

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Scrutiny Committee

HELD ON TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 6.30 PM

MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON, OX14
4SB

Present:

Ian White (Chairman)

Mocky Khan, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Stefan Gawrysiak, George Levy, Anne-Marie Simpson
and Kate Gregory (as substitute for Alexandrine Kantor)

Apologies:

Anne Badcock, Simon Hewerdine and Alexandrine Kantor, tendered apologies.

Officers:

Paul Bateman, William Jacobs, Richard Spraggett and Mark Stone.

Also present:

David Turner

12 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 June 2019 and 2 July 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

13 Declarations of interest

None.

14 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

15 Public participation



Listening Learning Leading

None.

16 Financial outturn 2018/19

The committee considered the report of the head of finance, which gave details on the final year end position for revenue and capital expenditure against budget for the financial year 2018/19. It was noted that the report contained summarised schedules of revenue and capital expenditure for 2018/19, which provided explanations of significant variances against budget. All the figures were pre-Audit and might be subject to change as a result of the audit of the Statement of Accounts.

The budgets programme contained several projects which were government-funded, the funding for which had been announced during the financial year. This made spending the full amount by the end of the financial year very difficult, and complicated the reporting of the outturn position against the budget.

The Committee had received questions from councillors and responses were given in written form and circulated to the committee;

Reference page 15, point 11; additional grants for flexible support and preventing homelessness totalling £262,000 and £22,000 for local authority parks - had these grants been used for this purpose? The response was that they were earmarked funds, for the provision of services, for example MIND housing project, connexions outreach and 'dedicated staff'.

Reference page 15 point 11; an additional £145,000 for car parking- is the budgeting for 2019/20 in line with this increased revenue? The response was that as part of the "right sizing" the budget exercise, the base budget for 19/20 was increased (by £144,000). This reflected the volume, not the charges.

Page 16, point 12; refers to the contract with Capita being renegotiated and the contract was £799,000 more than budget. What was the original forecast and what was the basis for the original budgets? The response was that the original budget for payments to Capita in 2018/19 was £3.747 million. The budget was set during a period when both the contract with Capita was being renegotiated, as was the "Inter-authority agreement" (IAA), which set out the basis on which contract costs will be allocated between the council signatories to the contract. The budget was therefore an estimate based on a previous modelling of contract costs that was set before the full financial implications of the outcome of the negotiations could be confirmed.

Reference page 21, appendix 3, under Community Services; reference is made to the Berinsfield co-location project and it's continual delay - what is this project and why does it continue to be delayed? Response; in January 2019, Cabinet agreed a set of recommendations regarding Berinsfield strategic review of progress to date and proposed way forward. The report is available here:

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/documents/s15665/Report.pdf>

The Berinsfield project is the phased but comprehensive enhancement and expansion of Berinsfield. It was delayed to allow a strategic review of the Berinsfield project to objectively consider the work progressed to date, current position and to recommend a proposed way forward.

Reference page 21, appendix 3; under Housing and Environment, reference is made to a reason for carry forward as an Air Quality project- did this project take place? Response; the air quality project was launched towards the end of 2018-19 when the staff restructure was completed. A small amount of the funding had been expended in year and approximately £40k had been allocated for the Henley projects. If the remainder is not spent in year request a carry forward for 2020/21 will be requested. Also, please see page 15, last bullet point, and no, the council is not stating there is less homelessness to prevent.

Reference page 23, under Appendix 4 under 'Explanation of significant variances Community Services' there's an underspend on community grants due to long lead times for paying grants- have the long lead times been taken into consideration for 2019/20? This is confirmed and officers will be bringing proposals to Cabinet in October 2019 which should reduce the lead-in times for paying grants.

How does the under-spend carried forward in Table 3 get calculated? Response; project-specific budgets and one-off growth budgets can be carried forward, underspends on day to day revenue budgets, however, are never carried forward. All carry forward requests are authorised by the s151 officer.

How is the overspend to Capita £799,000 000 (page.16, paragraph 14) allocated in Table 3? Response; It is part of the £740,000 overspend on third party payments in Partnership and innovation.

Table 5; what makes up the £815,000 externally funded additions in the year? Response; these are primarily disabled facility grants (£773,000) and section 106 receipts received from developers applied to capital schemes.

What is the amount owed in Catalyst loans and what have they been raised for? Response; these are housing loans and currently total £817,000.

A motion was moved and seconded, to note Head of Finance's report.

RESOLVED; to note the overall outturn position of the council as well as the outturn of the individual service areas.

17 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The Chairman commended the Work Schedule Committee to the Committee, which contained many important and interesting items for consideration. In particular, members would be interested to learn that an item on the 'Delivery of Crematorium, Graveyard or alternative provision over the next 20 years' was scheduled for future consideration, on a date to be determined. This tied in well with increased interest in environmental and green issues, and also care of the elderly.

On 1 October 2019 the Emerging Local Plan (report back following Council resolution) would be considered by the Committee. Members were encouraged to prepare ideas and issues for this item.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Chairman

Date