

## Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 6 December 2022
Present	Councillors Peter Gane, Connor McConville (Chairman), Patricia Rolfe and Rebecca Shoob
Apologies for Absence	None
Officers Present:	James Clapson (Case Officer (Committee)), Gavin Edwards (Performance and Improvement Specialist), Leanne Knight (Finance Specialist), Jonathan Smith (Senior Accountant), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services) and Brian Thompson (Interim Chief Financial Services Officer)

### 1. **Declarations of interest**

Councillor Rolfe and Councillor McConville both declared a DPI as they are directors of Oportunitas Ltd. A dispensation has been applied.

Councillor Shoob declared a DPI as she is a director of Otterpool Park LLP.

All members remained in the meeting, taking part in discussions and voting on all items.

### 2. **2022-23 Quarter 2 Performance Report**

Mr Edwards introduced the report that provided an update on the Council's performance for the second quarter of the year, from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2022. The report enables the Council to assess progress against the approved key performance indicators (KPI) arising from the Council's Corporate Action Plan.

During consideration of the item, the following points were as noted:

- After the publication of the report, the percentage figure of household waste recycled during quarter two had been received and was 44.6%.

- Members thanked Mr Edwards for his report. He had incorporated a number of suggestions that were made at the last meeting and the report was now clearer and easier to understand.
- Compliance for the council housing stock gas and electrical safety certificates were 99.58% and 97.2% respectively. The contractors had been unable to access some of the properties to carry out inspections, and a process for gaining access has now been approved by the Council's legal team and the portfolio holder for Housing and Special Projects.
- Councillor McConville asked Mr Edwards to provide him with more information about the number of businesses signposted to support programmes. The number of referrals in quarter one seemed unusually high.

The Sub-Committee Members noted the report.  
(Voting figures: 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

### 3. **Budget Strategy 2023/24**

Ms Spendley introduced the report that set the guidelines for preparing the 2023/24 Budget and drew Members attention the addendum that had been circulated. She advised that the addendum amended the tables in paragraph 8.9 and 8.10 of the report. These changes related to an increase in off-street and on-street income.

During consideration of the item, the following points were as noted:

- The parking team had calculated the estimated off-street parking income for 2023/24 based upon the proposed fees and charges rates and how busy the off-street car parks had been over the last two years.
- Councillor Rolfe asked for more information about the reduction in beach hut income. Ms Spendley offered to collate the information and respond after the meeting.
- The Hythe Swimming Pool income increase was because the pool had previously been non-operational during covid restrictions. The running costs of the pool would be closely monitored in light of rising energy charges. It was possible that there would be some support from Central Government to help mitigate these costs.
- All tiers of local authority were facing budgetary pressures. Regular conversations were taking place across the county between Chief Executives and Finance Officers to discuss options for the provision of services.
- The potential for Members to use their own IT equipment for Council business was in development, if this went ahead it could reduce the cost of providing IT equipment for Members.
- It was likely that some reserves would need to be used to fill the budget gap. Covid reserves could not be used for this purpose. There was a need to critically evaluate every opportunity to see what could be done to close the gap.

- The Council was looking at its assets to identify anything superfluous or inefficient. If an asset was sold it would generate a capital receipt; normally this could only be spent on other capital projects, however the Council currently has a dispensation that allowed the receipts to be used on some other things, such as building enhancements or efficiency improvements.
- Officers were working on the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan that would be considered by the Sub-Committee at the meeting on 10 January 2023. The Government had recently announced a rent cap, and officers were meeting with external advisors shortly to establish its impact for incorporation into the plan.
- The budget consultation would end on 1 February 2023. All the budget information should be collated into something easily digestible for the public.
- There needed to be more Enforcement Officers to tackle inappropriate car parking; particularly in town centres where businesses and residents would benefit from a better flow of traffic.
- A review of the Corporate Action Plan should involve members of the Sub-Committee.
- A discussion was needed with Folkestone Town Council regarding the provision of CCTV in the Leas Cliff Hall Car Park.

The Sub-Committee Members noted the report and made the following suggestions to Cabinet for consideration:

- The removal of the increase to Members Allowances of £61,000.
- The removal of the allocation of £20,000 for Members ICT provision.
- Fees and Charges:
  - The freezing of the charges for concession football pitch hire. (Officers should include an estimate how many sessions were forecast to be booked and what the loss of income from not increasing the fee to the amount stated in the schedule would be.)
  - The removal of cemetery fees and digging fees for children under 12 years old. (Officers should include an estimate of the cost resulting from the removal of these fees.)

(Voting figures: 3 for, 0 against, 1 abstention).

It was noted that although Members of the Committee agreed to note the report, this was not an endorsement of the budget.