

Minutes of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**Wednesday 16 March 2022 at 6.00 pm
at Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor L Giles (Chair);
Councillors E M Giles and Shackleton.

In attendance: Councillor Gavan;
Neil Cox (Director of Business Strategy and Change), Surjit
Tour (Director of Law & Governance), Charlie Davey (Adults
Business Partner), Chris Jones (Project Director), Abi
Asimolowo (Finance Business Partner), Sarah Sprung
(Senior Lead Officer), Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic
Services Manager) and Matt Powis (Senior Democratic
Services Officer).

13/22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Anandou and Moore.

14/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.



15/22

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022 are approved as a correct record.

16/22

Additional Items of Business

There were no additional items of business to consider.

17/22

Q3 Budget Monitoring 2021/22

The Cabinet, at its meeting on 23 February 2022, considered the 2021/22 Budget Monitoring report for Quarter 3 and referred the report to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment.

The Board was informed of the financial monitoring position as on 31 December 2021 which confirmed an overspend of £5.233m against allocated budgets. However, there was an underspend of £7.822m when the budgets were adjusted against the Council's reserves including the use of wider corporate resources and Covid-19 grant funding.

It was noted that the Cabinet had approved the budget virements of £7.366m in relation to Adult Social Care, Regeneration and Growth, Borough Economy and Housing.

Each directorate variance and pressure points were outlined to the Board. There had continued to be a financial impact to the Council due to the Covid-19 pandemic as a result of suspended or reduced services. However, there was continued flexibility to manage pressures through the unused Covid-19 grant funding.

In relation to the Council's Capital Programme, it was confirmed that £400k would be transferred to the programme in relation to the West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter project. In addition, a virement of £68k was approved by Cabinet from the Blackheath Library Project to the West Bromwich Town Hall project.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- in response to the Blackheath Library project virement, it was confirmed that the project cost had been overestimated. Therefore, it was agreed that the unused funds should be allocated to the West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter project;
- clarification was sought on the Council's position on funding for non-statutory SEND Home to School Transport. In response, it was confirmed that a response would be provided to the Board in writing;
- there were concerns about the length of time the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds remained unspent. The Board were reassured that Elected Members were consulted and involved in the planned use of CIL funds;
- Adult Social Care overspends had been alleviated from additional funding in respect of the NHS discharge to assess funding for external placements and a one-off increase in the Better Care Fund contribution to the Joint Equipment Store.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Adults Business Partner for his attendance.

Resolved that the Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring report for 2021/22 be noted.

18/22

Corporate Plan Achievements 2021

The Board considered a report on the Corporate Plan Achievements 2021, which was presented by the Director for Business Strategy and Change.

The Board were informed that the Council's Corporate Plan was adopted by Council on 12 October 2021. This refreshed plan was based on analysis of the impact of the Covid pandemic on the Borough and an acknowledgement of the Council's current priorities. The Council had recommitted to the Sandwell Plan and Vision 2030 as well as approving the 10 ambitions over the period 2021 to 2025.

Despite the challenges from the pandemic, the Council had made progress in the following priority areas:

- Best start in life for children and young people;
- People Live Well;
- Strong Resilient Communities;
- Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods;

- A strong inclusive economy;
- A connected and accessible Sandwell;
- One Council, one team.

The plan outlined the delivery model on how each strategic priority would be achieved and summarised the necessary timescales.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- the Corporate Plan Refresh had not been directly impacted by the recent intervention by the Government and external auditors. However, it had allowed the Council's to focus on aspects of the improvement plan to factor in delivery timescales within the new Corporate Plan;
- there were proposals for a performance and management strategy across the Council to ensure all directorates had the required support to improve performance and standards;
- the Council recognised the actions as set out in the improvement plan and was working to achieve each objective. However, it was noted that a critical part of the improvement plan was about building confidence across the workforce to deliver change;
- the Board would continue to have oversight of the Corporate Plan and monitor the process of each directorate action.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Director for Business Change and Strategy and the Senior Lead Officer for their attendance.

Resolved that the Corporate Plan Achievements 2021 be noted.

19/22

Cabinet Forward Plan

The Board noted the Cabinet Forward Plan as at the time of the meeting.

Resolved that the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

20/22

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme 2021-22

The Scrutiny Management Board noted its work programme for the remainder of the 2021-22 municipal year.

Resolved that the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme for 2021-22 be noted.

21/22

Exclusion of the Public and Press.

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended, by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to the financial and business affairs of any person, including the authority holding that information.

22/22

Sandwell Aquatics Centre Budget Update.

The Board considered an update report on the Sandwell Aquatics Centre budget.

The Project Director gave an overview of the phase 4 project plan which included the following updates:-

- drone footage outlined the capital build works with before and after footage of development;
- budget breakdown costs for the capital works which included reference to partner funding, contract technicalities and project governance and assurance;
- preparation and implementation of the Phase 4 – Legacy Construction;
- risks and management of the project including mitigation;
- impact of the project from COVID-19.

The Project Director confirmed that whilst progress on the construction and build of the project had been challenging, the Aquatics Centre was on target to be delivered on time and on budget for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- in response to the Council funding for the project, it was confirmed that funding could only be used in respect of the Commonwealth Games and could not be allocated to any other projects or services;
- several partners organisations had committed to contribute funding to aspects of the Aquatics Centre. It was expected that all partners deliver on their committed funding for the project;
- the Council had ensured that the Aquatics Centre would maintain strong ties with Wolverhampton University, which would enable Sandwell be home to leading sports development programmes;
- the Aquatics Centre had been designed to prioritise the legacy of the centre. This involved balancing a premium leisure offer to maximise income generation to allow the facility to be maintained at minimal cost to the Council;
- members requested a site visit to the Aquatics Centre.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Project Director for his attendance.

Meeting ended at 7.13pm.

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