

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – CORPORATE SCRUTINY DISCUSSION LOG

Issue	Response	Any Follow up action required
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Quarter two performance report – Corporate Scrutiny

Page 26	<p>Clarification around how market traders and shopkeepers were being kept updated around the ongoing works around St Editha square</p>	<p>It was confirmed by the Leader that signage had been due to go up today, but this has been delayed until tomorrow due to the snow. Officers were going out and speaking to traders and shopkeepers and it was hoped that the contractors would also be doing this. The Portfolio Holder and Members were also talking to them when in the town. The Leader was using their weekly piece in the Herald to highlight that the shops are open as usual.</p>	<p>No action required</p>
Page 28	<p>In relation to unfavourable variances, when we are employing temporary/agency staff do we employ them directly or do with go through an agency which can increase costs?</p>	<p>It was confirmed that sometimes temporary staff were employed directly and sometimes through an agency, however the Council always try to negotiate the best deal and better exit payments if the person were taken on permanently. Where they can, they try and recruit directly however for cleaners, specialised roles, bespoke pieces of work or where the roles are only for a certain amount of time they would look at the best avenue and value for money.</p>	<p>No action required</p>

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – CORPORATE SCRUTINY DISCUSSION LOG

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<p>Page 28</p> <p>With regards to the unfavourable variance what specific strategies are we implementing to address these income shortfalls and overspending and how are we adjusting our financial plans to ensure we meet our year and targets while maintaining the quality of our services?</p>	<p>Officers confirmed that where budgets are overspent managers are being asked to look at compensatory savings or to try and mitigate the overspends. A piece of work is being undertaken around the Assembly Rooms to look at how more income could be generated, review the budget and ensure that targets are realistic. A meeting is scheduled with the accountant at Lichfield District Council around the Joint Waste Service to understand the additional costs and action can be taken to improve the position moving forward.</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>Page 29</p> <p>Considering the projected reduction of balances by £360,000 and the re-profiling of £4.778 million in capital expenditures into 2025/26, Are there opportunities to optimise underperforming revenue streams, such as exploring new initiatives to boost car park usage or revitalising events to increase ticket and catering sales?</p>	<p>Officers confirmed that these were on the radar and were being looked at in terms of the current year budget and the budget process moving forward. The Committee expressed concerns over the figures for the general fund variance and balance and the impact of the assembly rooms and Joint Waste Service.</p>	<p>No action required</p>

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<p>Whether the Assembly rooms was meant to be a self funding enterprise or that the expectation was that the Council would always support this?</p>	<p>It was acknowledged that the Council has always provided a large subsidy for the Assembly Rooms and if that vision is going to change then it would need to be run in a very different way. Officers confirmed that a piece of work was being under taken to look at the Assembly rooms which is a non-statutory service. The Council are now able to identify what is spent on every single event as they understand the questions and challenges in this area. The ongoing reports would look at a range of options, costs and delivery models.</p> <p>The committee acknowledged that to be profitable the business would need to be privatised but expressed concern at losing the building from the public sector. The Council needed to be clear about what its ambitions were for the building, which may be for it to break even whilst providing a service to Tamworth residents but needed to be careful before investing large amounts of money in to it. To look at how they can better improve and utilize the building to make it more profitable. It was important that they see the loss reducing year on year.</p> <p>A motion was moved that an update on the recovery proposals for the key items that we need budgetary control over are brought to the next Scrutiny meeting. (Moved by Councillor A Wells and Seconded by Councillor M Couchman)</p>	<p>An update is tabled for the next meeting for an update as per the motion against the Joint Waste Service and Assembly Rooms</p>

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – CORPORATE SCRUTINY DISCUSSION LOG

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<p>Page 56</p> <p>What specific strategies are we implementing to effectively reduce the rising total rent arrears particularly focusing on higher value arrears and long-term debts, and how are we balancing enforcement actions with support for tenants facing financial difficulties to ensure both the financial sustainability of our housing services and the well-being of our residents?</p>	<p>Officers confirmed that there are trends in terms of recovery and the Council is following those trends and overall the Council was showing a positive trend and this was just not reflected in the current quarter. Overall rents arrears balances were being reduced annually with a focus on prevention supported by the figure of two evictions in the last period which is only taken as a last resort. Investment is made in Tamworth Advice Centre to provide welfare support.</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>Page 67</p> <p>Referring to page 67 and the fact that the local government Association expects one in four councils to apply for an emergency bailout in the next two years, in light of the ongoing deferral of funding reforms and the difficulty in planning beyond a one-year horizon, how does the Council's Financial Stability Plan and Productivity Plan specifically address the identified risks—such as potential income shortfalls from reduced Council Tax and Housing Rent collections, increased demand for services like homelessness support due to the cost of living crisis, rising supply costs, and the possibility of decreased revenue from attractions and events—to ensure we achieve our target risk score and maintain financial sustainability over the next three years?</p>	<p>Officers highlighted that the Budget and medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) process for the next five years had started with a report going to Cabinet on the 21st which touches on these issues. It is recognised that there is uncertainty around the local government settlement with an expectation of a one year settlement for 25/26 hoping that a three year settlement will follow to aid with financial planning. The Council does face a significant shortfall with the general fund balances supporting the MTFS but this will run out and therefore significant savings do need to be made which is being looked at.</p>	<p>No action required</p>

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – CORPORATE SCRUTINY DISCUSSION LOG

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<p>Page 76</p> <p>It was noted that the risk appears to have got worse in this area so what detail do we have about concrete strategies that the council are implementing that engages with our diverse Communities and most vulnerable and marginalized to understand their unique issues and needs? How are we measuring the effectiveness of these efforts in strengthening community cohesion and resilience? And how are we collaborating with Key agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to address the challenges?</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council confirmed that this was a priority area for the Council and they had been successful in securing £660k funding from Government to help fund recovery from the events of August 4th. The Council have commissioned the Belong Network who will be engaging with residents over the next few months to understand their concerns as a starting point for a piece of work in this area. It was confirmed that physical meetings were being held with Police and Faith Groups and the Tamworth Strategic Partnership was running again and an element of this was looking at Community Cohesion.</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>Page 89</p> <p>Page 89 – With increased resources including the new Climate Change Officer have what measurable progress is there on this issue? What specific, actionable measures are we implementing to enhance our borough's resilience against flooding, and are we addressing potential challenges such as staff training gaps, infrastructure development, and financial challenges in this area?</p>	<p>Whilst Officers did not have any specific information it was confirmed that the action plan was being work on and highlight by Members that this was being considered at IS&G Scrutiny in December.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council confirmed that work was being undertaken with the Environment Agency who they were in discussions with about flood defences and where they need to be which is a large piece of work. Modelling has been done by the Environment Agency around where they think work should be done before looking at how these would be funded. It was not expected to involve too much work on the Council employees.</p>	<p>No action required</p>

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – CORPORATE SCRUTINY DISCUSSION LOG

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<p>Know that Cyber security is a risk what specific additional strategies are we implementing to enhance our resilience against emerging cyber threats—such as sophisticated phishing attacks, insider threats from staff, and vulnerabilities with our cloud suppliers—to safeguard our sensitive data and ensure uninterrupted service delivery? The importance of testing was highlighted.</p>	<p>The Leader confirmed that this is a new risk on the matrix and would always be a risk that they would get a full response provided in writing. Officers confirmed that a pen test had recently been carried out and they would be feeding back on that</p>	<p>We have an ongoing schedule of network vulnerability scanning and associated remediation work, the scans are done monthly and high-risk issues reported to ICT mgmt. for oversight. In addition, we also have an annual internal and external penetration test as part of our PSN compliance process. This is carried out by 3rd party network security specialists and includes a simulated phishing test. The main mitigation actions from the most recent pen test are now mostly complete, the credential harvesting phishing test done as part of the last pen test was a success with only 2 staff clicking on the phishing email link and neither entered any sensitive information including their password.</p> <p>This year 3 members of staff have been trained to accreditation level as Cyber Security practitioners to further improve our cyber security posture/defences. Recently we've also been through the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)/Local Digital led Cyber Assessment Framework process, analysing in depth, 3 of our critical systems to ensure an appropriate level of cyber resilience is in place. We're nearing the end of this process for which we'll receive a grant of £15k for cyber related improvements subject to all the documentation being completed/to the required standard.</p> <p>As part of defence in depth, we also have a suite of measures provide as part of our cloud managed Sophos Endpoint</p>

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		<p>Protection system which protects our desktop, laptops, and mobile device estates.</p> <p>We are also signed up to the NCSC's Active Cyber Defence programme which provides a range of tools and services to help with cyber resilience. In partnership with the CCU, we have just completed a Cyber Incident Response Plan as part of our information governance framework.</p> <p>Network backups are done nightly and replicated to a cloud service. Integrity testing is performed after each backup and selective restores are done monthly to further test backup integrity.</p>
<p>Page 103</p> <p>There is a backlog of outstanding Audit recommendations – are these being taken seriously?</p>	<p>Officers confirmed that recommendations were taken seriously and that the report that was presented to the Audit and Governance contained more details and that in most cases although they may not be complete action had been taken to address the recommendation. Officers in these areas were being asked to attend future Audit and Governance meetings to advise Members of their plans and details of any actions being undertaken</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>Page 104</p> <p>Personal data breaches</p>	<p>A question was asked around the increase in personal data breaches and the Council failure to report these within the 72 hours statutory requirement. It was clarified that the figure appears to be a typing error and that all reports were made within the required 72 hours.</p>	<p>Further clarification was sought and due to its complexities, this led to a slight delay in our reporting process and the 0 value was found to be correct.</p>

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<p>Page 108</p> <p>Given the increase in personal data breaches and the Council’s failure to report any of them within the required 72-hour window, what specific measures is the Council implementing to strengthen our data protection protocols, ensure timely reporting to the ICO, and prevent future incidents—both accidental and deliberate—to safeguard sensitive personal data and uphold our legal obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018?</p>	<p>Officers confirmed that the Council have recognised a need for improvement following these response times and this being address by reviewing internal processes, increasing communication and collaboration with other departments and contractors including regular meetings to understand where the issues lie and how they can be addressed moving forward.</p>	<p>No action required</p>