

Report to: Council

Agenda
Item

11(ii)(b)

Meeting Date: 9 September 2014

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Chairman's Report**
Councillor Reg Watson OBE

Overview Report and Work Programme

The minutes of the Scrutiny Chairs Group held on 17 July 2014 were circulated for information. It was agreed that a Task Group be established to look at the issues around Member involvement and Member empowerment. This panel would lead on the Group but would invite members from Environment and Economy and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

The Scrutiny Officer drew Members attention to the work programme which had been attached to the report as Appendix 2. She reminded the Panel of their initial discussions regarding work programme items in which Members agreed that they would like to undertake a piece of work on Shared Services and would hold discussions in August with the Director of Resources in order to ensure that any ongoing work was complemented rather than duplicated. RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to this Panel (OS.19/14) be noted; 2) That the notes of the Scrutiny Chairs Group held on 17 July 2014 be noted; 3) That a Member Empowerment Task and Finish Group be established and to include Members from Environment and Economy and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 to 2019/20

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder further explained that the draft Medium Term Financial Plan would be available for consultation with the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel before returning to the Executive on 18 August 2014, prior to transmission to Council for approval on 9 September 2014. The Executive had received the report on 21 July 2014 (EX.67/14 refers) and made it available for Scrutiny. In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions: *Would it be prudent to consider working with the County Council in respect of the onstreet parking enforcement to avoid duplication of work and reduce costs?* The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained that discussions had been held with the County Council on the issue. The Chief Executive added that correspondence had been received from the County Council following the decision with regard to on-street parking charges requesting that the contract with the City Council in respect of enforcement be terminated. That contract had two years still to run and the Chief Executive explained that discussions had been held to look at how the service could be maintained and any deficit be reduced.

Draft Capital Strategy 2015/15 to 2019/20

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder outlined the current capital programme forecasts, reminding Members of the key assumptions which had been considered in making the projections including the Capital Programme of £7.217m for 2014/15 and £8.007m for 2015/16. The impact of the 2013/14 outturn and the carrying forward of budgets into 2014/15 and other adjustments had increased the programme to £9.716m in 2014/15. He indicated that the current capital programme forecast spending on capital projects of around £1m -

£2.5m per annum for years 2017/18 to 2019/20, although past experience had indicated that actual spending would be much higher due, in the main, to the fact that a number of initiatives were still at an early stage of development and had not yet been included in the projections. The Portfolio Holder particularly identified the Asset Review Programme and Vehicle Replacement Programme, commenting that the position on those schemes would need to be updated during the budget process when an indication of capital schemes coming to fruition and their timing could be made more accurately. The report further set out an estimated level of capital finance resources which would be generated over the next five years and highlighted the current position regarding borrowing; capital receipts; reserves and balances; Government and other capital grants and external funding; and revenue contributions. Also summarised was the level of capital spending and available financing for the period 2014/15 to 2019/20 which indicated that currently there was approximately £5.6m uncommitted estimated capital resources available to support any future capital programme as at the end of 2017/18. The Executive had received the report on 21 July 2014 (EX.68/14 refers) and made it available for Scrutiny. In considering the draft Capital Strategy Members raised the following comments and

questions: *The report refers to borrowing of £5,000,000 in respect of leisure facilities. If the Council do decide to borrow that money would it be a loan with a repayment programme?* The Chief Executive informed Members that the borrowing requirement indicated in the report would be subject to a detailed Business Case. It was intended that the money would be invested in important leisure facilities at the Sands Centre which would drive down the overall leisure cost in Carlisle. The Chief Executive confirmed that the loan would have a repayment programme. *Was the money to fund the improved pools not coming from the proposed development at Morton? Is that development going ahead?* The Chief Executive explained that the Morton site was part of the disposal of assets programme and was being considered separately to the leisure project. That revolved around money being invested in leisure facilities which it was anticipated would make a saving on the subsidy paid to the leisure provider and return additional capital. The disposal of assets and generation of capital was a longer term project that would lead to the repayment of the £15 million loan and would be included in the MTFP next year.

Organisational Development Plan

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions: *How many Members had taken up the opportunity to purchase laptops/tablets with a view to going paperless?* The Organisational Development Manager confirmed that she would find out that information and advise Members of the Panel accordingly. The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained that the scheme was part of an ongoing programme of efficiency. Some Members would already have computers and printers in their homes and when they became ready for renewal the options could be considered. There may also be an issue with Members who live in rural areas as they may not be able to access the internet. *It may be worth looking at how tablets could interact better with Council systems to make it easier for Members who wish to become paperless. Members who did not own a tablet were not given the opportunity to be part of the pilot programme.* The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder stated that if Members were considering going paperless but were reluctant to commit to purchasing a tablet they should be offered the opportunity to sit alongside a Member who does use a tablet in meetings before making a decision. *It is good to see that training is still on the Council's agenda.* The Organisational Development Manager advised Members that there would be a member health Check session on 9 September 2014 between 4.30 and 6.30 immediately prior to the next Council meeting.

RESOLVED – 1. That report CE.08/14 – Organisational Development Plan Report – be noted. 2. That the Organisational Development Manager to look at how many Members had taken up the opportunity to purchase laptops/tablets with a view to going paperless and to advise Members of the Panel accordingly.

Cllr Watson OBE

Chairman