

**Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at meeting held on
20 March 2018**

Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny		Response from officers
Performance Tracker - Priority: Finance and Resources		
Sickness absence – a Member questioned whether the recommendations which had come out of the absence management presentation in February would be taken forward. i.e. more detailed breakdown of figures.		The Head of Corporate Services confirmed a more detailed breakdown would be provided moving forward.
Leavers – the Member went on to raise concerns that Members were not made aware of staff changes at an early enough stage.		The Head of Corporate Services clarified that Members were notified of staff changes on a monthly basis via the Member Update Sheet. The Chief Executive recognised that changes to personnel could be difficult but, rather than being a Human Resource issue, this was more about Service Managers ensuring that there was a proper handover with Members and he undertook to raise this with the Management Team.
Financial Information		
A Member noted that retained income from the business rates scheme was showing a surplus of £240,000 and he questioned when this would be available to spend. He also queried whether there was a programme in place for 100% retention.		The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that the surplus of £240,000 was the anticipated year end position. In terms of 100% retention, Officers were working through the scheme detail to see how the pilot would work. If it was in line with the projection, the scheme could generate an additional £400,000 for the Council. The Chief Executive reminded Members that business rates, and other income streams such as the New Homes Bonus, were volatile and any changes made by the government could have a significant impact on the authority's accounts. One of the risks with business rates was the potential number of appeals and this was something which had been a substantial cost to the Council in the past.

<p>A Member drew attention to the successful bid of £4.53M from the growth deal fund to improve the existing Longford roundabout and A40 access to the new development site at Innsworth. In order to access the funds, a business case needed to be put forward to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for approval. With this in mind, he questioned how the Council would finance the transport consultants who were being contracted to do that work.</p>	<p>The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that the Executive Committee had approved £100,000 from the surplus to support the development of the business case; if approved by the LEP board, this would be replenished so there would be no detriment to the Council financially, although there was clearly an element of risk. The Head of Development Services confirmed that the first stage of the process was to produce the business case and this would unlock the wider allocation. Whilst there was no guarantee, the money had been allocated to this project and the risk had not increased since Members had been advised previously.</p>
<p>A Member asked if there had been any progress on the disposal of the MAFF site.</p>	<p>The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed an officer group was working up an options appraisal for a potential care home or residential facility on the site.</p>
<p>A Member raised a question about planning income being below target. Another Member raised concern that conflicting advice was being given at the pre-application stage and when the formal application was submitted.</p>	<p>The Head of Development Services explained that a number of applications which had been expected throughout the year had not yet been received for various external reasons. This could not have been foreseen and they were still anticipated to come forward at some stage given that a lot were reserved matters applications linked to outline planning permissions. She pointed out that there had been a 20% increase in planning fees nationally which would have an impact but consideration was being given as to how to increase opportunities for commercialising the planning service. The Head of Development Services explained that pre-application advice assisted with the planning process and was a crucial way to increase planning income. Whilst schemes did occasionally change throughout the life of an application, there should be consistency in the advice being given. If Members heard of any times when this did not happen as it should then it was very important that she was given the details.</p>

Appendix 1

<p>A Member queried the financial return on the new leisure centre.</p>	<p>The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the Council received £150,000 per year from Places for People plus a 45% share of the profit share in year 4 – 45% went to Places for People and the remaining 10% went to the Board to be used for improvements to the Leisure Centre and its facilities.</p>
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