

FINANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 November 2019

Present: Councillor M Turmaine (Chair)
Councillor P Kloss (Vice-Chair)
Councillors N Bell, J Johnson and J Pattinson

Also present: Councillor Mark Watkin

Officers: Head of Finance (Shared Service)
Head of Regeneration and Property
Democratic Services Officer (IS)

11 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Khan and Stanton.

Councillor Martins replaced Councillor Saffery and Councillor Dychton replaced Councillor Allen-Williamson.

12 Disclosure of interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

13 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2019 were submitted and signed.

14 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED-

that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) of the Act for the reasons stated on the agenda in terms of Schedule 12A.

15

Property Investment Board update

A presentation was received from the Head of Regeneration and Property, who responded to questions from members of the Finance Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair thanked the Head of Regeneration and Property for his presentation.

RESOLVED –

that the presentation by the Head of Regeneration and Property on the current work of the Property Investment Board was considered and noted.

The Finance Scrutiny Committee then moved back to the public part of the meeting.

16

Finance Digest 2019/20 (Q2)

The Committee received the report of the Head of Finance. The Head of Finance introduced the report highlighting some key areas of interest, such as the variance figures. It was explained that a good deal of the variance was as a result of the re-phasing of Riverwell and the sustainable transport initiative. The latter was re-phased following advice that it would be better (and give improved chances of a successful launch) to wait until the weather improved in the Spring.

There followed a short discussion regarding the Town Hall project and the cost of repair for the Colosseum roof. A question was asked as to whether the building work of a few years ago might have been below standard. It was agreed that there could be no come back on the previous builders.

The Head of Finance provided the committee with the key risks: Hart Homes, Croxley Park, Town Hall and the Bowls Club. She added that the Bowls Club had recently been resolved at court and so this was unlikely to feature in the next quarterly report.

The discussion moved on to staff budget and vacancies. It was explained that whilst some vacancies were carried, some of these were due to recent vacancies that had yet to be advertised and a significant proportion were as a result of vacancies being held as part of the 2020 process. This prompted a question as to whether the vacancies were having an effect on service delivery. The Head of Finance admitted that there was probably some impact, but not severe. There followed a general discussion about difficulty in recruiting so close to London, where salaries were higher and the larger

London unitary authorities could also offer greater scope and opportunities. The Head of Finance added that the council habitually budgeted for 5% staff vacancies.

The report concluded, the Chair asked if there were any final questions. A suggestion was made that perhaps Cabinet should consider the issue of recruitment. A short discussion resulted in the decision that this was not necessary.

The Head of Finance explained that as a result of the forthcoming General Election, the local government finance settlements would now be after Christmas.

The Chair commented that the next meeting would be on 14 January 2020 and concluded the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- that the 2019/20 Quarter 2 Finance Digest as shown at Annex A to the report was considered and the revenue and capital forecast outturn positions were noted.

Chair
Finance Scrutiny Committee

The meeting started at 7.05 p.m.
and finished at 7.45 p.m.