

Report to
Council

Agenda
Item
12(ii)(b)

Meeting Date: 5th March 2019

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Business & Transformation Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Report –
Councillor Pam Birks**

Our meeting of the 3rd January was looking at the Executive's response to our first round of 2019/20 Budget scrutiny. Given recent coverage of Central Plaza the Panel requested further information regarding the Expressions of Interest. The Portfolio Holder advised some Expressions of Interest had been submitted, and these were being compiled and sent to the Crown, and that the Council was acting as a conduit for the process. The decisions on the Expressions remains the decision of the Crown although the Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure the safety of the building.

Members raised concern that we had not received information regarding the EDRF bid which had been submitted for the BIC, we have since received a written response from the Corporate Director of Economic Development – that the funders had requested additional information which had been submitted and we were still awaiting a response.

Executive proposals - there is still uncertainty regarding Grant levels from 2019/20, we are hoping that this information will be confirmed by the end of January. Money available from the Business Rate Retention and Fair Funding will not be available before the end of February. We noted the risk associated with the Draft Budget figures and that the minimum Reserves may need to be reviewed depending on the outcome of the Local Government Finance Review.

Panel members asked that going forward, when setting the Budget, if it was possible for the City and County Council to prepare one document that shows the overall picture of how Council Tax is distributed and what it pays for. The Chief Executive agreed to take this to the Cumbria Leaders Board as a proposal for future consultation.

Treasury Management was discussed at length, we would like to thank our Investment Team for the hard work that they put in on behalf of the people of Carlisle. It was proposed that the Finance Team look at how we can have a more ethical Investment

Policy, and the Financial Services Manager agreed that this will be looked at in the future. Another great step for Carlisle.

Members of the Panel have worked as a Task and Finish Group looking at the efficacy and efficiency of the Council Scrutiny Panels and whether three Panels service the Governance of the Council in the best way. A final Report will be taken to the B&T Panel on 22nd February for consideration as a proposal to Council.

Meeting of 14th February

The Deputy Chief Executive gave us an overview of Risk Management and how risks cascade into Managers, Directors and Corporate Risk Management Plans. This represented a comprehensive explanation as to how decisions are made and scored within the Risk Management Framework.

We were pleased to hear that Officers are involved in monitoring the Cumbria Rate Pool, and that there are Joint Authority Meetings being held throughout the year.

April to December 2018 Revenue Budget was presented and in what has been a difficult year for the High Street and Businesses there is only a £5,000 overspend. Officers and Executive should be congratulated on such an achievement.

Sickness Absence and the long-term contributing factors were discussed – change within the Authority appears to be an underlying factor. An Organisational Change Sub-Group has been set up to review and identify opportunities to assist Staff who are undergoing change or likely to undergo change in their work environment. We are really pleased to see how proactive we, as an Authority, are in supporting our staff. We have been awarded the Bronze Better Health Award and now we are Going for Gold.

Full details of the discussions are to be found within the Minute Book

Cllr Pam Birks
Chairman