

Minutes of:	CORPORATE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	12 February 2020
Present:	Margaret Fulham (in the Chair) Councillors D Jones, A Quinn, E O'Brien, M Hayes, J Grimshaw, I Schofield and I Gartside
Trade Union attendance:	E Entwistle, C Jakeway, K Mather, S Morton, J Thomson and T Beesley
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor T Pickstone, Councillor J Black (Councillor J Grimshaw substituting) and Karen Lewis
Officers in attendance:	G Little, Chief Executive; L Ridsdale, Deputy Chief Executive; S Bagley, Head of HR; M Woodhead, Joint Chief Finance Officer; C Schofield, Strategic Lead HR ;K Dolton, Executive Director Children and Young People; Donna Ball, Executive Director, Operations and H Moore, Executive Officer

JCC.1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were detailed above.

JCC.2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

The Chair agreed to accept an overall presentation on the Council's financial position.

JCC.3 **FINANCIAL BRIEFING PRESENTATION**

The Joint Chief Finance Officer presented an overview of the financial performance year to date and the outlook for 2020/21. Key presentation points included:-

- The budget has been developed in the context of the emerging Bury 2030 strategy and the five key themes;
- Overspends were mainly driven by under achieved savings targets and increased demand; however, offset by other underspends in non-service specific budgets;
- Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – agreed recovery plan over 5 years;
- Housing Revenue Account – expect some slippage before year end and addressing this through improved processes including gateway reviews;
- Treasury Management - introducing an accounting policy which will give the Council a benefit of £2m in 2019/20 and ongoing £1m per annum;
- Key planning assumptions, key risks and key principles in relation to the revenue budget 2020/21 were outlined, together with a summary of the 'asks' of Full Council;
- An overview of issues relating to the Medium Term Financial Strategy were provided, which included loss of one-off grants, increased pay inflation, Government's Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Retention;

- Capital Programme and Strategy – an overview of proposed financing was shared and links to the Treasury Management Strategy were articulated. It was explained that there is scope to improve planning and phasing of programmes and new the new gateway process being introduced would provide greater oversight of the programme and would consider capacity requirements to reduce the amount of schemes being carried forward in future years.

It was agreed:

To circulate the slides to Corporate JCC Members.

JCC.4 **MONTH 9 CORPORATE MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered the forecast revenue and capital position of the Council at the end of 2019/20, which had been presented to Overview and Scrutiny and was due to be reported to Cabinet and Council on 26 February.

In response to a question relating to the forecast outturn for workforce modernisation and adult learning, it was agreed that the Joint Chief Finance Officer would provide the Trade Union with a breakdown of these two headings.

Clarification was sought in relation to the overspend in the Communities and Wellbeing Directorate. The Joint Chief Finance Officer reported that the Directorate had overspent by £2.410m but had offset against some underspends in other areas, which brought down the total overspend to £1.750m.

In response to a question about the non-achievement of savings, it was agreed to provide the Trade Union with a full breakdown of the historic savings which had been carried forward from previous financial years in Communities and Wellbeing.

It was clarified that the £1.875m in the report relating to the Better Care Fund was a saving and the fund totalled circa £15m.

It was noted that a correction was required in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

In relation to forecast overspend in the Children and Young People Directorate, it was clarified that the section on other management costs did not include consultants.

The Leader and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing offered the Trade Union Representative the opportunity of a one-to-one meeting prior to the Committee to go through the detail of the budget, as part of the budget discussions in future years.

In relation to the figures for the safeguarding and young people's service, the overall variance was provided with only key issues included in the report, not the full detail. It was agreed to provide the Trade Union with the tables which were available on what was and wasn't achieved for all Directorates.

In relation to Looked After Children and the forecast overspend, the Executive

Director for Children and Young People clarified that this was due to increased placements and complexity of cases. Higher than anticipated adoption placement fees were due to the need to make placements outside of the regional adoption agency and the regional adoption agency also have higher volumes of children that they are placing. All Finance Officers from Local Authorities were looking at how this could be forecast more accurately.

The Trade Union Representative highlighted concerns that some overspends were being offset by not filling posts, which in some areas, was having an impact on staff workloads. It was clarified that where vacant posts needed to be filled, these should be expedited to mitigate impact on staff.

It was agreed:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the detailed breakdowns of information be provided to the Trade Union.

JCC.5

REVENUE BUDGET REPORT 2020/21

The Committee considered the key elements of the 2020/21 budget proposals and the framework for the longer term Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020 – 2025, which had been presented to Overview and Scrutiny and was due to be reported to Cabinet and Council on 26 February.

The report outlined the latest financial information that would underpin the 2020/21 budget and the MTFS. The report also set out the process that will lead to the agreement of the budget and the setting of the 2020/21 council tax on 26 February 2020.

The Chief Executive explained that in the wider context of the budget, the Council had made progress and was getting better at delivery. This year, reserves would not be used to balance the budget. Investment in additional capacity was planned to ensure further emphasis on delivery.

In response to a question about local taxation and benefits discretionary policies, the Joint Chief Finance Officer agreed to provide the Trade Union Representative with the detail of allocations for local welfare provision, the range of different types of benefits and the detail on how much is spent.

In response to a question relating to £1.2m service reduction proposals, it was clarified that these related to a review of provider fees as part of the annual negotiation with providers, a review of highway fees and re-wilding of grass verges, the detail of which was in appendix 3 in the revenue report.

The Joint Chief Finance Officer reported that the settlement funding from Government was awaited. He clarified that the 6.3% referenced in the report was the total increase in spending power, not just the funding agreement.

In relation to reserves, proposals would be to increase reserves by £0.567m to

improve overall resilience and sustainability, which had been a previous commitment of the Cabinet. It was reported that a new reserves strategy would be developed as part of the closer of accounts programme.

In relation to the transformation fund, the intention of this would be to bring in short term capacity for programme and project delivery and business case based investment, for example, technology.

In response to a question about the option to bring services back in-house to generate savings, it was noted that whilst there may be short term savings, there could be longer term impact. The Committee were informed that steps had been taken this year to strengthen governance with both organisations on the basis of a strategic partnership.

It was agreed:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the information relating to local taxation and benefits discretionary polices be provided to the Trade Union Representative.

JCC.6

CAPITAL STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report on the capital strategy, the proposed capital programme 2020/21 and the indicative capital programme 2021/22 – 2022/23, together with the capital investment priorities and information on the funding of the programme, which had been presented to Overview and Scrutiny and was due to be reported to Cabinet and Council on 26 February.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

JCC.7

PAY POLICY

The Committee considered the report on the Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21, which was required to be produced under Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

**Margaret Fulham (UNISON)
Chair**

(Note: The meeting started at 4.00 pm and ended at 5.07pm)