

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS
2nd July, 2012

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); Councillors Goulty and Kaye (Policy Advisors).

J9. NEIGHBOURHOODS GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN REPORT 2011/12

Consideration was given to a report presented by Mark Scarrott, Finance Manager, which provided details on the Revenue Outturn position for Neighbourhoods Services accounted for in the General Fund for 2011-12.

The final 2011/12 budget for the service after in-year virements was £3.345m. The 2011/12 outturn position against budget was a net underspend of £509k or 15.22%.

Two requests to carry forward unspent balances were to be included in the Council's consolidated outturn report to Cabinet (4th July, 2012) as follows:-

- Members' Community Leadership Fund £19,620.
- Dispersed Units (now treated as a Trading Account) £40,091.

The revised cash limited budget after supplementary estimates and budget virements was £3,344,649, the net Revenue Outturn for Neighbourhoods General Fund services for 2011/12 was £2,835,202. This resulted in an overall underspend of £509,447 (a variation of 15.22%) and represented an increase in the underspend of £139k previously reported, largely due to the further impact of the Council wide moratorium on non-essential spend and controlled vacancy management.

The approach had been necessary as part of a range of measures designed to ensure that the Council was able to achieve a balanced budget. It was not anticipated that this position would be replicable in future years.

The report set out in detail the summary outturn position for the service and further information and clarification provided.

Reference was made and detail provided on the analysis of the key areas of underspend.

Discussion ensued on the underspends and concern expressed that whilst these areas had underspent this year, the budget allocation should not be withdrawn as a substantial proportion of the savings was due to one-off windfall savings together with salaries related savings as post were held vacant pending restructures. Future years' budgets had already been adjusted to reflect this position.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the unaudited 2011/12 revenue outturn contents be noted.

J10. HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2011-12 INDICATIVE OUTTURN

Consideration was given to a report presented by Maureen Gatt, Finance Director, which represented the indicative out-turn position for the 2011/12 Capital Programme.

As at the end of 2011/12, the final indicative spend on the HIP was £36.408m compared to a budget provision of £38.052m, an underspend of £1.644m.

The report submitted provided details of savings and slippage on the individual schemes of work with the overall programme and highlighted the fact that the resources not drawn down in 2011/12 would be carried forward into next year.

Further information was provided on:-

Total Capital Works to Properties.

Other Capital Works.

Empty Homes.

Central Heating.

Fair Access to All.

Regeneration/Neighbourhood Renewal – Private and Public Sector.

Overall it was noted that there was a saving of £154k on Other Works To Properties which, together with the £576k savings/slippage on refurbishment works resulted in an overall underspend of £730k on total Capital Works to Properties.

Resources not drawn down in 2011/12 due to the savings identified would be carried forward into subsequent years.

Discussion ensued on works to replace existing boilers, refused access to Council properties by tenants to carry out works and the consequences which were not enforceable and the role of the Neighbourhood Champions in tenancy verification.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the indicative 2011/12 out-turn position be noted.

J11. COUNCIL HOUSING - SUB-LETTING AND LODGERS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Maureen Gatt, Finance Director, which detailed how the Housing Act 1985 allowed all secure Council tenants to take in a lodger without the Council's permission. The Council could only object if the property would become statutorily overcrowded as a result.

The Housing Act also allowed secure tenants to sub-let part of the property provided that the Council's permission was sought and granted, and again, permission could only be refused if the property would be overcrowded.

This report set out in detail some of the issues associated with tenants taking in lodgers, and the actions the Council could take as a result.

It was, therefore, proposed that the Tenancy Agreement and customer handbook should be updated and a clear procedure document produced, along with guidance and training for staff and an information sheet for tenants.

Further information was provided on the definitions of sub-letting, lodgers and the national policy position, along with information currently provided by the Council, issues associated with lodgers particularly in relation to under-occupation, collecting more rent than their Council rent, obtaining and recording lodgers' details and the potential for tenancy fraud.

To assist in taking this forward it was suggested that action be taken to:-

- Update Tenancy Agreement and customer handbook later in the year.
- Produce clear and detailed procedure for staff.
- Produce information sheet for tenants.
- Ensure staff received guidance and training on all issues relating to lodgers.

Discussion ensued on the potential for fraud and how this would be monitored, the position of those claiming benefits, the need for advising staff to be fully trained and the obligations on tenants to inform the Council when they intended to take on a lodger.

Resolved:- (1) That the Tenancy Agreement and customer handbook be amended to ensure clear wording around subletting and lodgers.

(2) That a clear and detailed procedure be produced, alongside guidance and training for staff and an information sheet for tenants.

(THE CABINET MEMBER AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM IN ORDER TO NOTE THE PROGRESS MADE)

J12. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2011/12 OUTTURN REPORT

Consideration was given to a report presented by Mark Scarrott, Finance Manager, which presented the unaudited outturn position on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial period 2011/12.

The report set out the outturn position which was an overall surplus (transfer to Working Balance) of £5.555m which was an increase on the budgeted sum and summarised the key income and expenditure variances from the approved budget to demonstrate that whilst there was substantial increase in repair and maintenance costs, it had been possible to accommodate these within existing resources, as a result of savings in supervision and management costs, and with increased income.

The report also set out in detail the year end Housing Revenue Account Operating Statement for 2011/12.

Further information was provided on the main reasons for the variations against the various budget lines which made up the total expenditure.

Discussion ensued on the identification of the bands of rebate, the impact of the welfare reform, bidding process on soon to be vacant properties and turnaround time for voids.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the unaudited Housing Revenue Account outturn for 2011-12 be noted.

J13. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information likely to reveal the identify of an individual).

J14. PETITION - STORM HOUSE

Consideration was given to the receipt of a petition which requested demolition of the above-named building in order to put an end to constant anti-social behaviour and problems the site was causing to the local community.

This request was supported by the Cabinet Member and appropriate action to remedy the situation was proposed.

Resolved;- That the petition be received and forwarded onto the relevant Department for attention.

J15. PETITION - MALTBY

Further to Minute No. 8 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member held on 28th May, 2012, consideration was given to the receipt of a petition in support of the tenancy.

Discussion ensued on the reasons for the petition request, the background to this case and what action could be taken, if any, to rectify the position.

Resolved:- That the petition be received and forwarded onto the relevant Department for attention.