

# SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date:** 25 March 2015

**Venue:** East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

**Time:** 7.30 pm

**Present:** Councillors:- **Philip Stearn (Chairman)**  
**Sarah Peacock (Vice Chairman)**  
Tony Boto David Jenney  
Derek Capp Jake Vowles  
Richard Gell Clive Wood  
Sylvia Hughes

## **451. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 12 January 2015 and 2 March 2015 were approved.

## **452. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brian Northall.

## **453. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declaration of interest was noted:

The following interest was declared in the Agenda item specified below:

<b>Officer</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>	<b>DPI</b>	<b>Other Interest</b>
Sharn Matthews (SM)	Update from Members regarding recent Call-in	An Officer directly affected by the proposals		Yes

## **454. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3**

There were no questions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.3.

## **455. UPDATES FROM MEMBERS RE CALL-IN**

The Chairman invited verbal reports from the individual members nominated to monitor the decisions of the council's policy committees and sub-committees.

It was noted that no items considered by the Policy and Resources Committee, the Finance sub-committee or the Planning Policy Committee required review by the Scrutiny Committee.

SM left the room whilst an update was provided on the recent call-in from the Personnel Sub-Committee.

The Chairman noted his, and the Committee's, disquiet over what was considered to be an unsatisfactory decision by the Personnel Sub Committee at the meeting on 9 February 2015 regarding the options relating to the provision of S.151 Officer Support.

Events had since moved forward significantly and the Personnel Sub Committee, at their meeting on 9 March 2015, had decided to take no further action for a period of at least one year. The Scrutiny Committee would then consider what, if any, call-in action should be taken at that time.

#### **456. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 3 2014-15**

The Executive Director, on behalf of the Corporate Support Manager, presented a report detailing the performance of the council in respect of agreed indicators and other statistics for the period from April 2014 to December 2014, which had been monitored at Performance Clinic meetings in February 2015.

The committee reviewed the performance report, appended to the covering report, which detailed a summary of performance across the council, where targets were over or under-performing or within tolerance, any achievements across service areas and the draft budget outturn position.

The committee welcomed the report and noted particularly:

- 99.8% of invoice payments had been paid within 30 days
- A slight decrease in the overall sickness trend
- Over-performance of measures relating to housing benefit within Customer and community Services

The committee noted that the External Funding Officer had been very successful in finalising bids for external funding agencies as well as accessing external funding for East Northamptonshire Council.

The committee noted that following changes in processes a positive impact on the work of the Land Charges section had been sustained.

The committee discussed various under-performing measures which had been noted in the Performance Highlights report and requested that discussions on the targets set for the Planning Service, particularly round call In to Development Control Committee be included on the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2015/16.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

#### **457. BUDGET 2015/16**

The Interim Finance Manager (IFM) and the newly appointed Finance Manager attended to update the Committee on the Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast and figures for 2015/16.

The IFM provided an overview and recapped the position following the 2014/15 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

In preparing the projected MTFS for 2015/16, various assumptions had been made in respect of the revenue budget, council tax, government funding, the capital programme and reserves. Work on budget monitoring had resulted in cost savings and efficiencies being delivered and planning income was increasing, largely due to the steady recovery of the economy.

As a result of the aforementioned, the Council were now able to remove a funding gap in earlier calculations and would now allow funds to be made available for financing the future Capital Programme, corporate objectives and political priorities, which would also allow the Council to move from an MTFS to an Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The IFM noted that the current budget showed a projected underspend, which showed that the Council was managing within the available resource, and that this would result in a contribution to revenue reserves at the end of the financial year.

There were risks to be taken into account but further work was on-going to try to mitigate those risks i.e. work around:

- Funding
- Waste
- Capital Programme

It was noted that details of the budgets for each service area should be included in the discussion of Service Plans which would take place as part of the work-plan for the next financial year.

The Chairman noted his thanks on behalf of the Committee to the FM and IFM for their attendance and update.

**Chairman**