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Council

## Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee

At 7.00 pm on Tuesday 13th July, 2021 in the Council Chamber, Swanspool House, Doddington Road, Wellingborough, NN8 9TE

### Present:-

#### Members

Councillor Mark Pengelly (Chair)  
Councillor Valerie Anslow  
Councillor David Brackenbury  
Councillor Scott Brown  
Councillor William Colquhoun  
Councillor Jim Hakewill

Councillor Ken Harrington  
Councillor Larry Henson  
Councillor David Jenney  
Councillor King Lawal  
Councillor Jan O'Hara  
Councillor Malcolm Ward

#### Officers

Janice Gotts - Executive Director of Finance  
Paul Goult - Interim Democratic Services Manager  
David Pope – Senior Committee Administrator

Also in attendance – Councillor Lloyd Bunday – Executive Member for Finance and Transformation

### 1 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Richard Levell with Cllr Jan O'Hara acting as substitute. Apologies were also received from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Adele Wylie.

### 2 **Members' Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were received.

### 3 **Notification of requests to address the meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

### 4 **Introductions**

Members and officers were welcomed to the inaugural meeting of the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and made their introductions.

## 5 Capital Approval Process

The Committee received a report which provided details of the proposed new Capital Approval Process (CAP) and sought comments and views from members on areas that could potentially be strengthened or added to.

It was noted that the adoption of the CAP would provide a single governance process to ensure that any capital investment decisions made were based on sound evidence and costed proposals that met the strategic aims and priorities of the Council.

The new process was outlined to members, with attention drawn to the Capital Scheme Lifecycle featuring five key checkpoints that any capital scheme would need to pass in order to progress. It was noted that prior to any scheme being submitted there would need to be engagement with key stakeholders and sign-off from the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder(s).

The governance structure for the process was detailed to the meeting, which noted that the Executive would have responsibility for the ultimate approval for schemes, with the Strategic Capital Board (SCB) being responsible for the oversight of scheme management through their lifecycles. Membership of this board would be comprised of members of the Corporate Leadership Team and draft terms of reference were provided to the meeting. In addition, Capital Portfolio Boards would be convened to develop and bring forward projects for consideration by the SCB as well as being responsible for day-to-day management of significant projects. Again, indicative terms of reference were supplied to the meeting.

In order to facilitate a transparent audit trail for schemes, a business case template would need to be completed. This would assist in providing a focus on the aims and projected outcomes for the scheme as well as elements relating to adding social value and reduced carbon impact.

The meeting was also advised that new versions of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential and Treasury Management Codes were expected to be published later in the year which were the frameworks through which the Council could fund capital projects. In addition, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had put forward proposals which sought to tighten rules over investments made by local authorities.

Members asked questions in relation to:

- Engagement with stakeholders
- Membership of the Strategic Capital and Capital Portfolio Boards
- Linking checkpoints in the Capital Scheme Lifecycle to Royal Institute of British Architects standards
- Additional costs involved in improved BREEAM standards
- Agreed Section 106 funding management status
- Schemes coming forward through the Capital Programme
- Indicative timescales for the Capital Scheme Lifecycle
- Capital investments and disposal of assets
- Offsetting the costs of using eco-friendly elements to capital works

**RESOLVED** that the Committee noted and commented on the proposed new Capital Approval Process as outlined above.

## **6 Introduction to Scrutiny Work Planning**

Members received a report, the purpose of which was to ask the Committee to consider best practice and statutory guidance in relation to ensuring an effective and impactful scrutiny function and, as part of this, to agree a work planning process for 2021/22.

Details of the hybrid governance model adopted by the Council were outlined, with members noting that the Executive had established Executive Advisory Panels to support and encourage cross-party involvement in policy creation. This system intended to allow members early involvement in the development of potential recommendations for the Executive to consider. The role of Scrutiny would be to examine specific Executive decisions and raise appropriate concerns, as well as monitoring ongoing Council performance and the impact of decisions made by the Executive. Furthermore, the adoption by the Council of two scrutiny committees would allow Task and Finish Groups convened by each to focus on specific pieces of work, supporting the main committees and reviewing topics identified in the Annual Workplan.

It was heard that resources should be prioritised to focus on key strategic issues where scrutiny input could have the largest positive impact in terms of Council operation and policy development. A Scrutiny Conference was therefore proposed that would pull together various interested parties, including the membership of both scrutiny committees, to identify key strategies and issues that were of concern to Members, the public and partner organisations in order to form a effective work programme going forward.

Members welcomed the concept of the Scrutiny Conference and considered that it was important to differentiate the Executive Advisory Panels from Scrutiny, while noting the role of the panels in developing policy.

Members raised items for possible inclusion on the work programme for the Committee as follows:

- Agreed Section 106 funding management
- Agency worker spend
- Council contracts – performance reviews
- Review of the Process of Transformation, including budgetary spend
- The impact of Covid-19 on Council Tax and Business Rate collection and potential support that could be provided
- Transition projects update
- Financial impact on the Council of homelessness
- Children’s Services and Adult Social Care

In response to a request for scrutiny of Fees and Charges, it was heard that a working group had already been convened to ensure readiness ahead of the budget-setting process and to allow for timely scrutiny and consultation.

**RESOLVED** that the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee:

- i) Noted the Scrutiny Statutory Guidance; and
- ii) Approved the proposed 2021/22 work planning process as set out in the report.

## **7 Member Scrutiny Training**

The meeting noted that further training and development opportunities for members would be rolled out during the lifetime of the Council administration to complement training that had already taken place. This would ensure that members had the relevant skills in place to fulfil their role.

A report would be submitted to the next meeting of Full Council with a recommendation that the Council sign up to the Councillor Development Charter run by East Midlands Councils. Work would be undertaken in the short-term to meet the performance indicators that would allow the Council to achieve chartered status for its member development.

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Chair

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Date

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm