose, reflects best practice and provides a strategic top-down as well as bottom-up approach to the development of the future programme;
- Proposals would continue to be developed and would form part of the Capital Strategy to go to Executive in February 2023.

In introducing the item, the Chair informed the committee that he had recently undertaken a tour of the Town Hall, which was undergoing renovation, and encouraged other members to do the same.

The key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- The proposed changes to when key decisions are taken on capital expenditure, and the impact this would have on the call-in process;
- Requesting an update on the progress of the Council's Levelling Up Funding (LUF) bid;
- If the Council was intending on taking a tougher line on Section 106 payments given the necessity of this revenue stream;
- Expressing concern over a suggestion that S106 monies could be used to fund projects which were not in the area of the awarding development, and how local members would be involved in the process;

- How the implementation of a due diligence template would facilitate a more robust decision-making process; and
- Seeking clarification as to the amount of additional borrowing required to fund the capital programme.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that the capital programme existed in a more constrained environment given the increased cost of borrowing and inflation rate. The current capital programme had facilitated significant investment in Manchester and highlighted the parameters for future programmes.

In response to a query from the Chair regarding the proposal to amend the Constitution to allow key decisions for capital expenditure to be taken at the point that the budget increase is approved, the Deputy City Treasurer confirmed that this would allow the call-in process to begin at the time that the budget is set, as opposed to when a contract is awarded. This would improve transparency and the role of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Deputy City Treasurer advised members that the Council was successful in the first round of Levelling Up Funding and a bid had been submitted within the second round for the regeneration of Wythenshawe district centre. Any funding would be capped at £20 million and a decision was anticipated before Christmas. He also acknowledged the need for the Council to only apply for grants and funding which is relevant to the corporate priorities.

It was clarified that any S106 monies would continue to be linked to the schemes to which they are associated and that the proposed changes to the capital approval process were aimed to bring funding streams together to maximise resources and target priorities. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer stated that the report highlighted the importance of maximising all income streams, including S106, and making sensible decisions around the capital programme.

With regards to the proposed due diligence template, the Deputy City Treasurer explained that this would form an initial ‘sense test’ for projects to ensure they fit with the Council’s priorities, whether it could generate external funding, budget implications and deliverability.

The Deputy City Treasurer also explained that the capital programme would cost c£1 billion over 5 years with the Council borrowing around half of this. This amount had not yet been borrowed fully but Members were assured that the Council had the budget and means to repay this.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/22/58 Update on Autumn Statement

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which provided an updates on the main announcements from the Autumn Statement delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt MP, to the House of

Commons on 17 November 2022. The report also focused on the implications of the Statement for local government funding.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- A total of £55bn was announced in either public spending cuts or tax rises;
- Pensions and benefits were increased by the September 2022 inflation rate of 10.1% and would come into place in April 2023;
- Government department spend will increase more slowly than planned, below the current inflation rate, with exceptions in health and education, which have had increases in their budgets;
- The financial impact on the Council's position remained unknown until the finance settlement is received in late December;
- Positive announcements were around increased funding for adult social care, a continued freeze of the business rates multiplier and an extension and enhancement of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) reliefs scheme into 2023/24, plus a Supporting Small Business Scheme (SSBS);
- The announcements within the Autumn Statement were expected to have a positive impact on the funds available to the council for the next couple of years but there remained significant unknowns around the New Homes Bonus, the Services Grant and the Fair Funding Review; and
- The Statement's focus on three core priorities for economic growth -energy, infrastructure and innovation.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources stated that there were some positives announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, although he asserted that many difficult decisions after 2025 would need to be taken by local authorities and not the government.

He explained that the Council would benefit from compensation from the business rates multiplier freeze and increased funding for adult social care. The Council's financial position would become clearer upon receipt of the Finance Settlement, which was expected in late December 2022.

He advised the committee that there was inadequate support within the Autumn Statement to mitigate against the financial implications currently facing local authorities and there was no guarantee that future funding would rise in line with inflation.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

RGSC/22/59 Setting of the Council Tax Base and Business Rates Shares for Budget Setting Purposes

The committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which outlined the methodology of calculating the City Council's council tax base and business rates income for budget setting purposes for 2023/24. The report also explained the timing of related payments and the decision on business rates pool membership.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The calculation of the council tax base is the number of dwellings within the Council's boundary presented as 'Band D equivalent'. Dwellings outside Band D are converted into a proportionate Band D value and individual band bills are calculated in the ratios proportionate to Band D;
- The number of properties is adjusted to take account of discounts and exemptions for disabled occupants, single occupiers, students, exempt dwellings and reductions in accordance with the council tax support scheme and non-collection of council tax;
- The fluctuating numbers of students and the transient population in Manchester make it difficult to predict how many properties will be exempt, empty or occupied by a single person;
- Manchester has been part of the Greater Manchester business rates retention pilot since 2017/18 which means that 99% of yield will be retained by the Council and 1% paid to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority;
- The starting point for the calculation of the business rates base is the estimate of gross business rates payable by business ratepayers in 2023/24 and is adjusted by the forecast cost of mandatory and discretionary reliefs;
- The Council is required to estimate any business rates surplus or deficit on their Collection Fund for the relevant year and any such estimated surplus or deficit is shared between the billing authority and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority;
- An application was submitted to Government for the ten Greater Manchester authorities to form a Business Rates Pool in 2023/24 and each authority will need approval, through its respective governance arrangements, with a final decision on whether to participate in the 2023/24 Pool required within 28 days of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which is expected in late December; and
- Payment dates for the share of council tax payable to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority must be agreed and notified before 31 January 2023. The payment dates are proposed as the 20th of each month for 2023/24; and
- How the Council approaches Council Tax debt recovery.

In introducing the item, the Chair thanked officers for providing additional information regarding the Council's procedure for debt recovery, which was included as an addendum to the report.

The key points and queries that arose from the committee's discussions included:

- Commending the Council for a reduction in using enforcement agents to recover debts, and querying what more could be done to reduce this;
- The Council's procedure for dealing with complaints made against Enforcement Agents;
- Noting that the recovery process would stop if a resident contacted the Council and made and kept to an arrangement for payment;

- The need to recognise those facing mental health issues and how this impacts their ability to deal with financial difficulties and debts;
- Whether any information sharing was in place with partners to gain a clearer understanding of the personal circumstances of those who owed money;
- Noting that there was an increase of c.8000 Band D equivalent properties for 2022/23, and how many more were anticipated for 2023/24;
- How the Council's membership in a business rates pool with other Greater Manchester authorities would be advantageous; and
- Whether the Council would be required to pay central government if there was a decline in business rates growth in Manchester.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that decisions around the estimated council tax surplus or deficit for 2022/23; the 2023/24 council tax base; the estimated business rates surplus or deficit for 2022/23; the 2023/24 business rates income; the Council's membership in the business rate pool with other Greater Manchester local authorities; and the dates of precept payments to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority would be taken as Key Decisions by the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Resources, and that the Chair of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee would be requested to waive these decisions from the call-in procedure.

She also explained that the Council's business rates position was particularly complex for 2023/24 due to the pending re-evaluation and the Council tax position was increasingly volatile due to the need to ascertain correct estimates for student exemptions and new properties.

In response to a question around what more could be done to reduce the use of Enforcement Agents in collecting money owed, the Head of Corporate Revenues advised that over the last 10 years, the Council had utilised all information they had to contact and engage with residents who owed money to come to a mutually sustainable solution. The Council was also identifying companies who encourage residents through text messages and automated phone calls to engage with the Council. This had been trialled in other areas and had a good response rate.

He also informed members of a HMRC trial, which provided the Council with information on residents' employer and earnings and further encouraged them to contact the Council. Staff were currently making contact with those residents earning over £40,000 pa.

Officers had been instructed to take account of cost-of-living pressures when making sustainable arrangements, recognising the pressure on resident's finances.

The Head of Corporate Revenues advised that all Enforcement Agents wear body cameras with audio and visual recording functionality, and this could be utilised in response to a complaint. He explained that work was undertaken several years ago to examine the number of complaints against Enforcement Agents, and this was low, with around 5 complaints per company per year. He also provided an example where the Council had requested that a particular Enforcement Agent did not work in Manchester due to a complaint around conduct.

Members were also informed of criteria within the Enforcement Agents’ Code of Practice, such as mental health issues and recent bereavement, which required Agents to desist from visiting a resident who may be suffering or dealing with personal issues. All enforcement companies had Vulnerability Teams, who would assume responsibility for collecting money owed in a sensitive manner. The Council would also take any mitigating information around mental health or personal circumstances into account before passing details over to Enforcement Agents and would make further efforts to engage with residents prior to this.

A GDPR issue was acknowledged in response to a question around information sharing with partners, but the Revenues team had provided training previously to the Adult Social Care officers on council tax, to enable staff in the community to understand the payment process and encourage residents to pay. The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services explained that his service was looking at how best to link with the cost-of-living advice service which offered pathways to advice and support related to benefits, help with rent, debt and food poverty and worked in conjunction with Citizens Advice Manchester to provide holistic support to residents and acknowledge the wider issues as to why a resident may be in council tax arrears.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained, in response to a question from the Chair, that future forecasts of Band D equivalent properties were aligned with information from the Council’s housing department on proposed new developments, but this is not an exact figure as properties are not formally recognised until assessed by the Valuation Office.

The Deputy Chief Treasurer advised that a 2% increase in the tax base was assumed for 2023/24 and would provide a figure as to how many properties this equated to following the meeting.

It was stated that the Greater Manchester business rates pool would be advantageous for Manchester City Council if the pool was not a part of the 100% business rates growth pilot as this would enable the Council to retain its entire business rates income. Membership of the 50% business rates growth pilot would mean that grant funding would be provided to 9 of 10 Greater Manchester authorities, including Manchester City Council, with Trafford Council having to pay a tariff to central government and would be disadvantageous to the Greater Manchester economy.

The Deputy City Treasurer advised that there was a baseline of 97% for business rates growth, under which the government would compensate a local authority. He assured the committee that the business rates growth in Manchester was above 97% as a result of cumulated growth.

In summarising the item, the Executive Member for Finance and Resources reiterated that the use of Enforcement Agents in collecting debts was a last resort, that residents had a minimum of 12 opportunities to engage with the Council regarding their payments and that those on the Council Tax Support Scheme would not be referred to Enforcement Agents. He also highlighted that low income was not always the reason why a person may not pay council tax. However, he stated that council tax formed a substantial part of the revenue budget and was needed to provide essential and basic services.

Decision:

That the Committee

1. notes that the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Resources, has delegated powers to:

    - agree the estimated council tax surplus or deficit for 2022/23;
    - set the 2023/24 council tax base for tax setting purposes in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2013;
    - agree the estimated business rates surplus or deficit for 2022/23;
    - calculate the 2023/24 business rates income for budget setting purposes in accordance with the Non-Domestic Rating (Rates Retention) Regulations;
    - determine whether the Council should be part of a business rate pooling arrangements with other Greater Manchester local authorities in 2023/24;
    - set the dates of precept payments to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

2. notes that the Chair of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee will be requested to exempt various key decisions from the call-in procedure; and

3. recommends that the Council's partner agencies be provided with training on Council Tax to provide a collaborative holistic approach to residents requiring support.

RGSC/22/60 Overview Report

The Committee considered the report by the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided details of key decisions that fell within the Committee's remit and the Committee's work programme, which was to be amended as appropriate and agreed.

In response to a query regarding the Major Contracts Oversight Board, which the committee had recommended be established, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer confirmed that a meeting had taken place in November with a further one scheduled for January 2023. It was agreed that a report on the work of the Board would be added to the Committee's work programme for a suitable time.

Decision:

That the report be noted and the work programme agreed.