

Finance & Resources Policy Development Advisory Group
13 NOVEMBER 2023

Present: Councillors: Mark Baynham (Chairman), Tony Bevis, Paul Clarke, Mike Croker, Len Ellis-Brown, Anthony Frankland, Warwick Hellawell, Tony Hogben, Richard Landeryou and Mike Wood

Apologies: Councillors: Malcolm Eastwood
Also Present: Councillors: Ruth Fletcher, Martin Boffey and Jay Mercer

18 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the previous meeting were received.

19 **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION IN 2023/24 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2024/25 TO 2029/30**

The Director of Resources updated the PDAG on the council's financial position in 2023/24, Medium-Term financial planning and assumptions, and comparison to the budget set in February 2023.

An update was provided on current performance, next year and future years.

Economic uncertainty and the cost of living crisis was continuing to put significant pressure on balancing the budget. Pressure from sustained high levels of inflation in services, materials, utilities and salary increases is creating a high level of gross expenditure. The Council has however kept high levels of reserves and is not a borrowing authority and is able to fund some of the rising costs with the interests from investments.

A balanced budget is currently estimated in 2024/25 and the Council will need to increase fees and charges which could affect those residents that are struggling with the cost of living crisis.

The PDAG were advised that the medium-term remained uncertain due to the Government settlement, inflation, associated costs attributed to the environment and decarbonisation, lack of clarity on future Government funding regarding business rates and levelling up and the recent announcement for providing mandatory domestic food waste collection by March 2026. Sizeable deficits are forecast in future years.

The PDAG acknowledged the Council would need to work on solutions for the future and carefully consider projects and future ambitions affecting the capital reserves.

Members discussed the increase in multi-storey car park pass tariffs and potential effect on users, potential increases in external audit fees, the garden waste subscription service and the proposed increase to Council tax.

Consideration was also given to the increased pressures and risks to Revenues and Benefits and looking at future opportunities to use assets for additional income and additional revenue streams.

Members requested additional information on the potential Mowbray cemetery which would be provided to Members as soon as available.

20 **PRINT DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM (DPS) PROCUREMENT 2024**

The Senior Procurement Officer updated the PDAG on the Print Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) procurement. The current Framework Agreement for both general print requirements and the current DPS for specialist print requirements will expire in March 2024.

These agreements were set up by Crawley Borough Council and used collaboratively with Horsham District Council, Mid Sussex and Mole Valley District Council's to provide for those printing requirements not performed in-house. The current DPS also covered Electoral print and mail requirements and these will now not be dealt with and tendered for separately.

Horsham District Council will be the lead procuring Authority and will reorganise and update the current framework and remaining categories to form one single and new DPS.

Information was provided on the new DPS structure and printing categories, anticipated expenditure and timetables. The PDAG were also advised that suppliers wishing to join the DPS would need to demonstrate an acceptable minimum standard on quality control, equipment and plant, resourcing, turnaround times, supply chain contingencies and carbon footprint mitigation efforts.

Members acknowledged that the DPS was a positive example of the Joint Procurement Strategy put into action. Discussion considered those suppliers that joined the DPS requiring quality assessment compliance and meeting minimum standards alongside competitive pricing. Although the Sustainable Procurement Charter was not in direct effect, Members were advised that all those joining the DPS had to provide details on carbon footprint requirements.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Procurement Officer for updating the PDAG and the information in the report was duly noted.

21 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE FINANCE & RESOURCES
PORTFOLIO**

The Forward Plan Extract for the Finance & Resources portfolio was noted.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN