

Finance Sub Committee

Wednesday, 13 July 2022

Present: Councillor D Cox (Chair)
Councillors T Neira, Martin James Murphy, J O'Shea,
B Pickard and J Wallace

Apologies: Councillors N Craven and W Samuel

F1/22 Appointment of Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's constitution the appointment of the following substitute Member was reported: - Councillor J O'Shea for Councillor W Samuel.

F2/22 Declarations of Interest and Notification of any Dispensations Granted

There were no Declarations of Interest reported.

F3/22 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting 29 March 2022 be confirmed.

F4/22 Welfare Reform - Financial update

Discretionary Housing Payment Fund

The Committee was informed that the authority was managing a much smaller budget that it had available in previous years that would prove a challenge for many households in the current difficult financial environment.

The authority continued to work well with Citizens Advice and signpost households to their support and advice where appropriate.

The total committed funding was £192,804 with a further £107,150 unallocated.

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

The caseload as at the end May stood at 16,359 (7,266 pensionable age and 9,093 working age) which was a reduction of almost 500 claims against the number reported in March. The cost for the scheme was £16,591,215.

A member requested what support was being provided to help with the cost of school clothing. In response officers stated that information would be provided on accessing support and where further information could be found on the Council website.

Hardship Fund

The hardship payment of £150.00 continued to support working age claimants, with 56% of claimants having a nil liability for 2022/23.

Local Welfare Provision

For the period 1 April 22 to 17 June 2022, there had been 1,072 applications for Local Welfare Support.

All 1,072 applications were offered a full screening, with advice, information and signposting to partner organisations where appropriate.

There were 573 crisis applications eligible for further practical support that included receiving food, utility support, baby items or baby food, essential household items, travel costs or clothing.

Spend for the period in respect to immediate practical support amounted to £21,238.

This was in addition to the annual grant to the Food Bank of £29,934.14 which was paid in April 22.

Universal Credit

The number of Universal Credit claimants was high but reducing, with 18,451 claimants, a small reduction against the figure reported in March.

The committee was informed that the Cost of Living payments would be awarded to Universal Credit claimants in two payments one for £326 then another payment later in the year for £324. A member requested what criteria would be applied to claimants. Information to the required criteria would be forwarded to members for their information.

Housing Department Update

The Authority housing department had 5,256 tenants on Universal Credit (UC) as at 15 June 2022. 3,865 (73.53%) were in arrears. It was noted that 68.43% of those on UC were already in arrears when they made the current claim for UC.

The average increase per case since the claim for UC was £147.04. The average arrears for all tenants had decreased in the last quarter, those on UC was £767.28 compared to an average arrears of £575.39 for all tenants and £308.67 for those not on UC.

Other housing providers continue to advise of significant arrears with tenants, including those in receipt of UC.

Covid-19 had a large impact on housing tenants with 1438 of tenants reporting that they had been adversely impacted. 132 tenants (9.18%) reported an adverse impact on more than one occasion. This had contributed to the significant increase in the number of tenants claiming UC, with 822 tenants on UC, 80 tenants on legacy benefits and 536 self-paying tenants had been recorded as having been impacted by Covid-19.

The Authority housing department continued to make use of all available funding and services from internal and external providers to maximise tenants financial position and improve their ability to sustain their tenancy.

Agreed that (1) the Welfare Reform – Financial update be noted; and (2) information requested be provided to the matters discussed.

F5/22 2021/22 Provisional Finance Outturn Report

The Senior Business Partner – Finance presented the 2021/22 Provisional Finance Outturn report that had considered by Cabinet on 27 June 2021.

Officers provided information and offered further information to be circulated in response to a member question in relation to school finance and how funding was allocated and support provided to schools to minimise risk.

A member raised the effect for future years to the change in methodology in relation to the Authority's Minimum Revenue Provision, in response officer stated further information would be circulated to members.

Agreed that 2021/22 Provisional Finance Outturn Report be noted; and (2) information requested to be provided to matters discussed.

F6/22 Section 106 Update

The Committee received a report that provided an update to the position of Section 106 Agreements (s106).

It was stated that the Finance section, working alongside colleagues within Planning and Strategic Property & Investment had undertaken a line-by-line review of each scheme confirming balances and spend.

The report detailed examples of s106 projects approved by the Investment Programme Board (IPB) and delivered in the previous 12-month period.

The Committee was informed that the s106 Capital Programme Manager and s106 service area leads utilise the information to develop projects and define what monies were available for allocation.

There was an aim that s106 programme of works would supplement and support the wider Authority budget, to ensure a good spread of spend for all areas of the Borough and to provide flexibility and value for money. Information was appended to the report that detailed the current s106 financial information of all developer contributions that had been received by the Authority.

S106 allocated available monies related to money received by the Authority through planning gain, which totalled £11.820m as of 30 June 2022.

Members requested that a further update be provided at the next meeting of the committee

on the 13 September and asked that further detailed information be provided for projects where allocations of S106 had been committed.

Confirmation was requested and given that allocations in relation to ecology measures were considered on a whole borough view and were not necessarily to be allocated on a Ward basis.

Agreed that a further section 106 update be presented to the next meeting of Finance Sub Committee on the 13 September 2022.

F7/22 Exclusion Resolution

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and having applied a public interest test as defined in Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Act, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

F8/22 Business and Technical Partnerships Risks

The Sub-committee considered a report that detailed the monitoring on the risks rated high (red) within the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers of the Business and Technical Partnerships with Equans and Capita.

Agreed that the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers of each partnership be noted.