

Minutes of the Finance Board Wednesday 16th February 2022 Council Chambers

Attendees:

Margaret Lee, Max Caller, Claire Willerton, Alan Sinclair, Richard West, Steven Mair, Andrew Fraser, Rob Anderson, Dexter Smith

Apologies: None

Meeting Minutes:

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes

No amendments were raised

4. Update on current year financial position

An extract from the wider budget report was provided by Steven Mair for the group to review.

Key Points -

- It is driven by the savings we are trying to achieve
- It is not an actual reflection of the council's budget position
- Table 1 gives a summary by department

Action: Margaret Lee to discuss deep dive savings with each director individually.

4.1 Adult Social Care Budget Update – Alan Sinclair

There is a slight overspend within the directorate although it is an improving picture every month and AS is hoping to come in on budget.

Most of the overspend is on increasing expenditure. The main concern and struggle is where a change in the budget is made and where savings have been highlighted previously in that area.

Activity is higher, more specifically care home placements. This is delayed by assessments in general which increases costs.

Ms Lee posed the question if there is anything/what else can you do or delay or stop to meet budget requirements?

Mr Sinclair – there isn't anything easily done.

4.2 Children's Services / Children Company Budget Update – Andrew Fraser

Mr Fraser detailed there is 1.38m over spend within the Company budget. Significant cost pressures with additional cost and funding

- 2.86m are Covid driven costs.
- 1.72m are Agency Costs.

Due to covid, court delays have been prevalent which has caused increases in solicitors fees.

Update on Asylum Seekers

Asylum seeker hotel within Slough, there were 21 children, we have placed 7 which we are still awaiting home office funding – 17 still going through assessments.

110k anticipating no funding.

51k of legal fees

260k of placements exceeding timeframe

Savings/Reductions

266k of service reductions

65k corporate function

399k service efficiencies

31k of savings built into these figures.

These are not savings to offset the 1.3 million indices are savings that offsets the overall 3.5 million on pressures. but not in not in 21/22.

Additional funding options are also being explored.

There was an income of 714k of covid funding against to be put against the spend.

Ms Lee clarified in terms of the Asylum Seeker Hotel, the home office have advised that the LA should not incur any additional costs.

If you have evidence Ms Lee can have this discussion with the relevant offices.

Action: Alan Fraser to provide.

Ms Lee – is there an age assessment priority for those children being placed in care to ensure they are in the right place.

Mr Fraser – yes we are doing everything we can do.

4.3 Place and community – Richard West

Savings are to be achieved through staff costs and schemes that aren't going to happen.

Ms Lee - Of the 435k overspend, how much relates to the capitalisation overspend?

Would the capitalisation directive sort it and put the budget into a good place.

Steven Mair – yes it would put it in a better place.

HRA to be reported along with a full paper on the DSG.

5. Draft 22-23 budget – Steven Mair

This will go public on the 28th February.

108million base budget for 22/23

The shortfall in the councils budget – 84million – having to ask DHLUC for support.

Under the directions that Max and Margaret the council must provide a recovery plan by the end of May.

The debt will be netted off in the corporate directorate.

6. Finance Recovery Plan

A Recovery Plan is being created with Graeme McDonald's help.

Key Issues –

- Owning the gap
- Original Savings did not prevail.
- What can be done to make that saving easier? And if you can't deliver it what can be done instead?

Phil Brooks has been brought in from the crown agent to help and improve the assets disposal programme.

Max Caller – the target I am setting is 100million in the first year.

7. Procurement Recovery Plan

There is a lack of a comprehensive contracts register in Slough, although this project is now underway to bring together everyone's knowledge and build a strong contracts register.

This will enable an exercise to be completed reviewing contracts to establish what is still required, what can be streamlined and what needs to remain.

It was noted that improvements need to be made on keeping both Cabinet Members and Scrutiny well informed of the contracts that are being taken out.

Training needed for the procurement team as advice varies.

This process is focusing on getting the Contracts Register in place.

8. AOB

None raised

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