

## **Cabinet - 2 February 2023**

### **Item no. - \* Matters Referred by Policy Development and Scrutiny Bodies**

#### **Feedback to Cabinet following consideration of the draft 2023-24 budget & Council Tax proposals by the Corporate PDS Panel**

1. The Corporate Policy Development & Scrutiny (PDS) Panel met on 23 January 2023 to consider the draft budget and Council Tax proposals for 2023-24 together with the overall financial outlook. All scrutiny members were invited to attend the meeting as the PDS Chairs and Vice Chairs had agreed that when considering publication timelines, the draft budget would be scrutinised once.
2. The Cabinet Member for Resources and Chief Finance Officer(S151) initially set the context to which the budget proposals had been developed. Members were then given an opportunity to ask questions, following which some of the following themes emerged:

#### **Inflationary pressures**

3. Members questioned whether inflationary pressures, particularly linked to future pay deals, had been factored into the proposals. Confirmation was provided that a 3% increase had been budgeted for staff salaries in 2023-24, plus 1% contingency. Inflationary pressures were anticipated to continue to present medium term organisational challenge.

#### **Robustness of savings/income proposals**

4. Members sought assurance on the robustness of the proposals to address the 2023-24 funding gap of £14.38m. The Executive emphasised that rigorous budget monitoring was in place, with Cabinet receiving regular updates on delivery of targets.
5. The panel noted that the £4.8m linked to a review of 'social care contributions to the learning disability pool' was a funding rather than service level adjustment, and that discussions with the NHS on this line were expected to be concluded by 1 April 2023.
6. Confirmation was given that the proportion of income versus savings targets was similar to previous years.

#### **Outturn position 2022-23 & The Government Settlement**

7. The panel explored the in-year budget position and noted that as of quarter 2, a £4.53m overspend was predicted. Corporate recovery work in response to this position had ensured the position had improved; although demand related pressures, predominantly within Children's Services, remained.

8. The provisional Government Settlement position had been received on 19 December and the final confirmation figure, including grant allocations, was expected by early February 2023. It was noted that the final settlement details would be updated in the budget papers reported to Council.

### **Reserves**

9. The panel was given clarification on the differences between earmarked and unearmarked reserves, with members noting that to manage financial risk the council holds £12.6m (of £54.2m) in unearmarked reserves, with earmarked reserves set aside for specific purposes.

### **Budget savings/income reporting**

10. Following scrutiny input, the panel members welcomed the Executive's commitment to provide more context to future proposals by also showing the total budget amounts for any proposed targets. Panel members felt it would be appropriate to also feedback to scrutiny on how successful the council had been in delivering against its 2023-24 savings/income targets.

### **Growth areas - Park and Ride**

11. The panel welcomed the £0.4m investment into park and ride facilities, recognising that no firm decisions had been made yet on the planned improvements, but highlighting that any measures to enhanced vehicle security would be extremely welcomed by the community.

### **Equalities**

12. The panel was reassured that the budget had been subject to Equality Impact Assessments, and these were very much live documents, being revisited as proposals advanced through to delivery.

### **Community services transformation & Remembrance events funding**

13. Members look forward to receiving further detail on the transitional project-based costs for the Community Services Transformation Programme – Adult Social Care.
14. Finally, the panel welcomed the cabinet member's response to concerns around the removal of Remembrance events funding and were reassured that this would be supported going forward.

### **Resolved**

- i) **To thank the Cabinet Member for Resources for:**
  - a. **sharing the draft budget proposals with the policy development and scrutiny function**
  - b. **committing to include overall budget detail in future proposals to provide additional context to targets**

- ii) To ask Cabinet to note the summary of the Corporate PDS meeting held on 23 January**
  
- iii) To request that Cabinet continues to engage with scrutiny on implementation of the 2023-34 budget, particularly in relation to the identified savings and income proposals.**

**Cllr Karen Warrington**

**Chair – Corporate PDS Panel**

**31.01.2023**