

PERFORMANCE REPORTING AGAINST THE CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2020-2021 - QUARTER 3

COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At a virtual meeting on 25 February 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the recommendation to the Executive.

The following points were made:

- The Board was pleased to see so many key activities and performance measures continuing to be achieved despite the difficult circumstances due to Covid-19.
- Paragraph 1.4.6.4 – the go live date for the Business World system had been delayed due to the impact of Covid-19 on workloads and sickness levels, along with difficulties of testing in a virtual environment. In addition, there had been system implications due to the quality of the current data which was being rectified. Going forward, there would be system safeguards, training, clear guidance and instructions designed and implemented to ensure data was compliant in future. The revised live date had been selected taking this into account together with the avoidance of key service pressures, eg the Council's financial accounts.
- Paragraph 1.4.8.3 – Mixed experiences were reported by councillors with the FixMyStreet App. Concerns were raised about the status of reported highway defects being updated to completed when no work had been undertaken, which had resulted in complaints being received by some councillors, including from parish councils who had experienced issues with the system. The Chief Executive stated that she would request a fundamental review of the FixMyStreet App be undertaken to look at the responses and communications provided to the customer in relation to the current status of reported incidents.

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REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2020/21 - QUARTER 3 TO 31 DECEMBER 2020

COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At a virtual meeting on 25 February 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the recommendation to the Executive.

The following points were confirmed:

- The Covid-19 position had changed from a forecast surplus of £7.673m in Quarter 2 to a forecast deficit of £2.212m for the end of 2020/21 between the forecast expenditure and losses and the emergency Covid-19 grant received.
- Paragraph 1.16 – The estimated costs and losses for the first quarter of 2021/22 were currently lower than the allocated fifth tranche of general emergency grant from the Government of £15.159m to cover these costs and losses by £3.229m. Following the first tranche of grants in which the Council did quite well, the Government had since created a Covid relative needs formula which consisted of a mixture of deprivation and social care measures, and was now issuing grants based on this formula. The estimated costs and losses were currently lower than the allocated grant as they reflected what had been identified so far and the Council would continue to refine these estimated costs and losses for the first quarter of 2021/22.

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CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2020/21 - QUARTER 3 TO 31 DECEMBER 2020

COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At a virtual meeting on 25 February 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report and unanimously agreed to support the recommendation to the Executive.

Members of the Board asked a number of questions, when the following points were confirmed:

- As part of the Capital Strategy and improvements to the monitoring of the capital programme, there was now a Capital Review Group who were looking at business cases in an overarching way which included peer review, and were determining whether projects were realistic and ensuring that risks were highlighted at an early stage. It was noted that there were now standardised business case templates and guidance on the information to be included which would ensure all relevant information was captured to be able to make more informed decisions. It also provided a reminder to officers on what information the scrutiny committees and the Executive would need to see. This was being gradually implemented and as a result business cases were coming through in a much better format.
- It was recommended that Scrutiny Committees should have regular periodic reports right from the start in the larger projects.
- Highways schemes in particular needed to be better managed in terms of risks and budget forecasting. Future highways schemes, such as the North Hykeham Relief Road, should have more scrutiny of the risks going forward. It was recognised that not all risks could be mitigated against due to third party and contractor involvement.
- Specific schemes and projects in the capital programme were considered by the relevant scrutiny committee, such as the Special Schools capital scheme appraisals which were being brought forward to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. It was thought that members of the Board would benefit if future Capital Budget Monitoring reports about live schemes included information about when and with what result those schemes had been considered by a scrutiny committee so as to highlight that a scrutiny appraisal had taken place.
- Training on finance and the scrutiny of major projects should be provided so that councillors had the skills and confidence to interrogate the financial information presented at the scrutiny committees. This training had been incorporated into the Induction programme for councillors after the elections on 6 May 2021.

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