

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Monday, 29 July 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Larratt (Chair); Councillor Hibbert (Deputy Chair); Councillors Nunn and Palethorpe

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2013 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2012-13

The Finance Manager presented the report and elaborated thereon. She confirmed there were no new external borrowings and as interest rates had decreased in the year the main focus was on investments. The performance remained above the benchmark.

It was agreed that the description of the first Treasury Management Indicator be amended to 'net debt compared to gross debt'.

Resolved:

1. That the description of the first 'Treasury Management Indicator be amended to 'net debt compared to gross debt'.
2. That the report was agreed.

7. FINANCE AND MONITORING OUTTURN REPORT 2012 - 2013

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report and confirmed that there was good financial management in the year and no large variances from the budget. This provided a strong platform for Council as it faces continued austerity measures and reduced funding from government for, at least, the next 5 years.

Councillor Palethorpe requested further background information on the General Fund Earmarked Reserves for 2012/13 to gain a better idea of the risks.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that this information would be circulated.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2012/13 CONSULTATION

The Assistant Head of Finance presented the report and confirmed that there was a positive outcome overall as there were no high or critical risks and only half the number of medium risks. The total number of findings had gone down overall. She confirmed that they would revise the report and condense it by adding web addresses / links where further information could be found but to still include the important key information.

The Chair offered his congratulations as this was a massive improvement on previous years.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OUTTURN REPORT 2012-13

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report and confirmed that for 2012/13 the Council had met the targets and had an overall rating of 'Performing'.

Officers responded to Members' comments and questions, as summarised below:

- The household waste collection target had been up on previous years, although targets had still not been met. Discussions had taken place with the contractors and a new person had been employed to promote recycling in the hope of seeing an improvement in the future.
- The Enterprise contract would be reviewed next year with a view to ensuring that there were realistic targets in place which would provide a leeway for bad weather.
- A report will be presented to Committee on whether sickness figures related to stress where there was a staff shortage, including vacancies.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10. TREE AND SHRUB MAINTENANCE

The Head of Public Protection submitted a report and confirmed that all the trees owned by NBC & NCC required maintenance and were inspected on a rolling program. The Council had a budget for trees and was also provided with a budget by NCC. Information regarding trees is available on the internet for the public, together with questions and answers.

The Head of Public Protection responded to members questions as follows:

- He confirmed that most of the work undertaken by the Council was reactive rather than proactive as tree maintenance was expensive. The budget was used primarily for trees which were dangerous or a hazard. The expense of maintenance increased each year although the budget had not.
- Any additional work could be completed by other contractors at an extra cost.
- More inspections would result in more work and more funding would be needed.
- Members could use their Empowerment Fund if it fitted the criteria.
- Would liaise with the Insurance department to see how many claims there were for tree damage and report back to Committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

11. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2013/14.

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report which showed a slight forecast overspend of £29k for the year. He noted that car parking had forecasted a potential £117k shortfall based on an extrapolation of the first two months performance, although this was within the earmarked reserved amount. He confirmed that the free parking scheme had been well utilised, recognised by increased ticket sales. The extension of free parking recently agreed by Cabinet would be funded from New Homes Bonus monies.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

12. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

The Internal Auditor presented the report and elaborated thereon. He confirmed that the work this year had been slow to commence due to the move to LGSS although it was what was expected and on track. There was a low risk on using own devices however USBs posed a risk and a good response had been received from management.

More progress had been made since the report was issued and the Local Authority had made a lot of savings without too much impact on the public although the Government would apply more pressure.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.04pm.