

Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee

Tuesday, 12 September 2023

Present: Councillor J Montague (Chair)
Councillors D Cox, L Bartoli, L Bones, D Drummond,
M Hall, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, A Newman, P Oliver, J
Shaw, M Thirlaway and M Wilson

In attendance:
Councillor C Johnson – Deputy Mayor
S Fallon – Church Representative

Apologies: Rev M Vine and Ms F Burton – School Governor
Representative

OV11/23 Appointment of Substitute Members

Pursuant to the council's constitution the appointment of the following substitute members was made:

Councillor P McIntyre for Councillor J Wallace
Councillor A Spowart for Councillor W Samuel

OV12/23 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor Debbie Cox declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 4 2023/24 Financial Management & Performance Report to 31 May 2023, family member receives adult social care.

Councillor Pat Oliver declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 4 2023/24 Financial Management & Performance Report to 31 May 2023, family member receives adult social care.

Councillor Martin Murphy declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 4 2023/24 Financial Management & Performance Report to 31 May 2023, he has a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council.

Councillor Matthew Thirlaway declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 4 2023/24 Financial Management & Performance Report to 31 May 2023, he has a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council and he is employed by a social care provider who receives funding from North Tyneside Council.

Councillor Jane Shaw declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 4 2023/24 Financial Management & Performance Report to 31 May 2023, she has a family member who undertakes work on behalf of North Tyneside Council.

Councillor Liam Bones declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 4 2023/24 Financial Management & Performance Report to 31 May 2023, he has a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council.

OV13/23 Minutes

Resolved that the minute of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 be agreed.

OV14/23 2023/24 Financial Management & Performance Report to 31 May 2023

The Committee received a report that had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting 31 July 2023 in relation to 2022/23 Finance Outturn Report.

The report summarised the full overview of both the budget and service delivery performance position across the Authority as of 31 May 2023.

The Committee was informed that the General Fund will outturn with a pressure of £11.7m and the Housing Revenue Account will have a forecast underspend of £0.015m. In terms of performance, whilst service delivery remained strong there continued to be high levels of demand in several areas including Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments, children in care and home care.

The committee was informed that while the Section 106 figures are currently reported separately, in future they will be incorporated into this report.

A member asked if there was a tipping point where the provision of school meal services by the Authority would become financially unviable. The Head of Resources confirmed this was being monitored, ensuring the most efficient use of funds.

A member asked if the slowdown in inflation had been factored into budgetary concerns. In response the Head of Resources stated that rising and falling costs in different areas were being monitored and changes would be reflected in future reports, and currently energy prices were a key driver of costs.

A member raised a question about staff retention figures, the Head of Resources stated this is monitored by the Council, and those figures can be shared in writing and to note that there was a recent return of staff from EQUANS. The Assistant Chief Executive noted that work was continuing in recruiting and retraining staff, particularly with legal and social workers.

A member asked for further information on the DV081 North Shields Quarter amount of £0.250m, the Head of Resources stated we can share those figures in writing.

A member enquired about whether the Looked After Children figures included children seeking asylum. A senior business partner confirmed these figures did include those, and that the Council currently has 33 children seeking asylum but this figure is below the Government's mandated level.

Another member raised their concern about forecasted budget overspends and enquired as to the possible use of reserves. The Head of Resources confirmed that there would probably be some usage of the Strategic Reserve due to an uncertainty in funding. The 15 medium term plan themes had been created to tackle the areas of highest pressure giving best value for money and would drive the strategy going forward.

A member raised a question about the staff car parking charges and if they would be reinstated. The Deputy Mayor stated that the charges were stopped during Covid 19 and there had been no decision as to if, and when, this would be reinstated.

A question was also asked about the reduced number of taxi drivers and service costs, and what was being done to address these issues. The Head of Resources stated he would invite a comment from officers in the service.

The rising costs of the Mouth of the Tyne festival were queried. The Head of Resources stated this was due to above inflationary costs for equipment, and

these costs would be factored in going forward.

A member asked how the cost pressure on Street Lighting due to energy process was to be addressed. The head of resources stated that the Council was looking to balance this pressure with the anticipated contribution from reserves and some of the underspend from within Environment.

A member asked what the current road resurfacing spend was, this was confirmed as £3.6m.

It was **Agreed** that (1) the 2023/24 Financial Management & Performance Reported to 31 May 2023 be noted; and (2) the further information requested be circulated to all members of the Committee.

OV15/23 Section 106 overview and update on spend and project delivery

The Principal Account and Major Contracts Manager gave a presentation in relation to the update on the s106 spend position as of 30 June 2023. The committee were asked to note the information provided.

As of 30 June 2023, £20.342m had been received by the Authority, of which £9.604m has been expended in line with agreements. £10.738m remains as of 30 June 2023, of which £3.264m is committed. This leaves an uncommitted balance of £7.474m.

In discussions on the presentation given, and the commitment of funds, a member raised why a large sum was still to be assigned to any proposals. The Major Contracts Manager stated that approximately 30% of this funding would be attached to the Ambition for Education project, and that the nature of funding was that it was allocated both monthly, as proposals were agreed, and as longer-term strategic projects which took longer to assign, approve and spend. It was confirmed by both Deputy Mayor and officers that there were set rules under which a s106 spend could be applied. The delays in spend due to Covid 19 were now no longer occurring. The discussion covered who authorised the s106 spend and the criteria that defined what the fund could be spent on. It was advised that there was current legislation, guidance and government advice. The Major Contracts Manager stated that he would resend the s106 information forwarded in June 2023 to all members and was happy to answer any specific questions in the future.

A report giving a deeper dive into the long-term plans and current s106 spend would be provided as part of the Finance report at the next meeting.

The chair thanked the officers for the instructive nature of the report. It was **Agreed** that (1) the Section 106 overview and update on spend and project delivery be noted; and (2) the further information requested be re-circulated to all members of the Committee.

OV16/23 Technical Services Partnership – Capita service delivery performance update

The Head of Commercial and Procurement and the Assistant Partnership Director gave a presentation on the Performance Update from Capita and the 2022/23 full year outturn performance for the services provided. Capita had highlighted areas as identified previously by the Committee. The committee were asked to note the information provided.

The committee challenged the Key Performance Indicator information provided, asking for the following information to be brought back to a future meeting:

- The amount of time taken to inspect and repairs potholes.
- How Capita measure social impact.
- Who and how are the quality of repairs measured, including the checklist used.
- Percentage sample sizes to be identified and a request for these to be increased.
- How road resurfacing requests are chosen.
- What are the costs of re-repairs and re-inspection to jobs previously recorded as completed.
- Can further information on the job role of the Clerk of Works and how many projects they oversee be provided.
- What happened to the fulfilment of the process where Councillors were to be sent images of a completed job via a Members Enquiry.

The Assistant Partnership Director stated they would bring the answers to a future meeting and said they were happy to answer any questions about specific cases if Councillors wished to contact them.

The Deputy Mayor stated that it was council policy to bring services back in-

house as soon as it was viable.

It was **Agreed** that (1) the Technical Services Partnership – Capita service delivery performance update be noted; and (2) the further information requested be presented to a future meeting.