

Commenced – 6.00 pm
Concluded – 7.30 pm

Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Board
26 November 2013

Present: Councillor Stanton (Chair)
Councillors Pegg, Poulter, Redfern and L Winter

In attendance: Councillor Banwait

34/13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Barker, Keith, Naitta and Nawaz.

35/13 Late Items

The Chair admitted an item regarding *Fit to Respond*, a consultation by Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service, as a late item on the grounds that it required urgent attention by the committee owing to the imminent closure of the consultation on 23 December 2013.

36/13 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

37/13 Fit to Respond 2022 – Consultation by Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services

The Deputy and Chief Fire Officers, together with the Treasurer for the Fire and Rescue Authority attended the meeting to respond to the board's questions following the publication of *Fit to Respond 2022* consultation by Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services. The officers explained the reasons necessitating the consultation on the proposed re-organisation of the fire service, including the unprecedented financial challenges which it faced, the need to respond to risk and the reduction in the number of incidents which it was required to attend.

The officers outlined the three potential service models which formed the subject of the consultation and emphasised that refraining from amending the current model was not a viable option. The officers observed that the anticipated reduction in funding available to the fire authority would compromise its ability to continue providing the same level of service. It was reported, however, that in proposing the service models, the safety of the public remained a principal concern. The board was informed that the authority's partnership working arrangements continued to deliver effective prevention and awareness work which had assisted to reduce the number of incidents.

The board discussed the options and implications surrounding disposal of the service's assets, namely a number of fire stations, some of which had recently been

refurbished. The board was reassured that, in the event of the consultation results directing a sale of such assets, any capital gain would be reinvested. The merits of co-locating fire services with other emergency services were also explored by the board.

The board remained concerned about the levels of risk to public safety should any of the proposed models be implemented and reiterated its previous aspiration to encourage the public to individually and actively respond to all aspects of the consultation.

Resolved to delegate authority to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager, following consultation with the Chair, to use their discretion in deciding how the board should proceed with a consultation response following Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services response to the board's questions.

38/13 Revenue Budget Proposals 2014/15 – 2015/16

The board was consulted on elements of the Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals from 2014/15 to 2016/17 which fell within the neighbourhoods directorate portfolio. Following a presentation from the Director of Finance and Procurement, the board understood that the proposed savings were intended to address the multi-million pound budget deficit facing the council in 2014/15. The board was informed that in line with the overall projected saving of £81m, which was required to balance the budget over the forthcoming three years, a total of £29m savings was required in 2014/15. The Head of Finance confirmed that £6.391m of required savings had been attributed to the neighbourhoods directorate in 2014/15, which represented 12.1% of the net budget.

The board gave careful consideration to the key pressures within the directorate and noted that in 2014/15 there would be a pressure of £38m arising from the delivery of council services, together with £15m attributable to inflation and an estimated £28m reduction in central government funded grants. It was reported that the council continued to await confirmation of central government's funding allocation but a caveat accompanied the budget proposals which addressed the possibility of divergence from estimated figures.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods advised the board that in devising the proposed savings, the need to continue provision of statutory services was a primary concern. Consequently, discretionary services would be most affected by the 2014/15 budget savings.

With regards to the proposed increase in parking charges, the cabinet member estimated that it would generate a 3.5% rise in overall income. The Head of Traffic and Transportation explained that the detail relating to the application of the increase was subject to consultation and would be related to members in a future fee and charges report. The board discussed the possible effects of the increase, in light of market competition.

In response to questions from the board, the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods confirmed that the proposed reduction in highway verge grass cutting (to six

occasions per annum) was the minimum number permissible using the council's current equipment.

In relation to questions regarding the proposed, initiative to encourage residents to manage their own neighbourhood, the cabinet member explained that ownership of the trees would remain with the council but the public could undertake tree work subject to gaining prior permission from the council. It was reported that the policy change would be synonymous with the council's *Adopt Your Street* initiative.

Resolved to note the proposed Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals from 2014/15 to 2016/17.

MINUTES END