

Minutes of the meeting of the BUDGET AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2018 AT 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor R Bradburn (Chair),
Councillors Cannon, Darlington, Ganatra, P Geary, Gilbert, Miles,
Rankine and C Wilson

Apologies: Councillor K Wilson (Miles substituting)

Officers: P Simpson (Corporate Director (Resources and Commercial Development)), R Bates (Head of Revenues and Benefits), A Jordan (Welfare Reform Manager), H Lewis (Head of IT and Print), F Boundy (Creative and Cultural Manager) and E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Also Present: Councillor Middleton – Cabinet Member (Resources and Innovation)

The detailed notes on individual pressures are included as Annex A of these minutes.

BR24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gilbert declared an interest in Pressure P2 as Microsoft had been a client of his employer and that he would not contribute to any relevant items in the meeting.

BR25 RESOURCES AND CORPORATE CORE

The Committee received a presentation from Councillor Middleton, Cabinet Member for Resources and Innovation, about what the refreshed 2019/20 budget strategy meant for the Resources Directorate.

As part of the presentation, the Committee had a detailed discussion with Councillor Middleton about LGSS and the implementation of the ERP Gold financial management system. The Committee learnt that after 7 months ERP was now 85% operational, although there were still a number of issues round implementation. ERP was a jointly shared programme across the constituent local authorities in LGSS and therefore the Council was reliant on LGSS to instigate improvement. However, there had been an immediate saving of £70k in licence fees.

The Corporate Director (Resources and Commercial Development), as the Council's S151 Officer, had formally written to the interim Managing Director of LGSS to express the Council's concerns about the problems with the implementation of ERP Gold and the poor service received in trying to rectify these. He also commented that through the good will of Milton Keynes Council officers attempts were being made to sort out the remaining issues. He had since had a very positive meeting with LGSS

and other partners and was hopeful that there would soon be an improvement in ERP.

The Committee then scrutinised and commented upon the financial pressures in relation to Councillor Middleton's portfolio which had been identified during the preparation of the 2019/20 draft budget.

These pressures would be further considered at the meeting scheduled for 23 October 2018 and any recommendations included in the Committee's report, which would be submitted for consideration by Cabinet on 6 November 2018 as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process.

RESOLVED –

1. That Cabinet Member, Councillor Middleton be thanked for discussing the pressures in his portfolio identified as part of the 2019/20 draft budget preparation process.
2. That officer colleagues attending the meeting be thanked for the support offered to the Cabinet Member during the budget setting process and for the clarification of various issues raised by the Committee.
3. That a report on the work being done to implement the change programme associated with the new Microsoft software licences be brought to the Committee in 6 months' time.
4. That any recommendations the Committee may have arising from the evidence taken at this meeting be included in the report on its work which will be presented to Cabinet on 6 November 2018.

BR26

REPORT DRAFTING

Following the review of the Resources and Corporate Core pressures in the draft 2019/20 budget, the Committee prepared a first draft of the report to be submitted to Cabinet on 6 November 2018.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10:00 PM

Resources and Corporate Core – Cllr Middleton

P2 – Renewal of Microsoft Licences (£557k)

Microsoft had withdrawn its discount scheme for local authority software licences so the Council needed take the decision to renew its licences now in order to benefit from a revised discount if the order was placed before the end of the year. The Council had considered a partnership with other local authorities, but Microsoft would not give a group discount. Other operating systems had also been considered but Microsoft was the only one which did what the Council needed.

The new software licence would include:

- The latest anti-virus software;
- Increased data allocation for users;
- Additional functionality and applications;
- AI (artificial intelligence) technology to record meetings and print transcripts;
- Enhanced diary function;
- 24/7 support;
- Up to 5 separate licences per person;
- The ability to collaboratively share large documents;
- 10% discount if Council signs up before December 2018;
- Cost was now £509k as the pressure had reduced by £48k.

There was a long lead-in time and implementation probably would not start until autumn 2019. There would need to be a positive change programme to get staff up to speed, although 85% of staff were now using VDI as part of an ongoing programme of hardware replacement. The Council had capital funding to cover the replacement of hardware and there was some transformation money in the capital account which would be used to fund the change programme.

P3 – Additional Discretionary Housing Payments (£200k)

- There was pressure to maintain private sector tenancies although costs would be off-set by savings as the use of room-only hotel accommodation as a temporary measure ceased;
- An anticipated decrease in demand for discretionary housing payments had not happened;
- In Milton Keynes, the gap between what private landlords charged, and the level of housing benefit paid was one of the biggest in the country as housing benefit payments had been capped since 2011;
- Council now employed a development officer to liaise with private landlords but it also needed to the work with tenants to help them manage their tenancies;
- Benefits staff and housing staff were working together to deliver positive outcomes for tenants and savings for the Council.

P35 – MK Futures Programme (£55k in 2020/21)

Permanent funding to go into the base budget for a member of staff to support the MK Futures Programme from 2020/21.

OP9 – Festival of Creative Urban Living (£50k)

Funding every two years, alternating with the IF event.

Work on the European City of Culture had failed because of Brexit – this was Plan B.

Aim was to bring digital, hi-tech industries together with cultural industries, to move Milton Keynes forward and reposition culturally beyond the concrete cows and roundabouts.

Will help to secure extra match funding from elsewhere.

First event would be in September 2019. Would be based in CMK but Committee would like to see it reach out to other areas of MK.

Committee suggested £25k support be built into the base budget every year to accrue over the two years. The Council would not be spending any more money but it would show commitment to cultural events.

A baseline from which to work for monitoring was being developed; Arts Council was very rigorous with its monitoring of any events which received its grants.