

Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 20 October 2021

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.
Councillor Penberthy, Vice Chair.
Councillors Bingley and Laing.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.00 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

12. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

13. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 04 August 2021 were agreed.

14. **Chairs Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

15. **Scrutiny Chairs Discussion**

The Chairs' discussed their thoughts on the latest cycle of scrutiny and highlighted key areas of interest –

- (a) Chairs' were all happy with how the last scrutiny session had went and thanked Democratic Support for their help;
- (b) It was agreed that introductions from officers and members would be kept to minimum and reports would be taken as read – this made a positive difference at the last session;
- (c) More work to be done on KPI's and how the data is presented, are we measuring the right indicators?
- (d) Finance colleagues to provide training around interpreting financial data;
- (e) Cllr Laing was discussing with the Lead Officer about arranging for MAT CEO's to attend a future session.

16. **Finance Update**

David Northey Head of Integrated Finance) provided the Board an update regarding the latest financial position –

- (a) The forecast revenue outturn after the application of Covid grants and council mitigating actions was currently estimated at £0.945m over budget, which was a variance of +0.5% against the net budget (+0.18% against the gross budget);
- (b) This was a reduction of £0.501m over period 4;
- (c) This was the August monitoring report for 2021/22 and it should be noted that the financial position will fluctuate as we move through the year. Officers and Members will work closely to manage the finances towards a balanced position by the end of the year.

Within this position the following headline financial issues are reported:

- (d) The pandemic continued to have a major impact on our financial resources, with a potential drawdown of £16.315m against the currently available grants. The impact of COVID-19 will continue in this financial year but in this forecast the additional costs identified are offset by grant and so there is a nil impact on the forecast variance. A detailed review would be undertaken at Period 6.

Key budget pressures:

- (e) £1.185m reported within Customer & Corporate Services Directorate. This had improved by £0.313m in the last month owing to (a) management of staff vacancies and (b) a saving in the treasury area.

Key favourable variances:

- (f) Public Health was still reporting an underspend of £0.094m;
- (g) Place Directorate were now reporting an underspend of £0.139m. an improvement of £0.181m.

The Board noted the report.

17. **Budget Scrutiny**

Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Andrew Loton (Head of Performance, Governance and Risk) and Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor) present the Budget Scrutiny approach to the Board –

- (a) Budget Scrutiny provides the opportunity to test assumptions, examine risks and challenge priorities; this was with a view to establishing and maintaining resources that are fit for purpose, meet the council's obligations and priorities and address the needs and aspirations of the people of Plymouth.
- (b) Scrutiny Management Board were asked to consider the endorsement of the following principles;
- (c) An opportunity to enhance the role of scrutiny committees covering the breadth of the council services to participate in budget scrutiny sessions in December;
- (d) Recommendations and advice to be fed into the formal Budget Scrutiny process;.
- (e) Individual scrutiny committees would discuss and identify lines of questioning for their particular area and have detailed access to budget information to allow them to scrutinise the budget effectively and provide recommendations for in year budget issues;
- (f) Budget Scrutiny would run over one day in January 2022 date TBC;
- (g) An informal session would take place following formal Budget Scrutiny to formalise recommendations for Cabinet;
- (h) A risk-informed approach would be taken utilising the strategic risk register and informed by the committee sessions, with time allocated to areas for discussion at budget scrutiny based on risk level;
- (i) The suggested approach acknowledges feedback from previous years that budget scrutiny when held as a single two day event: does not allow sufficient scrutiny of service specific areas, where scrutiny panels have existing expertise and knowledge, has not always delivered scrutiny outcomes that reflect the resource and preparation that go into a two day event;
- (j) We therefore believe that a revised approach that divides the process and papers release between the Autumn and January would provide greater opportunity for service specific further consideration and reflection on the issues by scrutiny members culminating in a comprehensive one day scrutiny session that draws all the elements together.

The Board agreed the proposed enhanced approach for scrutiny of the 2022/23 Budget.

18. **Corporate Plan Performance Discussion**

Andrew Loton (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk) led a discussion on the Corporate Plan Performance –

- (a) Members discussed the relevance of some of the Key Performance Indicators that feature in the reports that are received for Scrutiny and what could be done to improve the way they're scrutinised.

Following a suggestion from Andrew Loton (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk) the Board agreed to hold a KPI workshop as part of the annual review cycle.

19. **Select Committee Reviews**

Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor) updated the Board regarding any planned Select Review –

- (a) Mental Health was currently scheduled for 02 December 21 and 12 Jan 21;
- (b) Councillor Penberthy raised that discussions would take place with his lead officer and Democratic Support about scheduling reviews for Leisure Services and Blue Badges. Democratic Support would identify dates once PID was received.

20. **Work Programmes**

The board noted the work programmes and proposed agendas and agreed that these would be updated following agenda setting meetings taking place.

21. **The Leader's Forward Plan of Key Decisions and Private Business**

Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor) gave the Board an update on the items that were currently on the Leader's Forward Plan of Key Decisions and Private Business and explained the ways for Scrutiny to be involved.

The Board noted the Leader's Forward Plan of Key Decisions.