

BUDGET PANEL

27 November 2018

Present: Councillor S Bashir (Chair)
Councillor P Kloss (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Barton, N Bell, J Johnson, M Parker, G Saffery and
N Shah

Also present: Councillor Robbie Laird and Councillor Mark Watkin

Officers: Head of Finance
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)

14 **Apologies for absence/committee membership**

Apologies were received from Councillor Martins.

15 **Disclosure of interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

16 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018 were submitted and signed.

17 **Council Finances - business rates retention update**

The Head of Finance provided members with an update on government plans to be a pilot for 75% business rates retention in 2019-20.

As reported to Council on 16 October 2018, Watford Borough Council was part of a bid submission which included all councils in Hertfordshire. An announcement from government was expected on 6 December 2018. It was suggested that the county as a whole would gain by £8.4 million if it were to become a pilot.

Should the pilot bid be unsuccessful, Watford would be included in the business rates pool for 2019-20. This pool was also expected to bring additional benefits to the borough.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that the council's business rates collection performance had improved over the past year.

18 Finance Digest 2018/19 Q2

The Head of Finance introduced the Finance Digest for quarter 2 2018/19. This showed the expected financial position (forecast outturn) for the current financial year, based on the actual performance at the end of Quarter 2 (September 2018) set against the latest budget.

It was reported that the latest forecast outturn was £15.283 million, a variation of £0.156 million when compared to the latest budget. This figure included planned use of reserves of £0.494 million. Key variances included costs associated with the Watford 2020 transformation programme, on-demand transport proposals in the town and the provision of investment advice to the council.

The Head of Finance provided a broad overview of the council's current financial position, highlighting changes in the revenue budget, capital programme, council income and treasury management. She took questions and provided clarifications from Budget Panel members on a range of issues, including the impact on s.106 monies of the discontinuation of the Metropolitan Line extension project, the £467,000 in year grant for homelessness, maintenance costs for the paddling pools in Cassiobury Park and long term debt issues associated with Watford Indoor Bowls Club.

RESOLVED –

that Budget Panel notes the content of the Finance Digest 2018/19, quarter 2.

19 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 15 January 2019.

Chair

The meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.15 pm