

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL
19 OCTOBER 2023

COUNCILLOR CHRIS MORLEY - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

For the period 24 August to 6 October 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

2019/20. We are still responding to requests from EY for clarifications and early sign off by the Auditor is still not guaranteed.

Furthermore, the consultation on the revised audit procedures and completion dates does not close until 10th October and at the time of writing I obviously have no idea of the likely outcome. A national fiasco. We have no cost estimates from EY, despite many requests, and therefore payment for 4 audits may be due this financial year.

The last price we have is £100k for 2018/9, and we need the backlog addressing in a progressive manner soon, if only to provide an accurate accrual.

The indicative fee from the PSAA for 2023/24 is £150k!

BUDGET MONITORING AND FORWARD FINANCIAL PLAN

This is the pivotal time of the year when we get a clearer view of the running rate of our revenue expenditure and I hope to have some indicative figures by the time the full Council meets.

This will provide a more informed full year forecast and provide a better base for the next financial plan which is underway with its estimates of consumption, cost management, fees and charges for the next year and beyond.

We are still progressing cost management opportunities and reserves that may be used for balancing the budget, without an undue call on the General Reserve Fund, with the Senior Management Team.

As regards capital, the forecast for this year has already been reduced from £66.7m to £36m and as at end September the current spend figure is £12.8m, around 35% of the latest annual estimate.

If extrapolated at this rate we derive a forecast of £25m for the year which was our running rate for the 3 years before the pandemic.

However, with our Major Housing Programme, Towns Fund, Enterprise Zone and operational needs, we have forecast a forward running rate of £52m pa over the next 3 years. I have opined that we have a capacity issue and that this forecast is more than a stretch.

BUSINESS RATES

The Leader has reported about the discussions surrounding the Business Rate Pool where, despite obvious local advantage, the Districts refused to change the current arrangements. I therefore thought new Members would

welcome a rounded overview brief on Business Rate Collection and allocation.

We all know how business is the backbone of our society in so many ways and through the Rates system, contributes the lion's share of this Council's revenues. Here are our figures, rounded but an accurate representation.

£45m collected by this Borough.

£12m retained by agreement from central Government after adjustments and pool levy (see below).

£23m retained by central Government.

£4m to County.

£4m to Police

£2m levy to pool.

You will note from the Table in the Leader's report that we are a major contributor to the Pool but if we did not agree to join in, Government would take the money for themselves. At least we receive some return from the Pool system and Norfolk generally benefits.

GRANTS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEMES

The **Defibrillator Grants scheme** ends the end of this month and a concluding report will be available. A national scheme is now in place.

Rural Communities Fund - You may have read that 13 projects have been awarded grants totalling £57k, good news, £18k is left in the kitty but transferred to next fiscal year. However, next year has an extremely large pot (now totalling 243k) with Grants up to £50k, and we will need to support our agent, The Norfolk Community Foundation, (NCF) in ensuring the necessary promotion of this small, but very useful to many, part of the Levelling Up proceeds.

The Small Grants Scheme – We have refreshed our Agreement with the NCF and this scheme (up to £2,500 revenue, £10,000 capital per application) is on offer until the end of November.

We have a raft of agreements (at least 15) with various organisations and which commit us to a considerable financial outlay. These range from support for the Ferry Service to West Acre Theatre. Many have just been rolled over or contain obligations that have not been fulfilled. These are under examination.

WEST NORFOLK WINS COMMUNITY LOTTERY

At the recent extraordinary full Council meeting I espoused at length about the extra promotion we are giving to this scheme.

This continues and at the end of the month we shall see if there are any charities or special community causes eligible for entering in to a £1k bonus draw. If there is the draw will be held at Fawkes in the Walks.

Enticing? More anon.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

½ year budget outturn figures.

Discussions on Corporate and Financial Plan.

Analysis of our various funding agreements with local organisations.

Teams Meeting – 15 District Lobby Group against IDB Levy.

Results of CTSS consultation.

Hopefully, news about the audit scope for backlog.

Community Lottery outcome from promotion.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Independent Partnership Meetings

Various Cabinet Meetings.

Regular Finance Portfolio Meetings.

31/8 Meeting Council Companies Financial Arrangements.

WINS Meetings.

7/9 Corporate Strategy Meeting.

7/9 IP & Labour Joint Meeting.

11/9 MMPB.

11/9 CPP.

18/9 Audit Committee.

TEAMS Town Deal Projects

20/9 Business Rates Pooling.

Meeting Solar Farms Planning Issues.

26/9 Joined Licensing Portfolio Meeting.

28/9 Additional Full Council Meeting.