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PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
01/09/2022 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor Ahmad (in the Chair)
Councillors Byrne, S Hussain, Kenyon, Rea and Shuttleworth

Also in Attendance:

A. Ryans – Director of Finance

M. Stenson – Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and Strategic Financial Management

A. Collinge – Head of School Support Service

P. Thompson – Constitutional Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marie Bashforth and Islam.

2 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business for this meeting of the Committee to consider.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests received.

4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions for this meeting of the Committee to consider.

5 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held 23rd June 2022, be approved as a correct record.

6 DRAFT 2021/22 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Finance that presented the Council's draft Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2021/22. The submitted report highlighted:

- a. The timeline for the preparation of the accounts and recent changes to the timetable for the audit of the accounts;
- b. The uncertainty regarding the timeline for the conclusion of the audit process given the on-going consideration of technical accounting arrangements regarding the valuation of infrastructure assets;
- c. The current position with regard to the audit of the accounts;
- d. The overall revenue outturn position for 2021/22 was a surplus of £2.749m;
- e. The year-end variances that are attributable to each Portfolio;

- f. The level of Government grants received in relation to the COVID-19 brought forward into and received during 2021/22;
- g. Schools balances at 31st March 2022 were £10.192m;
- h. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit was £2.773m and was held in an unusable reserve rather than being netted off the School's balances (as was the accounting practice prior to 2020/21);
- i. The final Housing Revenue Account (HRA) balance was £21.719m;
- j. The balance on the Collection Fund was a deficit of £9.133m;
- k. The revenue account earmarked reserves at £99.228m, other earmarked reserves at £20.992m (Revenue Grant Reserves of £10.731m plus School Expenditure on the Council's Capital Programme for 2021/22 was £76.989m against the revised Capital Programme in 2021/22, resulting in a variance of £38.280m compared to the projected outturn of £38.709m at month 9. Of the variance £32.333m was due to the required inclusion in the Council's asset register of the new Saddleworth School which was built and mostly funded by the Department of Education. The remaining variance of £5.948m was due to projects moving forward more quickly than anticipated towards the end of the year. The increase in expenditure required funding allocated to future years to be re-profiled to fully finance the Capital Programme in 2021/22;
- l. The significant items in each of the primary financial statements;
- m. The preparation of Group Accounts incorporating the Council's three wholly owned companies – the Unity Partnership Ltd, MioCare Community Interest Company and the Meridian Group. The Meridian Group has been incorporated into the Council's Group Accounts for 2021/22, as the Council became the only shareholder during 2021/22; and
- n. The performance of the Finance Team in closing the accounts.

The presentation of the draft Statement of Accounts to the Audit Committee on 21st June 2022, in line with recognised good practice, provided the Audit Committee's members with an opportunity to review the Council's year-end financial position before they were required to formally approve the accounts. The presentation of the draft Statement of Accounts to this meeting of the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided Members with an additional opportunity to consider the outturn for 2021/22.

Resolved:
That the report be noted.

The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Finance which provided members with the opportunity to review the first budget monitoring report for the financial year 2022/23. The report enabled the Committee to consider the key information relating to the forecast revenue budget position and the financial position of the capital programme, as at 30th June 2022 (Quarter 1 2022/23), together with the revised capital programme covering the period 2022/23 to 2026/27. The report (Attachment 1) had been considered and the recommendations therein were approved by the Cabinet, at its meeting, that held on 22nd August 2022.

The current forecast outturn position for 2022/23 was showing a projected deficit variance of £5.833m after allowing for approved and pending transfers to and from reserves. This position included additional costs and pressures that have been identified by the Authority in this financial year as a direct result of the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were two areas which continued to endure significant pressures which were attributable to the ongoing impact of the Pandemic; Community Health & Adult Social Care was reporting an adverse variance of £7.582m and Children's Social Care was recording £4.137m. These pressures were being offset against a corporate provision of £12.000m COVID-19 Legacy funding which had been set aside during the 2022/23 budget setting process.

An update on the major issues driving the projections was detailed at Annex 1 to the report. The report outlined the most up to date capital spending position for 2022/23 to 2026/27 for approved schemes. The revised capital programme budget for 2022/23 was £88.075m at the close of Quarter 1, a net increase of £2.073m from the original budget of £78.695m. Actual expenditure to 30th June 2020 was £6.787m (8.62% of the forecast outturn). Without doubt the forecast position would continue to change throughout the year with additional re-profiling into future years.

Resolved:
That the report be noted.

8

DELIVERY OF ADDITIONAL SCHOOL PLACES AND ADMISSIONS

The Committee scrutinised a report of the Head of School Support Services that provided a briefing and update to the members on the delivery of school places and school place preference rates for the borough.

The report provided an update on the delivery of additional school places and the work of Education Support Services including: -

- Pupil Numbers
- Allocation of school places by ward

- The percentage of residents who are offered a school place of choice (1st or top 3 preferences)
- Overview of the current school place plans
- Future to increase parental choice.



The Local Authority (LA) has seen a slight dip in the numbers of Primary age pupils in schools. In 2020 the January census recorded 24,676 pupils in Oldham schools, whilst the number from 2022 was 24,538. In Secondary schools the number continues to rise; in 2020 there were 16,740 secondary pupils, this now stands at 17,699. These numbers include children attending special schools and the pupil referral unit.

In secondary there was place pressure in some year groups, leaving a small number of surplus places available.

The usual situation existed insofar that the borough has some extremely popular secondary schools and others that are less popular. New provision at the Brian Clarke Academy will give the borough much needed places and further choice for residents who may otherwise struggle to get places at more popular schools.

Ahead of September 2022 Brian Clarke Academy did their own place allocation as a new free school, so these are not included in the data for this year as the places on offer were conditional on the school opening in September 2022, which has now been confirmed. The Brian Clarke Academy will be further established into the admissions process next year as they will then be part of our allocation, and the places at the school will impact fully on the data allocation in 2023.

Primary has place pressure in year 3 and 4, however all planning areas have at least one school with places in each year group. For many year groups there are several schools with available places. The borough currently has 10.6 % spare capacity in the primary sector.

Oldham continues to be a net 'importer' of pupils with 250 secondary places and 75 primary places offered to non-Oldham residents.

Appendix One of the submitted report showed the detail for 1st and top 3 preferences in Oldham for secondary places. In 2020, 75% of residents were offered their first choice of secondary school. This increased to 75.7 % in 2021 and to 76 % this year. In 2021, 89.9% of pupils gained a place at one of their top 3 preferences of secondary school and in 2022 this had increased to 91.2 %. National rates are included for comparison.

The data however did not include the Brian Clarke Academy as places offered at that school, for 2022/23, were conditional. In 2023 the data was due to include the Brian Clarke Academy.

Information in relation to places offered at the Brian Clarke Academy were detailed at Appendix 3 of the submitted report.



Oldham
Council

A member commented that the percentage of first, second and third choice of school places being offered to children in the South Chadderton Ward was 84.6% in 2022, down from 90.2% in 2021 and as such had the lowest Ward percentage Ward figure in the Oldham Borough. The Head of School Support Service undertook to investigate this matter and report thereon to Members of the Committee.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted
2. That the Head of School Support Services be requested to submit a further update on School's School Places and Admissions in approximately 12 months
3. That the Head of School Support Services' undertaking to report back to Member of the Committee regarding the percentage of first, second and third placed school allocations be noted.

9

PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Committee received a report detailing the Committee's Work Programme for 2022/23.

A Member requested that a report regarding Contract Monitoring be included in the Committee's Work Programme.

Resolved:

1. That the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2022/23 be noted.
2. That a report regarding Contract Monitoring be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

10

KEY DECISION DOCUMENT

The Committee considered the latest Key Decision Document, which set out the Authority's Key Decisions scheduled to be made from 22nd August 2022.

Resolved:

That the Key Decision Document be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.50pm

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