

**COUNCILLORS**

Boyd Elliott (Chairman)  
Glynn Gilfoyle (Vice-Chairman)

Steve Carr - **Absent**  
Jim Creamer  
Kate Foale  
Eric Kerry  
Nigel Moxon  
John Ogle

Philip Owen  
Francis Purdue-Horan  
Mike Quigley  
Dave Shaw – **Absent**  
Sam Smith

**OTHER COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Andre Camilleri  
Councillor Scott Carlton  
Councillor Richard Jackson  
Councillor Bruce Laughton  
Councillor Tracey Taylor

**OFFICERS**

Martin Elliot	Senior Scrutiny Officer
Isobel Fleming	Service Director Transformation and Change
Derek Higton	Interim Corporate Director - Place
Laurence Jones	Group Manager - Early Help Services
Kate Morris	Democratic Services Officer
Nigel Stevenson	Service Director, Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement
Marj Toward	Service Director, Customers, Governance and Employees
Melanie Williams	Corporate Director, Adult Social Care & Health

**1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2022**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 7 September 2022, having been circulated to all Members, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### 4. **BUDGET UPDATE AND CONSULTATION REPORT**

Councillor Richard Jackson (Cabinet Member for Finance), and Nigel Stevenson, (Service Director Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement) attended the meeting to provide a presentation that gave the Committee an overview of the Council's Budget process and on the Budget Consultation Process. A **summary** of the presentation is detailed below:

- The Budget was set in February 2022 and took into account factors that were known at the time. As the year progressed inflation rose increasing pressure on the budget.
- Emerging risks included:
  - retention and recruitment of Staff in Adults and Children's Social care, IT, and Home Care in particular.
  - General Inflation, wage inflation and impact on service delivery and increased costs from supplier
  - Pressure on Government finance which resulted in a change to the Autumn statement leading to a one year settlement announced late.
  - Implications from the proposed Adult Social Care Reform
- Overspend as predicted in Period 5 was £4.4million, this was reduced in Period 6 to £2.9million following actions and measures taken by management. Forecast overspend was identified in 3 main areas:
  - External looked after children placements and internal residential homes due to demand higher than supply for placements
  - Highways and libraries contracts due to inflationary impacts on wages, energy and fuel
  - Rising energy costs for buildings and lighting.
- A number of actions had been taken throughout the summer by departments across the Council to mitigate against pressures. Transformation activities were continuing across the Council to improve service efficiency that involved the potential use of reserves to mitigate issues during periods of transformation.
- The Budget Consultation process had begun in November 2022 in order to establish which services were most important to the public and to inform opportunities for savings for the 2023/24 budget setting. Separate consultation would also take place in line with the decision making requirements for individual savings proposals.
- There were a number of assumptions that were still being tested, that included:
  - Council Tax Base and collection of funds
  - Local Government Settlement
  - National living wage
  - Looked After Children and Adult Social Care pressures

- Inflation
- Actions going forward were identified as:
  - Identify saving options
  - Review assumptions as they become known.
  - Set Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept
  - Review the Budget Consultation
  - Cabinet report (26 January) Full Council Budget setting (9 February)

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- Members asked for clarity on how “key” services, as detailed in the published report, were defined.
- Concerns were expressed that the most vulnerable people, and those most reliant on services may not be able to access the consultation. Members asked what actions were being taken to ensure that the consultation process included those citizens, and whether a full Equality Impact Assessment had been completed.
- The report detailed the assumptions of reduction in pressures for Looked After Children’s budgets and for Adults Social Care budgets that had been made. These assumed reductions in pressures were significant and members queried how these pressures had been reduced so significantly.
- Costs assigned to Social work apprenticeships had been taken out of the revised budget proposals. Committee members questioned whether there were any plans to bring this scheme back going forward to save money on agency costs.
- Members raised concerns that the questions in the consultation were somewhat leading and that some options were not necessarily as clear as they could be. Members highlighted that changes and improvements may be needed for future consultations.
- Although members of the Committee received the questions proposed for the 2023/24 for comment earlier in the year, prior to the consultation commencing, were in agreement that the timing for the next consultation could be brought forward in order to allow them more time to contribute to and formulate the questions in the consultation.
- Members queried how many physical paper copies of the consultation had been printed for citizens unable to access it online or for those who preferred to complete a physical copy.
- Members noted that as the Council held large amounts of data in the form of Councillor Case Work, service user feedback, and other forms of communication that consultations should make use of this data in order to be more wide-reaching.

In relation to the points raised by the Committee, the Cabinet Member and Officers provided the following responses:

- Key services were those services most valued by the public, and these would be defined by the public through the consultation process. It was noted that information gathered in relation to this would be reported back to members at the next meeting of the Overview Committee. It was noted that some of these would be statutory and that some would be non-statutory services.
- A tiered approach was being taken to carrying out the Equality Impact assessments. It was noted that all individual savings proposals would have an Equality Impact Assessment completed prior to decisions being taken as was required. Work was also underway to look at methods that would enable an overarching Equality Impact Assessment, considering all of the proposals together. It was noted that all Equality Impact Assessments were available to Members for viewing.
- Officers had worked hard to identify the difference between number of children needing care against the contract inflation costs. It was noted that the adjusted numbers had taken out the factor of inflation, with this impact being noted elsewhere. It was noted that the reduction in the number of children needing care overall was a result of the transformation work that was taking place to decrease the number of children needing external placement services through the use of internal foster carers, other services, and work with families to ensure they could stay together or that children can return to their families more quickly.
- There were a number of programmes and schemes, either underway, in development, or under investigation to develop social workers in Nottinghamshire. These included the teaching partnership with the D2N2 local authorities and universities. It was noted that the Council also worked with the “Step up to Social Work” scheme, had its own apprenticeship scheme and that work was also underway with Frontline that focused on the north of the County where recruitment had previously been more challenging.
- Officers confirmed that paper copies of the budget consultation had been distributed to Children’s Centres and Libraries across the county and that noted that they would feedback to committee members on the exact number of paper copies that had been distributed.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Jackson and Nigel Stevenson, along side Councillor Taylor and Laurence Jones for attending the meeting and answering member’s questions.

### **RESOLVED (2022/03)**

1. That the current position on the Council’s 2022/23 budget be noted.
2. That the process in establishing the Council’s budget for 2023/24 be noted.

3. That the current assumptions that have been made in establishing the Council's budget for 2023/24 be noted.
4. That the public consultation process on the 2023/24 budget be noted.
5. That the following issues raised by the Committee in its consideration of the budget consultation questions be progressed:
  - a. that members of the Overview Committee be involved in the development of the consultation questions for the 2024/25 budget at the earliest possible stage of the consultation planning process;
  - b. that the scheduled briefing for members of the Overview Committee on the budget consultation responses should also include information on how the consultation process was managed and delivered;
  - c. that a task and finish review takes place on the budget consultation process, giving regard to the budget consultations carried out by other local authorities;
  - d. that Cabinet be provided with a summary of the Overview Committee's comments on the development of the budget for 2023/24 and the budget consultation.

## **5. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE PLAN – ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2022/23**

Councillor Bruce Laughton, (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transformation) and Isobel Fleming (Service Director – Transformation and Change) attended the meeting to provide a presentation that gave the Committee an overview of the Annual Delivery Plan for 2022/23 of the Nottinghamshire Plan. A **summary** of the presentation is given below:

- All actions contained in the annual plan were either on track to be achieved by the end of the year or had been completed and performance against the majority of key measures was good.
- There were three levels of output,
  - Public reporting: The Nottinghamshire Plan and the Annual Delivery Plan which reports the actions taken each year to achieve the outcomes within the Nottinghamshire Plan.
  - Annual Delivery Plan Assurance Report: providing in year updates to the leadership team and the Cabinet on the progress against the annual plan.
  - Services: Held lots of data both from service users and on performance, reviewed regularly and helps to manage demand and capacity of services.
- The Nottinghamshire Plan had been approved by Council in November 2021 and set out the Council's ambitions. The Annual Delivery Plan set out how the Council would action the ambitions in the Nottinghamshire Plan and at the

end of each reporting cycle the Annual Report would summarise the activity and progress being made against the Annual Delivery Plan.

- The Annual Delivery Plan – Assurance Report sat below the Annual Report and provided in year assurance on the progress of actions towards the Delivery Plan. It was noted that this was reported quarterly to the Council's Senior Leadership team and to Cabinet Members.
- Measures in the Annual Delivery Plan included up to date performance measures taken from a number of different places. In the Assurance report, the measures tracked the quality and impact of services in achieving the delivery in year. Wider system measures were not presented quarterly, but work took place with partners to continually influence these.

The committee raised the following points in discussion:

- Numbers of visitors to various Country Parks and attractions are had decreased in comparison to previous years. Committee members recognised the impact that the pandemic had had on visitor numbers in recent years, but asked what impact, if any that this was having on the contracts for these site.
- In 2019 a ten-year Visitor Economy Strategy had been created. Members asked about the impact of the Covid pandemic on the delivery of this strategy and the targets that it had set out as this had not been referenced in the Annual Delivery Plan.
- The percentage of placements that were considered as stable for Children in care had reduced from 57% to 52%. Members raised concerns about this reduction and questioned if sufficient support was being made available to foster carers.
- Committee members questioned the uptake in the Start Talking Strategy aimed at combating the delay in development of speech and language in young children, noting that has been further exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic..
- That there had been significant levels of consultation on various proposals that taken place throughout the year. It was noted that public engagement and active participation in public consultation lead to better informed decision making and service provision. Committee members questioned how the Council was ensuring that consultation activity carried out was as broad and inclusive in its reach as it could be.
- Members noted that there was a broad spectrum of transformation work taking place across the Council. Committee members asked how the budget for this transformation was being managed in order to ensure that the anticipated savings from this activity would be realised.
- It was not always easy to establish the trend of performance in the report for some sections. A summary of concerns and reasons to celebrate success at the start of the report would be helpful for members to more easily access this information.

In relation to the points raised by the Committee, the Cabinet Member and Officers provided the following responses:

- A large part of the visitor number fluctuations that had been seen in the report were due to the normal seasonal trends seen across the year, that had been exacerbated to some extent by the unseasonably warm weather in the second quarter of the year. The lifting of the strictest Covid restrictions had also meant that people were more easily able to travel abroad in 2022 and that this change had also resulted in a dip in visitor numbers. It was noted that there were no anticipated adverse contractual effects of financial impacts on the Council as a result of these usual fluctuations.
- Officers confirmed that visitor number was not the only statistic used to consider the Visitor Economy, visitor satisfaction at attraction also gave a good indication of the overall picture.
- The Visitor Strategy was due to be refreshed in response to the changes following the Covid pandemic and the changes to the visitor economy. This refresh would be considered by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management in early 2023.
- The reduction in the stable placement percentage for Children in Care was reflective of wider problems within the foster care system and the number of foster carers choosing to continue being carers, both internally and for external agencies. The number of Children in Care had reduced and those left in care tended to be those with the most complex needs and such there were difficulties in finding suitable and appropriate placements.
- Work had taken place to ensure that support within the care system followed the child and that wrap around support was available. Feedback had been received from foster carers that had shown was that this model of support was the most effective. There was currently a reduced supply of carers which meant that some external providers were more able to dictate placements leading to disruption in care continuity.
- There was a good package of activities and services that were available to help support speech and language development. The exact uptake figures would be circulated to Members. It was noted that the Early Years network encourage participation in the strategy.
- The issue of public engagement and consultation would be considered during 2023 to enable members to examine the wider issues around consultation.
- Transformation activity was taking place alongside budgetary changes. In the long term the only sustainable way for the Council to operate was to reduce costs through the transformation work in order to allow for a more sustainable budget to be maintained in the future. New and innovative ways of operating were also being considered. It was noted that the Council continued to work hard to ensure that Government recognised the constraints that the Council was working within, and where the most significant financial pressures were.

The way the Annual Report was set out would be considered by officers and that suggestions on changes that could be made on how to make the information more accessible are welcomed

The Chairman thanked Councillor Laughton and Isobel Fleming along side Councillor Carlton, Councillor Taylor, Derek Highton and Laurence Jones for attending the meeting and answering member's questions.

#### **RESOLVED (2022/04)**

1. That the performance framework within which the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 sits be noted.
2. That it be agreed that the current Annual Delivery Plan - Assurance Report Q2 2022/23 provides assurance for the delivery of the Annual Delivery Plan and that the actions identified and detailed are sufficiently progressed to ensure that the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 is on track.
3. That it be agreed that the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 provides appropriate actions that are in line with the Council's ambitions, as set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan and also provides significantly robust measures that support and benefit the timely delivery of the ambitions as set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan.
4. That the following issues raised by the Committee, including to help inform the development of the 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan, be progressed:
  - a. that future reports to the Overview Committee on the Annual Delivery Plan - Assurance Report include headlines on areas of performance that are doing well and which areas require further attention, as well as more visual aids to show longer term trends on areas of performance;
  - b. That the Place Select Committee carry out pre-decision scrutiny on the refreshed Visitor Economy Strategy in advance of the strategy being considered by the Cabinet Member for Communities.

#### **6. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee's current work programme. Changes highlighted in this meeting and since publication of the agenda will be reflected.

#### **RESOLVED (2022/005):**

- 1) That the work programme be noted.
- 2) That Committee members make any further suggestions of items for inclusion on the work programme to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (subject to consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) and senior officers, and the required approval by the Chairman of the Overview Committee).

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting 12:13pm



**CHAIRMAN**