

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 December 2023 at 7.00 pm**

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<b>Present:</b>	Councillors Martin Kerin (Chair), Georgette Polley, Lynn Worrall and Aaron Green (Substitute) (substitute for Valerie Morris-Cook)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Councillors Jack Duffin (Vice-Chair), Valerie Morris-Cook and Robert Gledhill
<b>In attendance:</b>	Steven Mair, Interim Chief Financial Officer/Section 151 Officer Jenny Shade, Principal Democratic Services Officer

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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **14. Minutes**

The minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 5 October and the Extraordinary Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 1 November 2023 were approved as a correct record.

### **15. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **16. Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

### **17. Update from the Investment Advisory Panel - Verbal**

This item will be deferred to the next meeting.

### **18. Quarter 2 Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn**

The report presented set out the estimated forecast revenue outturn position for 2023/24 for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Public Health Grant.

The following points were raised.

- Member questioned when the financial accounts for 2020/21 would be completed and what the severity for the council would be on these not yet being completed.
- Member questioned the HR, OD and Transformation overspend of £0.928m.

- Member questioned the Children's Services placement overspend of £2.153m.
- Member questioned the Counter Fraud & Enforcement overspend of £0.064m.
- Member referred to the Housing Revenue Account, Housing Development, and questioned why the forecast variation had doubled the current budget.
- Member referred to the direction of travel and raised concern on the high number that were red, going downward, although tight controls were in place.
- Member referred to the Housing General Fund and raised concern on the down direction of travel and questioned whether enough was being done from Government grants.
- Member referred to revised reduced forecast for income from Thameside and stated Thameside needed the chance to operate fairly on a level playing field and that this was not a fair overspend.
- Member requested a breakdown of the Transformation Budget and include in a briefing note. (see action point 26)
- Member questioned the final balance of the capitalisation that would be sought from Government this year.
- Member sought clarification from officers on the direction of travel on the Housing Revenue Account.
- Member referred to Place, Economic Development Service and stated the council were inhibiting revenue to be created. (see action point 27)
- Member referred to the Lower Thames Crossing overspend of £0.317m and questioned whether charges being made for work being carried was being monitored sufficiently. (see action point 28)
- Member referred to the Slippage on Capital Programme, by Project, and questioned how at risk were these programmes.
- Member questioned why on Appendix 2 the Item 10393; Redevelopment of Council Offices for Residential Accommodation was still being shown. (see action point 29)
- Member asked for clarification on external funding for Youth Zone. (see action point 30)
- Member asked for clarification on borrowing costs.
- Member requested an update on the progress on the work being undertaken by PWC.

*At 7.34pm the meeting went into exempt session.*

*At 7.39pm the meeting resumed into public session.*

The chair thanked members for their contributions this evening.

## **ACTIONS**

26. Steven Mair to provide a breakdown of the Transformation Budget in the form of a briefing note.
27. Steven Mair agreed to take back to service colleagues for an update on the operations of the Thameside theatre and provide briefing note.

28. Steven Mair agreed to take back to service colleagues to ensure charging was being monitored and would provide an update at the February meeting.
29. Steven Mair agreed to take back to service colleagues for further detail on why on Appendix 2 the Item 10393, Redevelopment of Council Offices for Residential Accommodation was still being shown.
30. Steven Mair agreed to take back to service colleagues for further detail on external funding for Youth Zone.

## **RESOLVED**

1. **Noted and commented on the overall forecast general fund outturn position for quarter 2 is an underspend of £1.512m.**
2. **Noted that directors with adverse variances would continue to review directorate budgets and identify mitigating actions to resolve the forecast pressure against the 2023/24 budget.**
3. **Noted the potential risks to the position listed noted in section 4 and the following specific risks noted within the report: a) Noted there is an ongoing assessment of the investment portfolio values which remains under assessment pending reporting in quarter 3. b) Noted there are ongoing wider financial accounting assessments related to prior periods which may also need to be considered.**
4. **Noted and commented on the positions set out in respect of the HRA, DSG and Public Health which project to deliver the budget within the existing funding envelopes.**
5. **Noted and commented on the capital programme, the current projected General Fund slippage of £22.13m, the HRA slippage of £12.59m and the outcomes of the external capital programme review.**
6. **Noted the proposed changes to the capital programme for 2023/24 as set out in section 8 and Appendices 7 and 8.**
7. **Noted that the position will remain provisional as further substantive work is undertaken, notably in preparation of historic accounts, which could have an impact on current or future years.**
8. **Noted Thurrock's 2024-25 Schools funding formula to be implemented as set out in section 6.**
9. **Noted the review of the Expenditure Control Panels included at Appendix 6.**

## **19. Work Programme**

The work programme was discussed and members agreed to invite Councillor Snell to the 1 February 2024 meeting to provide an update on the Investment Advisory Panel.

The recording of the meeting can be viewed from the following link:

[Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 7 December 2023, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

**The meeting finished at 7.45 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**