

Report of the Director for Customer & Business Support Services

2015-16 Monitor 2

Purpose

1. This report forecasts the 2015/16 outturn position for the services falling under the responsibility of the Corporate & Scrutiny Management Policy & Scrutiny Committee.

Financial Analysis

2. The Council's net General Fund budget for 2015/16 is £119,760k and the net budget for the areas covered by this report is £16,121k. Of this £13,389k relates to Customer & Business Support Services (CBSS) and £2.7m to the Office of the Chief Executive (OCE).
3. Following on from previous years, the challenge of delivering savings continues with £12m to be achieved in order to reach a balanced budget. £3,985k of these savings fall within the services covered by this report. Of this £157k relates to OCE and the balance of £3,828k relates to CBSS. The forecasts outlined in this report reflect a prudent view of how that challenge is currently being met.
4. All budgets are reviewed on a quarterly basis and some are monitored monthly. Those that are monitored monthly are high value or high risk areas. The latest review has not identified any major variations that require action or mitigation and all savings proposals are progressing. Overall, the areas covered by this report are forecasting a small overspend of £160k, all of which is due to pressures within OCE.

Performance Analysis – 2015/16 Monitor 2

5. Following the Monitor 1 report in September, Members requested comparative data for some of the key performance information. However, comparisons with other Councils are only available for year end information. Therefore, this will be incorporated into the outturn report scheduled for Summer 2016.

Customer & Business Support Services

6. The second quarter saw a small reduction in call volumes for general enquiries to 60,489 (66,218 Quarter 1) and 7,244 (8,114) for Benefits. The predicted improvement in performance in both areas has been delivered with performance against service level target (80%) increasing to 68.1% (45% Quarter 1) general enquiries and 78.8% (59.1% quarter 1) for Benefits. The total percentage of all calls answered in both areas was 92.5% and 94.5% respectively in quarter 2. The improving performance continues into quarter 3. The number of residents visiting the customer centre in quarter 2 increased to 18,965 (17,504 quarter one) and the average wait time remained above target (10 Minutes) at 9.5 minutes.
7. The E-Democracy Scrutiny Task Group are reviewing the implementation of a new system to improve customer access to on-line services, due to go live in Summer 2016 and will make recommendations to this Committee as per the agenda for this meeting
8. The collection rate for Council Tax at the end of quarter 2 was 56.82% compared with 56.69% at the end of quarter 2 2014/15 and Business Rates 58.02% compared with 56.7 in quarter 2 2014/15.
9. Housing Benefit performance remains on target at the end of quarter 2 with a combined (New Claims/Change of Circumstance) average of 11 days.
10. Total Council sickness absence (excluding Schools) has averaged 4.2 days per FTE in the year to date, lower than 5.2 days during the same period in 2014/15. Stress related absence is also slightly lower than the same period last year.
11. Average wage levels remain a concern and the Council continues to focus on measures to promote high value jobs. On 18 September, City of York Council and the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership submitted a bid to government for a new Enterprise Zone which could unlock over £100million to help deliver York's largest brownfield site, York Central. Estimates in the bid suggest this could help to create up to 6,600 jobs in the city, and over £1.1 billion value for the region's economy. The jobs created would be high-value office based jobs, helping to grow York's economy by an estimated 20 per cent and increase average wages in the city. The Autumn Statement announced that the bid had been successful.

Office of the Chief Executive

12. The Council continues work on producing a Local Plan for the city, with new housing and economic baseline projections agreed at the Local Plan Working Group on 29 September. The group agreed to take forward two economic

scenarios, a baseline forecast and one with growth more focussed on higher value sectors which would help reverse the decline in average wages seen in recent years while maintaining similar overall jobs growth. These projections will form the basis upon which further variables are built, and inform proposed land allocations.

13. The York Open Data website was launched in March 2015 and there are currently 363 data sets available. The number of visitors between July and September was 4,152, with a total of 1,092 downloaded data sets and 3,295 previewed.

Update on progress on Workforce Equality Scheme

14. The usual statistical information, as previously requested by members, was unfortunately not available in time for the publication of this report. The information will be circulated separately.

Consultation

15. There has been consultation with Trade Union groups on the ongoing implications of the Council's financial situation and performance improvement issues.

Council Plan 2015-19

16. The information and issues included in this report demonstrate progress on achieving the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

Implications

17. The financial implications are covered within the body of the report. There are no significant human resources, equalities, legal, crime and disorder, information technology, property or other implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

18. The risk management processes embedded across the Council continue to contribute to managing the risk issues associated with major projects and key areas of service delivery.

Recommendations

19. As this report is for information only there are no specific recommendations.

Reason: To update the Committee on the forecast position for 2015/16.

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Ian Cunningham	Report Approved	✓	Date	<i>24 December 2015</i>
Wards Affected: <i>All</i>				
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Annex 1: Workforce Equality Scorecard (to follow)