



Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Wednesday 12 January 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present Councillor Danielle Stone (Chair)
 Councillor Andrew Grant (Vice-Chair)
 Councillor Sally Beardsworth
 Councillor Michael Brown
 Councillor Paul Clark
 Councillor Maggie Clubley
 Councillor Rupert Frost
 Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
 Councillor Mark Hughes
 Councillor David James
 Councillor Koulla Jolley
 Councillor Ian McCord
 Councillor Colin Morgan
 Councillor Ken Pritchard
 Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
 Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz

Also Councillor Jonathan Harris
Present:

Apologies Councillor Azizur Rahman
for
Absence:

Officers Martin Henry, Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer)
 Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager
 Richard Woods, Democratic Services Officer

36. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

37. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

38. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements:

1. That proposals for budget scrutiny by way of a whole-committee Task and Finish Group on 27 January 2022 would be put forward following the Committee's discussion and identification of priority areas of the draft budget for additional scrutiny.
2. A formal meeting of the Committee would be held on 7 February 2022 in order to consider the findings of the Task and Finish Group.
3. Additional training on Overview and Scrutiny had been scheduled for 1 February 2022 and that diary invites had been circulated to Members of the Committee.

39. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

40. **Budget Scrutiny**

By way of introduction, the Chair explained that the intention of the Committee was to identify at least three priority areas of the budget for additional scrutiny, in order to ensure its robustness and to identify any recommendations to Cabinet that may arise.

The Executive Director – Finance provided a headline summary of the Draft Budget 2022-23 with the central point being that the Council was on course to set a balanced budget for the upcoming financial year, though the Council had received an additional £3.8m more than expected in the settlement from central government. The Executive Director – Finance explained that a higher settlement than expected from central government could not be guaranteed in future years therefore further work was required on how additional income from central government would be factored into base funding in future budgets.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Jonathan Harris addressed the Committee and thanked the Executive Director – Finance and the wider finance team for all of the hard work that had gone into delivering a balanced budget. Councillor Harris asked a number of detailed questions regarding the draft budget which were duly answered by officers.

Following the address from Councillor Jonathan Harris, the Chair opened up the floor for Committee members to participate in a detailed Q&A session with the Executive Director – Finance in relation to various aspects of the draft budget. Following a detailed discussion, the Committee came up with the following priority areas of focus for additional detailed scrutiny:

- The mapping of the business plan to the budget – Section 151 Officer and Deputy Section 151 Officer to provide details to the Task and Finish Group.

- The achievability of the Council's commitment to carbon neutrality and Highways – The Executive Director – Place and Economy and the Assistant Director – Highways and Waste to provide information to the Task and Finish Group.
- The Children's Trust Budget Director of Children's Services, Chief Executive of the Children's Trust and the Director of Finance and Resources, Children's Trust to provide details to the Task and Finish Group.
- Strength Based Working Model and financial savings associated within it – Executive Director – Adults, Communities and Wellbeing and the Assistant Director – Safeguarding to provide information to the Task and Finish Group.

Members of the Committee agreed that the best way to focus scrutiny activity on the identified priority areas of the budget was to hold a whole-committee Task and Finish Group, with breakout groups to discuss the individual areas identified.

Resolved

- (1) That a whole-committee Task and Finish Group be convened on Thursday 27 January 2022 in order to discuss the identified priority areas of the draft budget.
- (2) That it be agreed that scrutiny of the draft budget by this committee be commenced as soon as practicable in future municipal years

41. **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Chair advised the Committee that following the decision to hold a whole-committee Task and Finish Group on 27 January 2022, a formal meeting of the Committee would be convened on 7 February 2022 in order to discuss the findings of the Task and Finish Group, and make any recommendations to Cabinet as necessary.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the addition of a whole-committee task and finish group on 27 January 2022 and an additional formal meeting of the Committee on 7 February 2022, the Committee Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.49 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____