

THE CABINET
Wednesday, 3rd July, 2013

Present:- Councillor Stone (in the Chair); Councillors Akhtar, Doyle, Lakin, McNeely, Rushforth, R. S. Russell and Smith.

Also in attendance Councillor Whelbourn (Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hussain and Wyatt.

C40 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

C41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

C42 GENERAL FUND - BUDGET PRINCIPLES 2014/15 AND ONWARDS 2014/15, PROPOSED BUDGET SETTING TIMETABLE AND 2013/14 REPORTING IN YEAR FINANCIAL BUDGET PERFORMANCE

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Director of Finance, which explained that in setting the 2013/14 Revenue Budget, it was recognised that the current budget principles, that had served the Council well since the Coalition Government's programme of austerity started, would need to be refreshed in light of recent announcements that further significant funding reductions for Local Government were likely to continue until at least 2018. This report proposed a refreshed set of budget principles on which the 2014/15 General Fund (GF) Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy should be based.

The report also recommended for Cabinet approval the proposed Budget Setting Timetable for setting the 2014/15 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), and the proposed approach to reporting the Council's in year financial performance to Cabinet for the financial year 2013/14.

Cabinet Members noted that with the significant on-going funding reductions and welfare reform changes that the Council would face until at least 2018, the new Budget Principles were proposed to ensure the Council operated effectively within the funding available and delivered savings which had the least impact on the citizens of Rotherham.

Resolved:- (1) That the refreshed Principles on which the 2014/15 General Fund Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy will be based be approved.

(2) That the proposed budget setting timetable for the Revenue Budget 2014/15 and Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved.

(3) That the proposed approach to reporting to Cabinet the Revenue Budget Monitoring position for 2013/14 financial year onwards be approved.

C43 CAPITAL PROGRAMME OUTTURN 2012/13 AND UPDATED ESTIMATES 2013/14 TO 2015/16

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Director of Finance, which set out the capital outturn position for the 2012/13 financial year and recommend for approval changes to the programme for the financial years 2013/14 to 2015/16 resulting from the 2012/13 outturn and scheme changes since the overall programme was agreed in April, 2013 as part of the budget setting process.

The current economic climate and the on-going impact of the Government's austerity measures required that the capital programme was subject to continual oversight, and if necessary, revision, to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans were aligned with strategic priorities and maximised the value from the limited capital resources available.

The financial implications of the Programme were reflected in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.

For 2012/13 the Council's capital investment into the regeneration and enhanced infrastructure of the Borough was £57.923m. The profile of this investment and the updated future expenditure plans were reflected in the Directorate summary table set out in the report, along with a detailed copy of the programme for each Directorate

The Capital Programme was funded through a number of sources – borrowing (both supported and unsupported), Capital grants and contributions, Revenue contributions and Capital Receipts. Any certainty over the funding of the Programme rested on confirmation that grants/contributions and Capital Receipts continued to be available in forthcoming years. Where funding sources were volatile in nature, the risk would be managed by continually keeping the Programme under review.

(1) Resolved:- That the 2012/13 capital outturn position be noted.

(2) Recommended:- That the updated 2013/14 to 2015/16 capital programme be approved.

C44 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF FUEL POVERTY

Further to Minute No. 146 of 6th February, 2013, Councillor Whelbourn, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, introduced a report by the Director of Public Health, regarding the response to the scrutiny review. It had been identified in the 2011/12 Scrutiny work programme and originally allocated to the Improving Places Select Commission focusing on physical schemes and measures to improve fuel efficiency in communities with a high incidence of fuel poverty. However, the issue of the forthcoming Green Deal and its potential impact had lead other Select Commissions to raise fuel poverty as a key issue and, therefore, it was re-allocated to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of its 2012/13 work programme.

Since completion of the review, progress had been made with work underway on a number of the Scrutiny's recommendations including the establishment of a Green Deal Working Group and a Green Deal Partnership Agreement under development.

It was noted that the reference to ten out of the eleven recommendations being accepted was incorrect and, in fact, all eleven recommendations had been accepted and lead officers identified to implement in line with the details contained within the action plan

Resolved:- (1) The response to the Scrutiny Review of Fuel Poverty be approved.

(2) That the response to the Scrutiny Review be submitted to the next available meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

C45 HOME AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE - CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND THE RESPONSE TO LOCALISED GROOMING

In accordance with Minute No. 35 of 19th June, 2013, Councillor Lakin, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, which contained a detailed analysis against the Home Affairs Select Committee's recommendations.

The Home Affairs Select Committee report had identified thirty-six statements and/or recommendations in its report of June, 2013. The Rotherham Local Safeguarding Board Manager and the Strategic Director had undertaken a self-assessment against the thirty six statements and identified three areas where the Authority was undertaking work as identified in the recommendation, but was not reflected in the existing Child Sexual Exploitation Plan i.e.

- No. 4 Improvements in Residential Care.
- No. 8 Return interviews for children who have been reported missing.
- No. 31 Resources for the voluntary sector.

The publication of the Select Committee report had rightly made the Council and its partners re-assess the effectiveness of the response to child sexual exploitation. Failure to continually improve services would mean children and young people were not afforded a comprehensive and quality service.

The Council would continue to maintain its focus on early intervention and prevention activity, but believed that the strengthened multi agency working must lead to enhanced disclosure and evidence gathering, investigations and ultimately prosecutions by the Police and acknowledged the deterrent effect that successful prosecutions could bring.

Cabinet Members noted that as a result of the Home Affairs Select Committee recommendations an extraordinary meeting of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board had been convened to take place on Monday, 8th July, 2013 to go through the progress and incorporate actions where appropriate.

Some of the recommendations were from a national perspective and not necessarily in Rotherham's jurisdiction to implement at this stage.

Progress reports would be submitted to future meetings of the Cabinet where any areas for future development were highlighted or where positive work could be celebrated.

Cabinet Members noted that some of the criticism was historical and stressed the importance of an improved multi-agency way of working as a result of the Home Affairs Select Committee recommendations.

Information that had been in the press locally had been handled sensitively, which gave confidence to local people to report any concerns that would then be appropriately dealt with.

It was also noted that an externally conducted review on practices was to be undertaken in July 2013. This would be facilitated through Barnardo's and the incoming independent Local Safeguarding Children's Board Chair. A further diagnostic would take place in October, 2013.

Resolved:- (1) That the assessment against the Home Affairs Select Committee recommendations be noted.

(2) That the findings of the practice review in July, 2013 be submitted to the Cabinet in due course.

(3) That a quarterly progress report against the local Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan (incorporating the Home Affairs Select Committee recommendations) be submitted to the Cabinet on a regular basis.