

## Notes of Informal Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 10 March 2023

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### Item 1 – Apologies

Attendees: Cllrs Geoff Winnard, Betty Rhodes, Brenda Monteith, Paul Davies, Alun Griffiths, Mike Barnes, Moses Crook, Rachel Melly, Peter Harrand, Susan Lee-Richards, Jane Dowson, and Sam Harvey.

Apologies: Cllr Carol Thirkill and David Jones.

Officers: Khaled Berroum, Melanie Corcoran, James Nutter, Hannah Scales and Angela Taylor.

**Skipped Items 2&3 due to the meeting being informal.**

### Item 4 – Minutes of the last meeting held on 20 January 2023

### Item 5 – Chair's comments and update

The Chair welcomed members and wished to minute his thanks to Councillor Peter Harrand for his service to the committee and previous Overview and Scrutiny Committees over the years.

### Item 6 – Business plans and budget 2023/24

The committee received a report which advised of the approved business plan and budget for 2023/24. The Transport Levy remained cash frozen, recognising the difficult financial environment in which all local government is setting budgets. It has proposed that some non-recurring savings would be set aside and put in a ring-fenced reserve for transport related projects or to support expected pressures on the bus tendered services budget... Further government funding to support bus recovery was confirmed after the budget was set and further reports will set out the consequences and impact of this.

#### **Budget update**

Funding Gap: Members asked questions around how the £462k funding gap previously reported had been closed. This was achieved through many small refinements across numerous budget heads such as the revised pension rates, updated inflation estimates, the review of contracts and resulting in a forecast small surplus.

Risk and Vacancy Savings: The pay award had been set at 4% in line with all five West Yorkshire local authorities. It was likely that the CA would over-achieve on the vacancy saving set which would help to offset any increase in salaries above that budgeted figure. The inclusion of a vacancy saving reflects the impact of the timing differences that incur as a result of normal recruitment timescales and the Committee queried the impact on others of these vacancies. In some instances, interim support and consultancy had been procured e but the approach taken varied between teams.

Longer-term vacancies are not carried indefinitely, they are considered further – whether the post was still required in its original capacity, why the post might not be attracting the right people, etc.

Transport Levy (the levy): Members questioned whether it was realistic that the levy remained frozen. It was emphasised that the CA worked in partnership with the Districts, for the good of the region and a decision on the approach to the levy is made collectively taking the wider matters into account. In the coming years a levy increase could be the way forward to assist in balancing the budget but that would be discussed in the round.

Bus-tendered Services: The CA had a general duty around bus-tendered services as opposed to a statutory one; therefore, members could decide not to support the network in part or in full which would cause challenges. Despite most areas of spend more straightforward to forecast, bus tendered services are currently very volatile.

£2 Mayor's Fare: The government scheme of the £2 fare did not apply for the majority of West Yorkshire, with the local Mayors Fares (intended to be for 3 years) being a different scheme set up well in advance of the government's one. The intention was to encourage increased patronage and in turn produce increased revenue. Evaluation of the success of the scheme is underway.

The committee requested that in future an overview of the business and budget plans is submitted in their initial stages to allow for the overview aspect of the committee's function and so that the committee could add value before the two plans were aligned.

## **Business Planning**

The CA had moved to an outcome led operating model. The business plans were developed through logic mapping, which aimed to determine what each team would be doing and what the desired outcomes were.

Accountability: The Directors were accountable for the delivery of the business plans. The business plans were centrally monitored through the reporting of Key Performance Indicators and exception reporting on outcomes. Reporting had been somewhat 'bogged down' in a lot of process and detail which the CA aimed to improve to make the activity simpler and less process focussed. Through aligning spend with outcome delivery and monitoring spend, risk and performance there should be early warning on which impacts the CA might struggle to deliver. It was hoped that the early warning would give time to consider options and address members about the difficult decisions to be made.

Pressures and Resource: Members questioned whether the business plans were realistic with pressures on resource and heard that the Directors had signed up to the business plans and therefore one could only assume Directors were confident the plans could be delivered. The main concern was around how much confidence the CA could have in the stability of the workforce.

Workforce: The certainty of delivery was heavily dependent on staffing levels. With the current staffing level the business plans could be achieved but it was important that

this was monitored regularly. The CA had been proactive in recruitment and there had been an increase in responses to job adverts.

Social Value and Carbon Impact: The Commercial Team had different tiers for procurement, teams were allowed to process smaller procurement independently. The CA aimed to have social value integrated into infrastructure schemes and therefore brought the value of the contract as low as possible. The £60k cap was deemed the lowest value that the CA could set where it was insisted that social value was included in the contract.

It was a concern that the committee met infrequently and that matters should be brought to committee at an earlier stage so that the committee could efficiently scrutinise.

### **Item 7 – Update - Integrated Corporate Systems**

The committee received a report which provided an update on the Integrated Corporate System (ICS) project. The new ICS combined the three separate existing HR, finance and payroll systems which was going to achieve much better efficiencies and provide improved access to information in an immediate way.

Implementation of the ICS project had been underway for just over a year in earnest. The previous 'go live' set before Christmas was based on the supplier's plan and was a challenging timescale for such a large project. The HR and Finance elements had been signed off; payroll was the last part to be completed before a 'go live' date could be confidently provided. The project had been delayed due to the interpretation and understanding of how parts of the payroll processing worked. The CA had a good relationship with the contractor but had held a hard line, payments had been held and the contractor was owed a significant amount of money which would not be paid until work was completed up to standard.

The committee looked forward to receiving further progress reports on the realisation and benefits of the ICS project.

### **Item 8 – Corporate Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23**

The committee received and noted the final, summarised Corporate Scrutiny Work Programme for the 2022/23 municipal year.