

Minutes of: **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 4 July 2023

Present: Councillor D Vernon (in the Chair)
Councillors R Bernstein, C Birchmore, A Arif, N Bayley,
N Boroda, D Green, T Pilkington, G Marsden, E Moss and
G Staples-Jones

Also in attendance: Councillor J Rydeheard, Councillor R Gold (Cabinet
Member for Finance and Communities) and Councillor
T Rafiq
Nick Fairclough, Senior Policy Manager for Transport for
Greater Manchester
Sam Evans, Executive Director of Finance
Sam McVaigh, Director of People & Inclusion
Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and Democratic Services
Chloe Ashworth, Democratic Services

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor M Rubinstein

OSC.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies are noted above

OSC.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

OSC.3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

OSC.4 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

OSC.5 MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th June be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Members were informed that the letter to Ofcom has been written and will be circulated to all members on Thursday 06th July.

OSC.6 YEAR-END OUTTURN FINANCIAL POSITION

Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities provided an overview of the report which set out the final financial position for the Council for 2022/23. The report sets out the position for both revenue and capital and provides an analysis of the variances, both under and overspending. On revenue, the report sets out that the revenue budget overspent by £2.329m, at quarter 3 the overspend was forecast to be £3.958m therefore the financial position has improved by £1.629m during the last quarter of the financial year. This net overspend comprises of individual departmental overspends and underspends.

The largest individual departmental overspend was on Children and Young People at a value of £6.114m. The extra costs were around agency costs for social care and safeguarding, an increase in demand for children's residential placements including Independent Foster Agency costs and increased costs for home-to-school transport. The most significant underspend was on non-specific services, driven by reduced capital financing costs.

A member questioned the impact that underspends in staffing will cause and asked what is in place to ensure these posts can be recruited to. In response Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities and Sam Evans, Director of Finance advised there are underspends in certain aspects of staffing these are offsetting overspends in the department therefore as recruitment takes place work is needed needs on previous areas of overspend.

A member sought assurances on culture change to deliver the budget. In response Councillor Gold advised there has been a comprehensive finance restructure along with others to support efficient delivery of the budget.

A member of the committee sought assurances on how lessons are learnt from previous years budget's with Children's Services being a key area. In response Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member advised directorates now hold regular meetings on the delivery of their budget and hold accountability for its success. A Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member advised that interest rates are going up and therefore capital receipts are more financially beneficial.

A Question was received regarding the £6,000 Public Health, Substance Misuse underspend. In response Committee members were informed this is due to a staffing restructure and the post will be recruited to.

Members of the Committee were informed that historic debts from the Pandemic were written off these included Business rates.

Members sought assurances regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant and the challenges. In response Sam Evans, Director of Finance advised we are currently in Project Safety Valve and must submit our management plan by 18th July 2023 and we have reduced our deficit and secured money from health for packages of care.

Committee members discussed the report, and the following points were highlighted:

- The difficulties currently with an over reliance on agency workers especially in Childrens and Adult Social Care.
- There are challenges from interest rates rising

- The real living wage is to be extended to contracts with Bury Council and around 6000 people are expected to benefit from this
- Discussions took place regarding charging for car parking in other parts of the borough.

It was agreed that:

1. Councillor Gold and Sam Evans be thanked for the report and update to the Committee.

OSC.7 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Rafiq, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR advised members that it is best practice that the Council produces an annual Health and Safety Report. The report sets out key health and safety activity over the 2022/23 financial year alongside a summary of reported health and safety incidents. It goes on to propose a set of Health and Safety Priorities for the 2023/24 financial year.

Members had discussions regarding:

- Buildings with asbestos and the responsibility of the Council; members were informed that every building has an asbestos management plan and locations on where asbestos is located.
- The 'RAG' rating for Updates on Corrective Actions Arising from Audits, Investigations and HSE Involvement; members were informed that completed actions are not included and amber are where work is ongoing therefore a lack of green ratings is not of concern to officers.
- Members were informed that claims document were from employees and the public.
- Discussions took place regarding the benefits of a staff welfare programme on staff health, welfare and the delivery of services and productivity. Members were informed that an improved employee assistance programme, credit union support, risk assessments and training in place to support staff and managers.

It was agreed:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered and provided feedback on the Health and Safety Annual Report & Policy.
2. Officers and Councillor Rafiq, Cabinet Member for HR and Corporate Affairs be thanked for their attendance.

OSC.8 CORPORATE PLAN

Councillor Rafiq, Cabinet Member for HR and Corporate Affairs advised that Bury Council has committed to an ambitious community strategy, LET'S Do It! which sets out vision that by 2030 the borough of Bury will stand out as a place that is achieving faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation.

This report outlines details of the Council's corporate priorities for 2023/24, aligned to the planning framework set out in the "3Rs" commitment of Response, Recovery and Renewal. It details some of the key deliverables by quarter and the key performance indicators that will be monitored throughout the year.

A member placed on record that he felt the Corporate Plan should be clearly aligned to budget efficiencies by holding Executive Directors and Cabinet Members accountable for the delivery of anticipated savings with links to performance deliverables. Members were informed that each department does have clear alignment beneath the plan to departmental plans and monitoring of savings delivery.

Questions took place regarding the Household Support Fund of which £3 million was received. Members were informed the deadline for spending the money is 31st March 2024 and has now been launched on the Council website. So far 87 payments have been made and there is a robust programme on the plan to roll this out. Councillor Gold advised that more information on the Household Support fund and where it will be used can be sent out.

A member questioned who is involved in the pilot network around Improving Adult Lives and place-based community engagement. In response Councillor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing advised he will send this information.

It was agreed:

- The committee noted the contribution of this activity to the LET'S Do It! Strategy and the target outcomes within.
- Members noted the key performance indicators which will be tracked monthly to inform the quarterly reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny.

OSC.9 GM TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE

Members were presented with a report on the Bee Network and Improving Greater Manchester's Transport Governance. Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and Democratic Services informed Committee members that this report outlines the alignment of Transport for Greater Manchester to the Committee framework with the inclusion of the Bee Network. The Bury member on this Committee is Councillor Quinn, Cabinet Member for Environment, Climate Change and Operations.

Nick Fairclough, Senior Policy Manager for Transport for Greater Manchester informed member that the Bee Network is an integrated transport system for Greater Manchester that is emerging and developing currently. Members were informed that the aim is to provide places like Bury with world class transport links and improved connectivity. This new system is critical for meeting the ambitions for Greater Manchester as is key for economic growth and decarbonisation targets and will align with buses, tram lines and train lines. To increase the ease of using the various modes of public transport a 'bee app' will be launched to include real time information, journey planning and the opportunity to buy tickets. This integration will be supported through bus franchising so Greater Manchester will control bus routes, fares, frequencies and standards. The 'Bee Network' will have the role of setting the standards and

monitoring TFGM's performance in delivering them. Bury is currently in the first phase of bus franchising and is due to launch in September 2023.

In response to a question regarding clarity on road congestion members were informed that concerns around congestion and road works will remain with the local authority for the area.

Members discussed the importance of Bury's input to the new joint transport committee (the Bee Network Committee) and back to Bury Council's local Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In response to a member question regarding franchising; Nick Fairclough, Senior Policy Manager for Transport for Greater Manchester informed members that Greater Manchester will set out the routes they want to be covered and operatives will be invited to apply. The chosen company will be picked based on quality and costs and will be chosen to run the specified route.

Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member for Communities and Finance informed members that the new system will protect residents bus routes as currently companies can drop routes, whereas these will be set by Greater Manchester and delivered as set out.

A member questioned if Wi-Fi will be made available on the buses and if not, could this be considered. Nick Fairclough Senior Policy Manager for Transport for Greater Manchester advised that he will feed this back to the team, but there is plans to include USB charging points and high cleanliness standards to make them enjoyable experiences.

It was agreed:

- Members note the update and thanked officers for their input.

OSC.10 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR D VERNON
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.15 pm)