

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**28 November 2024**

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS MORLEY - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE**

For the period 1st to 28th November 2024

### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

#### **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 23/24**

As I promised during my oral update at the last full Council meeting, this Statement was published at the end of that week and met the Government's timetable. It confirms, following the tally of transactions through the year, that the outturn position improved upon the budget set for 23/24 such that the draw down from the General Fund was less than forecast.

The original budget set a drawdown of £2.641m but the outturn figure was audited at £1.065m. An operational saving of £1.576m or 6.3% and ahead of our initial Directorate target of 5%.

The Statement of Accounts is posted under "Final Accounts" on the Council's web site.

#### **REVENUE BUDGET 24/25**

Our net budget is a spend of £26.931m and at ½ year we were running in excess of what was planned by some £300K. However, I expect this will not only be brought back to budget at year end but also our final outturn will reveal a further efficiency saving.

By the time this Report is presented at Council, we will have issued a full Budget Monitoring Report for greater analysis.

#### **BUDGET 25/26**

By the time this report is issued the first round of budget setting will have been conducted by Cabinet but the opportunity is open for all Members to contribute. Any ideas for additional services or improved procedures should be offered as early as possible.

In recognition of the issues created by last minute suggestions and Motions to the final budget setting process, the Informal Working Group looking at the Constitution have recommended a new timetable for budget amendments which allows time for the finance team to examine the monetary effect before final agreement by Council.

We are, of course, waiting to hear formally of the settlement the Government are going to offer us for next year before we can settle on final figures for the Council Budget meeting next February.

## **COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS**

### **EMPTY HOMES**

We have not asked the County and Police Preceptors for a greater share of this premium. The expected return to us for bringing the premium forward 1 year is currently estimated at £32k which also means potential additional sums of £366k for the County's coffers, £68k for the Police and Crime Commissioner, and £18k for the Parishes.

### **2<sup>ND</sup> HOME COUNCIL TAX**

Our share is still under negotiation with the County.

### **IDBs**

I am concerned that the Government is going to delay or obfuscate Councils on their true intentions. The Minister cancelled the last meeting and there is a rumour that all we are going to secure for funding IDBs for 25/26 is the same as offered for this year.

The SIG have asked if the Government need more figures from affected Councils but, at the time of writing, no further news.

## **PROCUREMENT**

Key elements of the new Procurement strategy, both to comply with the new Procurement Act (which comes into force on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025) and for continuous improvement, will be forwarded for scrutiny very shortly,

The key planks being:

- Delivering value for money;
- Maximising public benefit;
- Sharing information to allow suppliers to understand our policies and decisions
- Acting with integrity.

However, we must not "let and forget" our contracts. Contract management is going to be enhanced to cover the whole procurement cycle from initial supplier engagement to contract review post completion and final payment.

In line with the new Procurement Act, tenders will be designed to consider any barriers that may exist for SMEs, and what can be done to remove these barriers.

The strengths and weaknesses within the existing organisational structure along this procurement "pipeline" are being examined and will be fixed by whatever means are appropriate.

## **ICT**

### **NEW INTRANET SYSTEM**

A series of design workshops have been held with the project team to map out the new system. The IT team is currently in the early stage of the build process with a completion date planned for early January.

Content then has to be added and User testing with a view to going live in early March.

The design team has to take due notice of and provide flexibility for, that which emerges from the Transformation process that is also underway. No mean task.

## **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

Financial Settlement from Government.

25/26 Budget Consultation.

External Audit timetable for Statements of Accounts and Governance.

Procurement and Contract Management Integration Process.

2<sup>nd</sup> Home Council Tax Resolution with County.

Intranet Development.

Continuing saga of IDB funding.

## **3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

5/11 Cabinet

6/11 Cabinet briefing

8/11 SLA and Grant Funding Review

11/11 Members Major Project Board

13/11 Webinar Digital Switchover

15/11 Contract Management

18/11 Audit Committee

19/11 Budget and Finance

20/11 Cabinet "awayday"

25/11 Joint Group

26/11 Shareholder Committee

27/11 Procurement

28/11 IT and Microsoft Product.

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