

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL**  
**11 JANUARY 2017**

**FINANCE**

**Budget Briefing**

1. In November I chaired two briefings for members on the updated Medium Term Financial Plan, savings proposals for the forthcoming budget and Council Tax. There was a low attendance at both.
2. A further and final briefing is to be held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> January at 5pm in the Mandela Room. This will give members the opportunity to be briefed on the budget by the Strategic Director of Finance, Governance and Support and ask questions you may have ahead of the Council Budget meeting.
3. It will cover the same information as contained in previous briefings so those who have already attended do not need to attend again, unless they wish to do so. As this is the third opportunity offered, there will be no further briefings on the budget which is to be considered by full Council on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Audit**

4. As part of their annual plan Internal Audit have recently reported on two key reviews.
5. They have reported that there is a strong control environment in relation to monitoring of capital expenditure. Internal Audit have commented favourably on the high profile the approach to robust capital programme monitoring has been given in the organisation and the extensive work that has been done to develop the approach to slippage and re-profiling of expenditure.
6. Internal Audit have also reported a strong control environment for budget monitoring and control. The report comments favourably on the system of quarterly reporting for both revenue and capital spend and its integration with the reporting of overall performance.

**Council Tax Base**

7. In November I presented a report to Council on our Council Tax Base which forms part of the budget and council tax setting process.
8. The report outlined an 825 (2.0%) increase in the number of properties in Middlesbrough. This is a result of the net new house building over the period. The tax base is a net increase of 755 (2.3%) band D equivalent properties and allows for

projected increases in housing stock. This is estimated to have reduced the need for budget reductions by over £1million in 2017/2018 and on an on-going basis. This was based upon the 2016-17 Basic Council Tax

9. The cumulative effect since 2013/14, is that in 2017/18 the Council should be able to collect over £4million more in Council Tax, than if there had been zero growth, reducing the need for budget reductions, cuts to front-line services delivered to the people of Middlesbrough and job losses.
10. This is of particular importance given the phased removal of central government funding in the form of the Revenue Support Grant and assumptions made by the Conservative Government that Councils will instead raise income locally by increased revenue from Council Tax and Business Rates.

### **Council Improvement Plan (CIP)**

11. In December, I took a progress report on the Council Improvement Plan to the Executive. I'm pleased to be able to report to members that the Council has made significant progress in delivering the plan since it was first agreed by Executive in May. The plan covers the following areas:

- Financial performance reporting;
- Financial planning;
- Performance management;
- Risk management;
- Decision making;
- Asset management;
- Change Programme / Programme and Project Management;
- Capital Programme monitoring; and
- Embedding business change.

12. Key actions within the CIP in relation to financial performance reporting, financial planning, risk management, Project and Programme management have now been completed. We are of course committed to delivering the CIP in full and regular reporting to members on progress will continue. The next detailed report will be considered by the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee in February and Executive in April.

### **Programme Management Framework**

13. Work has been underway since January 2016 to roll-out and embed the framework for Programme and Project Management to ensure consistency and governance is applied across the authority in the delivery of projects.
14. As such, a two-day training programme was rolled out to approximately 160 project managers this summer offering an overview of the general principles of project

management and the specific requirements and expectations of the Council's PPM framework.

15. Since then, the project management software 'Project in a Box' has been implemented and all staff actively managing projects, as well as Departmental Business Coordinators have received system training. Further bespoke training has taken place with project managers in completion of project documentation and this is part of the ongoing support provided by the Programme Management Office (PMO).
16. The initial Programme and Project Board structure was initiated in November with Directorate Project Boards taking place monthly and the Corporate Programme Board, quarterly to provide scrutiny of projects. I will also be receiving regular briefings and updates on major projects.
17. As such, all actions relating to the Project Management Office from the Internal Audit Report and as detailed in the Council Improvement Plan have now been signed off as completed in full.

### **Customer Strategy Programme**

18. The Customer Programme is now well into delivery and has made the following achievements in 2016/17:
  - Realisation of £160,000 customer access savings target.
  - The Customer Charter is the trigger for the entire programme and further embedding work is to take place early in 2017.
  - The Customer Excellence Development Programme was launched in December to ensure staff have the correct behaviours, skills and attitudes to deliver a consistent level of customer service.
  - Firmstep customer platform is now live (as of 9th December) which realises a revenue savings in licensing from Seibel of £56,567. All processes that previously ran through Seibel have been redesigned to become more streamlined and customer-focussed to enable self-serve.
  - The new Council website went live in September and improvements are ongoing. A new staff intranet to mirror the design of the website is in development and will launch in January 2017. I would welcome any feedback from members on the new website.
  - The designs for the new and improved Middlesbrough House Customer Centre have been signed off, tender responses have been received, with build works scheduled to begin on 16 January 2017. The old Register Office will serve as the temporary location during the build works from 9 January until the end of March 2017 and relevant publicity has been issued to the public on this.
  - A marketing campaign was launched in September utilising a range of means both hard copy and digital sharing the message of 'Save Time, Go Online',

whereby residents can use their computer, phone or tablet, 24/7 to access arrange of services including:

- Pay Council Tax
- Report a faulty street light
- Arrange collection of bulky items
- Check bin collection dates
- Apply for school places
- Make claims for housing or council tax benefits
- Other environmental issues

## **HR**

### **Fluency Duty**

19. The Immigration Act 2016 received Royal Assent on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2016. Part 7 of the Act, which creates a duty to ensure that all public authority staff working in customer-facing roles speak fluent English (or Welsh) to an appropriate standard, came into effect on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016 and a Code of Practice introduced.
20. Minor changes are being made to the Council's recruitment processes and documentation to include the fluency requirement. The Complaints Procedure is also being updated to make members of the public aware they can complain if they feel a customer facing member of staff has insufficient proficiency in spoken English. Manager and staff communications are being used to raise awareness of the duty. There is no intention to introduce testing for existing employees any issues should have already been picked up through normal performance management processes.

### **Organisational Development and Workforce Development**

21. There are number of initiatives and programmes of work under way.
  - Middlesbrough Manager Upskilling – Catch Up Sessions: These sessions are underway for managers who were not captured during the Phase 1 and 2 upskilling programmes. Once these sessions are completed (end of January), the focus will then be on providing what further development is needed to ensure all managers have the necessary skills, attributes and knowledge.
  - Manager Customer Excellence Programme: This programme will be launched early January and delivered by Outcome areas. Outputs from the learning event will result in each Outcome area agreeing what the measures of success should be for providing great customer service within their service area.
  - Employee Customer Excellence Programme: Employees have been grouped by line managers and by the level of customer interaction they have in their job. A blended learning approach (classroom, eLearning and toolbox sessions) will ensure each staff grouping undertakes appropriate learning in the provision of customer excellence. Full

day learning programmes are scheduled to start mid-February, with toolbox sessions and eLearning following shortly after.

- **Appraisal Upskilling:** All Middlesbrough Managers will take part in an upskilling workshop through January and February to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and understanding to appraise their staff using the new, simplified process and competency framework. A new workforce development process for capturing learning and development needs will be launched a part of the appraisal upskilling session above.
- **Workforce planning methodology:** A workforce planning approach is being trialled within Adult Social Care. The purpose of this work is to understand where there are potential succession and development issues within the Outcome area so that a robust Adult Social Care workforce strategy can be implemented to develop and/or recruit emerging talent so that there is a healthy supply of talent to ensure future service provision. Once this work is complete it is planned to roll this methodology out across other services.
- **Corporate Engagement Video:** Work is ongoing with the Marketing and Communications team on the design and production of a Middlesbrough Council corporate video. The video will underpin a number of initiatives to support cultural change by showcasing the great work/service the Council provides to the residents of Middlesbrough and instil a sense of pride for all employees in their work.

## **ICT**

### **Council Email on Personal Phones**

22. As mentioned in my last report to Council I have asked that the facility to receive council emails and calendar on personal smart phones which is to be made available to staff also be offered to all members.
23. An email was sent to all members on this on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2016 outlining the process which will involve an appointment being arranged to have the app installed.
24. The app can be installed on most IOS and Android phones but Windows phones are not compatible. ICT can help members to identify if your particular phone is compatible. There is a small cost to the council which will be met from existing members' budgets

### **Self-service Portal**

25. The new self-serve portal yourICT for logging ICT incidents and requests has now been live for 5 weeks and it has been very well received with 42% of all incidents now logged via yourICT.
26. The yourICT self-serve portal allows quick and easy access to submit service requests for the items listed below.
  - Request to add user to shared email account
  - Software Install Request

- Social Care Password Reset
- Access to a shared email account
- Request to add user to email group
- General ICT Service Request

27. Could I take this opportunity to wish all members a Happy New Year for 2017?

**NICKY WALKER**  
**EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE**