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20 June 2022

Dear Councillor,

Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee
6:00pm, Tuesday 28 June 2022
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

You are invited to attend this meeting for consideration of the matters itemised in the following Agenda.

Yours sincerely,

T. Clegg
Chief Executive

To: Councillors:

McMahon, J.B. (Chair)
Johnson, T.B. (Vice-Chair)
Arduino, L. Molineux, G.N.
Fletcher, J. Muckley, A.M.
Frew, C.L. Theodorou, P.C.
Hoare, M.W.A. Wilson, L.J.
Jones, P.G.C. Woodhead, P.E.
Kraujalis, J.T.

Agenda

Part 1

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

(i) To declare any personal, pecuniary, or disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(ii) To receive any Party Whip declarations.

3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2022 (enclosed).

4. Introduction to the Role of the Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee

Presentation of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services.

5. End of Year Performance 2021/22

To receive the end of year 2021/22 performance information for the Financially Resilient Council Priority Delivery Plan (Item 5.1 - 5.12).

6. Review of Council's Assets Task & Finish Group - Final Report

Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 6.1 - 6.3).

7. Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022-23

Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 7.1 - 7.13).

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee
Held on Tuesday 12 April 2022 at 6:00pm
(Postponed from Tuesday 22 March 2022)
In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 1

Present: Councillors

Hughes, R.J. (Chair)

Kruskonjic, P.	Jones, P.G.C.
McMahon, J.B.	Sutton, H.M.
Muckley, A.M.	Woodhead, P.E.

20. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillors G. Adamson (Vice-Chair), F.W.C. Allen, M.A. Davis, C.D. Smith, and P.D. Startin.

Apologies were also noted for the Chief Executive who was unable to attend due to being unwell.

21. Declarations of Interest of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

No declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

22. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 7 December 2021 and 3 February 2022 be approved.

23. Quarter 3 2021/22 Performance Update

The Chair introduced the report, drawing Members' attention to the overall performance update as detailed in report paragraph 5.3, and the specific performance measures for the Financially Resilient Council Priority Delivery Plan as set out on page 4.5.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that work to procure a new customer relationship management (CRM) system was taking longer than anticipated, but options were being researched to ensure the right system was purchased.

A Member raised that climate change being a 'cross-cutting' rather than standalone corporate priority made it difficult to scrutinise as it was spread across each scrutiny committee and therefore difficult to track progress on. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services referred to report page 4.14, which set out the related actions for this committee's consideration. For the new Corporate Plan, the way in which progress against climate change matters were reported could be looked at to help scrutiny. Another Member raised that to ensure progress was tracked, the Chair of the relevant scrutiny committee should be written to asking they ensure their committee receives regular updates. Another Member noted that the committees could work together to jointly monitor this issue and report back to the respective committees as necessary.

A Member referenced the shared chief executive role (report page 4.7), noting that a year ago Council agreed the role be shared on a six-month basis, with an update to be provided later in the year and a decision made on whether to continue with the arrangements. The same Member then queried that given it was now 10 months on and no update had been received, what progress had been made to date, and was there a danger of the Council being without a chief executive by June 2022. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised a report was due to be presented to Council on 27 April for consideration, which would cover the continued sharing of the role, as well as proposed timelines for work going forward, depending on what was agreed at the Council meeting. The report would also acknowledge difficulties in progress so far and provide an update on interim management arrangements currently in place. Members then commented that due to the delays on this work, the progress should be recorded as a red cross rather than amber triangle. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised this would be amended for the end of year report.

A Member suggested that to aid better scrutiny, portfolio leaders should be invited to the meetings to speak on agenda items. Another Member agreed, noting this happened at Staffordshire County Council and had always worked well.

A Member raised caution on the increased use of home working, noting that there appeared to be a significant minority of staff working at night, and so questioned whether this was a good thing. The same Member noted there was a duty of care to those who worked from home, and there should be at least 1 day per week when all staff were working in the office. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that Leadership Team would be receiving a report on this matter shortly, some of which would cover the points raised by the Member. It was recognised that existing arrangements could not continue going forward, with a hybrid working arrangement to be trialled later in the year. This committee's task & finish group would be able to feed into this process with a report to Cabinet at a later date. The model proposed included reference to 20% office-based time. It had been designed to be relevant to role types, whilst not wanting to undermine those roles that were suited to home working.

The Head of Economic Prosperity noted there had been a lot of different views raised on this matter, and whilst some of the benefits of the increased home working did not want to be lost (such as virtual meetings and the environmental impact), the arrangements needed to be flexible but with a desire to have people back into the office for part of the week to help rebuild team relationships. The Chair noted there was a need to also factor in how long an employee had been in their role and how well they understood their job, particularly so for new starters.

A Member raised a concern with home working in respect of its impact on customer service. Feedback from residents had been that service was poor, with calls not being answered. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that a report had been considered by Leadership Team that gave agreement to reception being re-opened post-pandemic from 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, and employees in customer facing roles were likely to be needed on-site more regularly.

Another Member hoped that performance in respect of calls answered, and complaints received, would improve in quarter 4. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised it could not be guaranteed at this stage due to some persistent problems faced with call handling outside of the contact centre, especially call transfers, for which solutions were being investigated by the Head of Technology.

The same Member then queried when the performance data related to the finance system would be available. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that it was difficult to say at this stage as the Finance team had experienced an unprecedented year with the implementation and rollout of a new system, but this would be followed up accordingly.

Another Member then queried what progress had been made with improvements works to bridges and boardwalks following the review undertaken as referred to on report page 4.12. The Head of Economic Prosperity replied that a schedule of works needed to be developed for various bridges across the District. The Corporate Assets team currently had resource and capacity issues, therefore the focus in this regard was the Rugeley boardwalk and one or two other bridges referenced in the August 2021 Cabinet report. Furthermore, the feasibility study for the Elmore Park toilets still needed to be completed, for which external support was being sought. The same Member then queried if there were any estimated timescales for completion of works as previous assurances had been given for delivery by the end of quarter 1 in 2022/23. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised the timescales would need to be clarified and reported back to the committee separately, as they were likely to have been impacted by urgent repairs works required at Rugeley swimming pool.

A Member queried if the review of the Council's capital programme, as approved in February as part of the Cabinet's budget, would impact on these works. The Head of Economic Prosperity replied that this review should not delay the planned works as any existing commitments would be continued. Any delays were due to the aforementioned resource and capacity issues. The money had been earmarked and no indication received that funding would be diverted elsewhere.

A Member referenced the capacity issues and increased workload faced by the Revenues and Benefits team and queried if this had resulted in debt recovery being halted and / or slowed down, and the amount being recovered being impacted by older debts. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services replied that in the early part of the pandemic such debts were not actively chased up as the team's focus was on distribution of grant payments. The focus was now moving back toward debt recovery, and whilst there had been an impact, it was not as great as first anticipated. Payment of the recently announced energy rebates would however impact this work. It was considered that the next twelve months could be challenging in this regard due to cost-of-living issues. The current position regard debt collection would be checked and reported back to Members accordingly.

24. Update from the Review of Council's Assets Task & Finish Group

The Chair provided the following report on the review of Council's Assets task & finish group:

- It was agreed that a review of the Council's assets be included in this committee's work programme for the 2021-22 municipal year. A task & finish group was formed to undertake this review, comprised of Councillors Hughes (Chair), Adamson, P. Jones, Muckley, and Startin. The Group met on four occasions between 10 November 2021 and 3 March 2022.
- The agreed scope for the review was:
 1. To review how the Council's property assets were being managed across the organisation and determine where strategic improvements in process and delivery may be achieved.
 2. Review the utilisation of existing Council owned assets.
 3. Review energy efficiency performance and standards of those assets.
 4. Assess how changes may be implemented.

Only those assets included within the Council's General Fund were part of the review (i.e., Housing Revenue Account assets were excluded).

- At the first two meetings, Members received presentations from the Corporate Assets Manager that provided an overview of the Council's corporate property estate, the Corporate Assets team structure, review of the Council's asset management strategy 2013-2018, maintenance responsibilities, and current priorities (linked to the maintenance plan agreed by Cabinet in August 2021).
- The Corporate Assets Manager and Head of Economic Prosperity had outlined some of the key challenges and issues facing the Council in terms of its corporate estate, including:
 - i. Ageing nature of several Council assets i.e., the Civic Centre and ongoing maintenance liabilities to bring buildings up to 'condition standard'.
 - ii. Availability of capital and revenue resources to support an ongoing programme of pro-active and re-active maintenance.
 - iii. Availability of officer capacity within the Corporate Assets team to manage workload (although this was being partially addressed with the recruitment of a new Compliance Officer). There was also a challenge in terms of recruiting appropriately skilled and experienced individuals.
 - iv. The ongoing challenge to ensure that corporate buildings met compliance and Health & Safety standards and relevant regulations.
 - v. The need to improve the energy efficiency of the Council's buildings and reduce energy consumption.
 - vi. The need to produce an up-to-date Asset Management Strategy that would set out the Council's vision for its corporate estate, ensuring that Council owned land and buildings delivered against the Council's agreed corporate priorities, were financially sustainable, and could deliver against other themes.

- vii. The need for an asset management database or system to upload details of all Council owned assets, to include essential information and data on each Council asset, including maintenance plans and schedules, and condition surveys.
- viii. The importance of effective liaison between the Corporate Assets team and other teams/services responsible for managing assets and the challenges that this could present, in terms of knowing who was responsible for what in terms of planned and reactive maintenance. The review noted that the Corporate Landlord approach to asset management was viewed as industry best practice; and that this required management of assets being overseen by a central team, with decision making regarding assets, being undertaken corporately rather than at service level.

(Councillor P.G.C. Jones left the meeting at this point.)

- The task & finish group agreed the following draft recommendations:
 1. That procurement of a dedicated asset management database for use by the Corporate Assets team should be prioritised, with an appropriate budget identified to ensure a bid could be developed. Furthermore, proactive discussions should take place with Stafford Borough Council to look at the purchase of a single database that could be utilised for the benefit of both councils.
 2. The Council should adopt a 'Corporate Landlord' approach to managing its assets, which should include the re-establishment of a dedicated Asset Management Group.
 3. On a wider basis, the Council should actively focus on better shared / cross departmental working and move away from teams operating in silos.
- It was proposed that a final report setting out the findings of the review and the final recommendations be produced and presented at the next meeting of this committee, before being presented to Cabinet for consideration. Due to timing, this would need to take place in the next municipal year.

A Member queried if the database would include the Council's housing stock. The Chair replied that this would not be the case as the Housing service already had its own dedicated database in place. The Head of Economic Prosperity further replied that for non-housing assets there was not a bespoke database in place, with reliance currently being on a paper-based system. Suitable options were currently being researched, and whilst use of the housing database was an option it would not be a neat fit.

(Councillor P.G.C. Jones returned to the meeting at this point.)

Another Member noted that in respect of the database, the Finance system included an additional module that was thought to provide this need, but on review this was not the case. As such, it was felt important given the remit of this committee to ensure the right software was purchased and money not spent on something that would not provide the required functionality. The Chair noted that the third recommendation of the task & finish group covered this issue, as asset management covered multiple departments so silo working would not help this regard.

Another Member queried if the Council had any asset liabilities in place and whether a review would be undertaken of what assets could be disposed of or retained. The Chair replied that the task & finish group considered that the importance of having a database in place underpinned such questions and allowed for an appropriate strategy to be developed and works delivered proactively. The Head of Economic Prosperity further replied that there were some liabilities in terms of maintenance and standards. Regulations coming into force would mean there was a need to look at current assets and determine what could be kept going forward. A major piece of work was required to determine what could be disposed of, retained, or invested in.

Another Member noted the task & finish group had also discussed using assets in a smart way, i.e., by using them properly rather than hiring out for a peppercorn rent or not utilising them for their full purpose.

25. Update from the Review of Hybrid Working Task & Finish Group

The Chair of the task & finish group (Councillor Kruskonjic) reported on its work to date, as follows:

- The group had met on two occasions so far. The first meeting looked at what the Council wanted to do and how hybrid working had progressed so far, with a specific focus on working practises before, during and after the pandemic, including the effects of remote working, particularly the levels of output and the impact on those employees working in this way.
- The second meeting considered feedback received from two staff surveys on hybrid working. Pre-pandemic, there had been very little in the way of homeworking through formally agreed arrangements, although there had been instances of it happening informally if certain tasks needed completing.
- During the pandemic, 80% of staff worked from home, with a small number based in the offices to undertake specific duties that could not be carried out remotely, as well as those employees who did not have an office-based role. From the survey feedback received, 69% of respondents were positive about homeworking, and 82% wanted to continue with it on a full or part-time basis. 65% of managers considered there had been little or no impact on service delivery.
- Wellbeing and support packages had been offered to help with the adjustment to homeworking, and customer interaction had changed overnight from in person to entirely by telephone or online. This had resulted in customer footfall into the Civic Centre since being reduced, with more people adapting to new ways of accessing the Council's services.

(Councillor McMahon left the meeting at this point.)

The Chair of the Committee queried if those employees who had been based in the offices during the pandemic were from a particular job role or spread across the organisation, and was it possible to use their survey results as a comparator for those who worked from home. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services replied that as the survey results were anonymous, it was not possible to extract the data in that way, but some of the questions were for home working respondents only. Office

based staff tended to be caretakers, cleaners, core administrative staff, support services, planning, and environmental health.

(Councillor McMahon returned to the meeting at this point.)

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services further replied that the Revenues and Benefits team also had office-based staff, so the home workers were still able to carry out their roles. Personal preference also played a part in the working arrangements as some employees wanted to still work from the office, whilst others had to use specialist equipment that meant homeworking was not always practicable.

A Member queried if the support packages provided during the pandemic were still in place. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services replied that there may be some modifications as the focus had been on getting people used to homeworking and coping with the pandemic, but it was expected support would still be available where needed.

26. Update from the Shared Chief Executive





As the Chief Executive had been unable to attend today's meeting, it was agreed that arrangements for the update to be given at a later date would be picked up separately.

The meeting closed at 7:13 p.m.

Chair

Priority Delivery Plan for 2021-22
Priority 3 – Financially Resilient Council

PROJECTS – Summary of Performance

Delivery of Projects for Q4					
				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Project on Target	Work in progress but project slightly behind schedule < 3months	Action more than 3 months behind schedule – specific action required to address delay	Project not yet started	
6	1	9	5	3	24


Summary of Successes as at Quarter 4

- Good progress made in clearing some of the Food safety inspection backlogs
- Reception has reopened fully
- Interim asset maintenance plan approved
- Cyber security arrangements have been enhanced



Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 4

- Whilst progress continues to be made in reducing backlogs, these have not yet been eliminated. Outstanding work will be rolled over into 2022/23
- The shared services business case is behind schedule due to capacity issues but has now been considered by Cabinet and approved by Council
- Work continues on our plans for organisational reshaping and increased use of digital solutions, but this is taking longer than anticipated.

3.1 To make the best use of limited resources – managing our people, money and assets

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
.COVID Recovery / Service Restoration							
Ongoing restoration of services and clearing of backlogs	Planning for clearing of Housing Repairs backlog: Appointment of Void Supervisor	✓				A Voids Supervisor was appointed in April 2021 and the voids procedure has been improved, but there is still a backlog - details below.	
	Prioritise backlog jobs	✓				The backlog of jobs that was caused due to the lockdowns and the impact of covid on sickness levels has now been overcome, but the knock-on effect of the backlogs keeping a challenging amount of jobs in the system. In addition, ongoing sickness, plus the high winds earlier in the year (contributing to additional unplanned repairs) means at least the first part of 22/23 will remain a challenging time for Housing Maintenance.	
	Food safety inspections - recovery of 2020/21 backlog of approx. 400 interventions across all risk categories	✓				Good progress has been made and the backlog from 2020-21 has been reduced to 80 inspections. These will be carried forward and completed in 2022-23; additional resources are being deployed to ensure the Council is on track to meet the milestones contained within the Food Standards Agency COVID-19 Local Authority Recovery Plan 2021-24.	

Item No. 5.3





Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
	Planning enforcement – deal with backlog of cases	✓				Agency support was provided August to October 2021 to assist with backlog. Currently a consultant is covering vacant Enforcement Officer post since early March 2022. Backlog still significant: 20/21 83 open cases - 70 closed cases. 2021/22 124 open cases - 51 closed cases.	
Re-introduction of face-to-face customer services, where necessary and by appointment	Appointments will be available where necessary from 12 April in line with the easing of restrictions	✓				Reception has re-opened fully.	
	Planning for wider opening of reception areas		✓				
.Shared Services							
Explore the business case for the further sharing of services and a Chief Executive with Stafford Borough Council	Establish project team, appointment of independent advisor and review models for sharing services		✓			Team established	
	Prepare business case and report for Cabinet			✓		First stage of business case completed. Reported to Cabinet and Council	
	Subject to outcome of the business case and Cabinet approval, develop implementation plan				✓	Second stage of business case to be completed for Cabinet in October and Council in November 2022	
.Review and Reshaping of Operational Delivery Model							
Develop options for reshaping operational delivery re:							

Item No. 5.4





Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
Customers – to include future Reception Services, the Contact Centre and making more services available on-line which will form the basis for a Customer Engagement Strategy	Produce options paper for future of Reception Services		✓			Report presented to Leadership Team	★
Employees – to include development of business case for increased use of homeworking and flexible working in the future, the infrastructure needed to support this and the implications for office space	Proposal for interim hybrid working arrangement to be developed and agreed with Cabinet		✓			Proposal agreed by Leadership Team for 6 month Trial	✘
	Interim changes to working arrangements and policies to be reviewed and agreed			✓		Rescheduled for 22/23	
	Identify changes that need to be made to improve infrastructure to support remote working		✓			Changes identified and work in progress	
	Development of longer-term business case for remote working and implications for Civic Offices				✓	Rescheduled for 22/23	
Members – to include the ongoing use of virtual meetings in the longer term and the implications of this	Produce a paper on hybrid and broadcasting meetings, the technology needed, costs and training implications		✓			Additional quotation being sought. Report to be presented to Cabinet in 22/23	✘

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
Increase our use of Digital Solutions in Delivering Services							
Establish changes made to working practices brought about by the pandemic and how these can be improved or be extended further	Inform staff of the tools and techniques available to them using our newer systems and software.			✓		Information passed to staff through a series of emails known as 'Byte size'. These are now produced as required.	★
Development of a digital strategy and action plan	Develop a digital strategy made up of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Infrastructure • Digital Workplace • Digital Engagement 				✓	A draft of the Digital Infrastructure part of the strategy has been produced. Further financial and risk information are needed to complete it.	▲
Ongoing development of cyber security arrangements utilising Government funding	Establish and 'air gap' backup process.			✓		Licence purchased and system in place.	★
	Procure the necessary hardware and services to support the new backup system.			✓		Hardware was not required for this solution.	
Procurement and development of customer portal (replacement of current CRM system) to include e-forms package	Determine requirements/ specification for the Customer Portal/Digital Engagement platform.	✓				Requirements changed as the result of the new working arrangements. Specification amended.	✘
	Procurement of new system				✓	Procurement has been agreed by LT and will now commence in 22/23	
	Development of project plan for implementation			✓		Rescheduled for 22/23	
	Implementation and testing				✓	Rescheduled for 22/23	



Item No. 5.6

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
Procurement of new website including re-design/review of content	Establish requirement for new website and draft specification		✓			Completed Q2	
	Commence procurement			✓		Completed Q3	
	Award contact and commence implementation				✓	Procurement delays	
Campaign to encourage the sign up to e-billing for Council Tax and Business Rates	All bills issued to make taxpayers aware of the e-billing facility. All e-forms to incorporate easy sign-up option.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Information about e-billing is issued as a matter of the daily routine of the council tax section	
	Social media campaign to coincide with Chase Matters distribution and in advance of Annual Billing			✓	✓	Monthly social media posts being undertaken	
.Organisational Development							
No projects planned for 2021/22							
.Asset Management and Maintenance							
Develop a new asset management strategy (aligned to the new corporate priorities)	Develop the strategy			✓		Draft strategy developed Q4.	
	Present to Cabinet				✓	Strategy is due to be presented to Cabinet for approval in June 2022.	
Develop a new energy management strategy (aligned to the asset strategy and the costed action plan for climate change)	Develop the strategy				✓	Links to Asset Strategy and climate change base-line study, both of which are imminent. Hence re-programme to Q2, 2022-23	


Item No. 5.7

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
Develop a new maintenance strategy and plan	Undertake a review of maintenance priorities for 2021/22 and present to Cabinet		✓			Interim maintenance plan agreed by Cabinet August 2021	
	Develop a 5-year Maintenance strategy (aligned to the new Asset Management strategy and the costed action plan for climate change)				✓	The new Maintenance Strategy will link to the Asset Strategy hence re-programme to Q2, 2022-23	
Identify opportunities to enhance, redevelop and transfer the Council's assets (aligned to the asset management strategy)	Review of individual assets to be included as individual projects (on a rolling programme)	✓	✓	✓	✓	Process for asset reviews forms part of the Asset Strategy and will be developed following agreement of the strategy	
Options for Public Toilets at Elmore Park, Rugeley	Undertake a feasibility study, identifying options			✓		Feasibility review completed Q4	
	Present outcome of feasibility study to Cabinet setting out options, costs and secure a way forward				✓	Outcome to be presented to Cabinet 16.6.2022	
Undertake a review of the bridges and boardwalks across the district	Audit review of bridges & boardwalks	✓				Audit has been completed.	
	Present outcome of review and options for improvement / investment to Cabinet		✓			Plan to invest in Boardwalks & Bridges approved by Cabinet in August 2021.	

3.2 Being a financially sustainable Council that lives within its means





Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
3.2.1. Prudent Financial Management							
Manage the collection of council tax and business rates collection and ensure outstanding debts are chased in accordance with Council policy	Day to day operation of service in accordance with policy.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Some disruption to the council tax and business rate recovery plan as a result of the introduction of Omicron Business grants and preparation of Council Tax Energy Rebates, to be issued in q1 of 2022-3	
Identify opportunities to apply for grants and submit applications as appropriate	Ongoing review of new funding sources with applications submitted with a sound business case	✓	✓	✓	✓	Undertaken on an ongoing basis	N/A
Set a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to fund Council services by a prudent mix of investment, services and tax income, while maintaining adequate reserves. MTFS to be reviewed annually as part of budget setting process	Medium term financial plan set as part of budget process			✓		Completed	
	Review of existing fees/charges			✓		Completed	
	Review of income generation opportunities			✓		To be undertaken as part of wider review on savings in 22/23	
	Identify potential Invest to save initiatives			✓		To be undertaken as part of wider review on savings in 22/23	
Lobby for a fairer distribution of Government funding to sustain essential local services	Response to consultation documents on funding and letters to MP's where appropriate	✓	✓	✓	✓	This is done as and when appropriate	N/A

3.3 Consider the impact on the environment in managing our assets and use of resources






Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
3.3.1. Environmental Impact							
Undertake an assessment of our current carbon footprint and develop a management plan to inform how our buildings may be most efficiently maintained and reduce our carbon consumption.	Base Information - schedule current energy efficiency levels and energy usage of all corporate buildings		✓	✓	✓	This information is included in the work by Aecom to produce the 10-year costed action plan, due to be published in the Summer 2022.	
	Develop costed proposals for improving the energy efficiency levels of the buildings (to achieve carbon neutrality)				✓	As above	
Identify opportunities for funding for green initiatives.	Review opportunities and submit funding bids if they support Asset Strategy and/or Corporate Priorities	✓	✓	✓	✓	This is an ongoing item	N/A

Priority Delivery Plan for 2021-22
Priority 3 – Financially Resilient Council

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Summary of Performance as at Q4			
			
Target Exceeded	Target Achieved	Performance Slightly Below Target	Performance Significantly Below Target
1	0	3	1

Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target Achieved?
Objective 3.1 To make the best use of limited resources – managing our people, money, and assets								
Total Number of Stage 1 Complaints	Q	29	n/a	9	11	10	8	Total for year = 40
Total Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Q	4	n/a	6	5	3	3	Total for year = 17
% of invoices paid within 30 days	Q							* Data not currently available
No of incoming calls received	Q	91,623 (22,905 per qtr)	n/a	22,917	22,718	19,033	22,081	86,749 (21,687 per qtr)
No of calls answered	Q	83,691 (20,923 per qtr)	n/a	19,568	18,873	16,902	19,584	74,927 (18,732 per qtr)

Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target Achieved?
% of calls answered	Q	91%	94%	85%	83%	89%	89%	
Average Call Wait Time	Q	1.41	2.00	3.06	4.04	2.41	3.07	
Number of on-line forms completed	Q	707 per qtr	700	728	793	669	739	
Number of Council Tax payers receiving e-bills	Q	Baseline March 2020 = 2,085	New	5,748	5,889	6,915	7,311	N/A
Number of Business Rate payers receiving e-bills	Q	Baseline March 2020 = 275	New	1,627	1,664	1,703	1,745	N/A
Objective 3.2 Being a financially sustainable Council that lives within its means								
% of council tax collected annually	Q	96%	98%	28%	54.6%	81.1%	96.2%	
% National non-domestic rates (NNDR) collected	Q	96.3%	98%	26.2%	47.8%	74.1%	97.2%	
Total income from service fees and charges	Q	New measure						*Data not currently available
Value of successful grant applications secured for the District	Q	New measure						*Data not currently available
Amount of external funding secured to support the delivery of projects and programmes	Q	New measure						*Data not currently available

*Due to technical issues with the implementation of the new finance system, the financial information is not currently available.

Comments on Performance Significantly Below Target:

The average call wait time has been longer than the target throughout the year. Despite changes being made in Q3 which saw an improvement in performance this has dipped again in Q4 along with an increase in the number of calls. There continues to be problems in transferring calls to some service areas and Customer Services are working with the respective service areas to identify the problems and to improve performance.

Report of:	Head of Economic Prosperity
Contact Officer:	Amanda Laight
Telephone No:	01543 464 309

Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee
28 June 2022
Review of Council's Assets - Task & Finish Group Final Report

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with details of the work carried out by the Review of Council's Assets task & finish group and present the group's recommendations for consideration (as set out in paragraph 3.6).

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee wanted a greater understanding of the assets held by the Council and the future plans for the utilisation of those assets, including a review of condition and energy efficiency levels.
- 2.2 A small 'Task and Finish Group' of Members was established to undertake this review.

3 Detail

- 3.1 A Task and Finish Group of five Members, chaired by Councillor Rob Hughes, was established to carry out a review of the Council's non-residential assets and bring back its findings to the Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 The Group met on four occasions, 10 November 2021, 02 December 2021, 13 January 2022 and 03 March 2022.
- 3.3 At the meeting held on 10 November 2021, Members received a presentation by the Corporate Asset Manager which provided an overview of property and a review of the 2013 Asset Management and Energy Management Strategy. Members had the opportunity to ask questions and agreed the review scope should be further developed for the next meeting.
- 3.4 At the meeting on 02 December 2021, Members received a second presentation by the Corporate Asset Manager. This presentation reviewed the list of assets held by the Council, and considered the requirements for good asset management, the management of compliance and a strategic approach to

property. Members had the opportunity to ask questions and were tasked to consider areas for improving the management of the Council's property assets and bring back their ideas to the next meeting of the group.

- 3.5 At the meeting on 13 January 2022, Members provided their feedback and raised further questions for Officers to research.
- 3.6 The final meeting of the group took place on 03 March 2022. The group determined the following suggestions to improve the future management of the Council's assets, for recommendation to the Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee:
- (a) Consideration be given to the procurement of a dedicated Asset Management database for use by the Corporate Assets team, with an appropriate budget identified to ensure a bid could be developed.
 - (b) That proactive discussions should take place with Stafford Borough Council to look at the purchase of a single database which could be utilised for the benefit of both Councils.
 - (c) That the Council's structure for the management of its assets be reviewed with consideration towards adopting a 'Corporate Landlord' approach.
 - (d) That a dedicated Asset Management Group be re-established to undertake strategic asset reviews.
 - (e) On a wider basis, that the Council should actively focus on better shared / cross departmental working and move away from teams operating in silos.

4 Implications

4.1 Financial

There is not currently a budget allocated for the purchase and maintenance of an Asset Management database. It would be more cost effective to share a single database for the benefit of both Cannock Chase and Stafford Borough Councils.

Utilisation of the existing Housing database, although not an ideal solution, would be most cost effective.

4.2 Legal

None.

4.3 Human Resources

A major restructure of the Council's proposals for service delivery would require consultation with Officers.

4.4 Risk Management

None.

4.5 **Equality & Diversity**

None.

4.6 **Climate Change**

The re-establishment of a Corporate Asset Management Group to undertake strategic asset reviews would assist the Council achieving its aspiration of a low-carbon future.

5 Appendices

None

Report of:	Head of Governance & Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Judith Aupers
Contact Number:	01543 464 411
Portfolio Leaders:	Leader of the Council Innovation & Resources
Report Track:	Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee: 28/06/22

Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee

28 June 2022

Work Programme for 2022-23

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out the draft work programme for the Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee for 2022-23.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee review the draft work programme for 2022-23 and advise on what they wish to include for the forthcoming year (see Appendix 5).

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

Key Issues

- 3.1 The Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising the element of the Corporate Plan that relates to the priority for being a Responsible Council. An extract from the Corporate Plan for 2022-2026 setting out details of the priority and strategic objectives is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The services or functions of the Council falling with the remit of the Committee are set out at Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee is encouraged to identify corporate issues and/or ones that are a priority for local people and communities. If a matter is a recurring issue for the people you, as Councillors, represent, the likelihood is that it is something that the Committee should consider.

The more relevant the issue is to local communities then the greater the likelihood

of engaging those communities in the scrutiny process and of producing outcomes that will be visible to those communities you represent. Guidance on selecting reviews is included in Appendices 3A and 3B.

- 3.4 Members are invited to comment on the draft Work Programme attached at Appendix 4. Members are also encouraged to propose issues that could be included for consideration in the work programme. The work programme may be revised during the year as necessary.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.5 The scrutiny committee is responsible for ensuring effective accountability for the delivery against the Council's priorities and strategic objectives as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-26.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:

- (i) It provides for effective scrutiny of the Council's priority for being a "Responsible Council".

5 Report Detail

Background

- 5.1 A new Corporate Plan for 2022-26 was approved by Council on 27 April 2022. The Plan sets out 4 priorities and this Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising Priority 4 – Responsible Council.

- 5.2 The Responsible Council Priority has 5 objectives:

- (i) Improve our customers' access to services.
(ii) Enhance the use of technology and new ways of working.
(iii) Develop our workforce to ensure they are suitably skilled.
(iv) Be a responsible Council that lives within its means and is accountable for its actions.
(v) Make the best use of our assets.

An extract from the Corporate Plan setting out details of the priority, the strategic objectives and actions is attached at Appendix 1.

- 5.3 The Financially Resilient Scrutiny Committee also has responsibility for scrutinising the corporate and support functions of the Council as set out in Appendix 2.

Developing the Work Programme

- 5.4 To support Members in their Scrutiny role and in particular in developing a work programme a Scrutiny Toolkit has been produced; a copy of this has been

circulated separately to Members. An extract from the toolkit relating to developing a work programme is attached at Appendix 3A and an extract from the LGA's guidance is attached at Appendix 3B.

- 5.5 In developing the work programme Members are encouraged to consider the following questions:
- Is the matter a concern to local people (you may wish to reflect on topics raised with you when canvassing)?
 - Is the issue an identified priority for the Council or partners?
 - Does the issue relate to an area of service with a trend in weak performance?
 - What difference could scrutiny make?
 - What would happen if you did not look at this issue?
- 5.6 The Work Programme can be revised during the year to reflect emerging priorities, but it is important to plan ahead and allow time for reports to be prepared and invitations to be sent to relevant parties.
- 5.7 Whilst it is for the Committee to determine what they want to include in the Work Programme, a draft Work Programme is attached at Appendix 4 to this report which includes some standing items (e.g., Performance Progress Reports), an outstanding review from last year's work programme and some suggestions as to potential reviews.

Undertaking the Scrutiny reviews

- 5.8 Once Members have identified the matters they wish to scrutinise, consideration should be given to scoping the subject in more detail including the timing and method of scrutiny to be used. Support in this process will be given by the Lead Officer for the Scrutiny Committee. A template to assist with scoping the review is also attached at Appendix 5.
- 5.9 Members may wish to:
- Allocate the work to a small working group of Members to investigate the issue over a period of 2-3 months (this may involve visits to see how services are working in practice).
 - Invite expert witnesses to give their views.
 - Seeking the views of service users and/or the general public.
- 5.10 Members should also consider what they can do to support the review e.g.:
- Undertaking research e.g., via the internet.
 - Seeking the views of ward members or specific interest groups.

Reporting on Scrutiny Reviews

- 5.11 In addition to reporting to the Committee on the outcome of any reviews, the Committee may wish to make recommendations to Cabinet or another Committee.
- 5.12 At the year end, the Chair of the Committee will prepare a report for Council on the outcome of the Committee's Work Programme.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

Any costs to be incurred in undertaking any review will need to be contained within existing budgets.

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equality & Diversity

The Council has a responsibility to undertake adequate Equality Impact Assessments to ensure services do not have a negative impact on any one section of the community and the scrutiny committees have a role in ensuring that this responsibility is fulfilled, particularly in regard to health impact. Scrutiny as a function must also comply with the relevant legislation. When considering work programme items, especially when undertaking reviews of policy, the scrutiny committees must always consider whether their recommendations may impact differently on various individuals/sections of the community.

6.6 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Extract from the Corporate Plan – Priority 4 Responsible Council

Appendix 2: Overview of services falling within the Committee's remit

Appendix 3A: Extract from the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit

Appendix 3B: Extract from the LGA Guidance on Scrutiny Work Programming

Appendix 4: Draft Work Programme 2022/23

Appendix 5: Template for Scoping a Scrutiny Review

Previous Consideration

None

Background Papers

Corporate Plan 2022-26 - Report to Council - 27 April 2022

Cannock Chase Council Corporate Plan 2022-26

PRIORITY 4 - RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL

‘To be a modern, forward thinking, and responsible Council’

We aim to:

- **Improve our customers’ access to services.**
- **Enhance the use of technology and new ways of working.**
- **Develop our workforce to ensure they are suitably skilled.**
- **Be a responsible Council that lives within its means and is accountable for its actions.**
- **Make the best use of our assets.**

We want to improve the ways in which customers can access our services and at a time that suits them through better use of technology; while continuing to provide contact via the telephone or face-to-face for those customers who need more personal support.

Building on the lessons we have learned during the pandemic; we will develop a hybrid working model that supports employees to continue to work flexibly and in a way that best suits their role. Alongside this we want to ensure that our staff are trained to deliver the services that our residents need. The Council faces a challenging financial future, so it is important that we live within our means and make the best use of the assets we have. We will communicate with our residents to provide updates on the progress we are making in delivering our priorities and key decisions that affect the future of services.

Over the next 4 years we will:

- Develop a new customer portal to deliver better access to services online.
- Update our digital technology strategy and plan future improvements.
- Develop and deliver a workforce plan.
- Set a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- Undertake a corporate wide review of our assets and develop a new Asset Strategy.
- Identify opportunities for funding for green initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings.
- Communicate with residents and stakeholders using language that is clear and easy to understand.
- Provide updates on our progress in delivering the priorities set out in this plan.

**Services / Function Falling Within the
Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee's Remit**

Service Area	Sub-Areas
Corporate Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Consultation (as appropriate) • Complaints (includes Ombudsman and MP enquiries) • Corporate / Cross Cutting Issues
Civic Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Events
Governance and Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit • Risk Management • Insurance • Health & Safety • Procurement • Democratic Services • Electoral Services • Emergency Planning • Business Continuity • Policy • Performance • Equality & Diversity • Consultation & Engagement • Communications • Website • Data Protection • Freedom of Information • Customer Services • Support Services • Caretaking & Cleaning • Land Charges
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Management • Treasury Management • Creditors and Debtors • Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates Collection
Corporate Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land and Property Holdings (excluding HRA Property) – Maintenance of Assets and Purchases / Disposals
Stafford Led Shared Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology (including Reprographics) • Legal • Human Resources

Extract from the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit

Developing the Work Programme

Members have a key role to play in developing the work programme for the Scrutiny Committees and it is important that manageable programmes are developed. The Scrutiny Committees will need to filter potential items of work; to be selective and to prioritise.

Given the limited resources available, in particular the constraints on member and officer time, it is unrealistic to select more than a few items for intensive review. Realistically, a single committee cannot undertake more than two in-depth reviews per year.

In developing the work programme Members are encouraged to consider the following questions:

Public interest – the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen. Things to think about include:

- Any issues raised with you when canvassing.
- Have any surveys or research undertaken by the Council identified any concerns.
- Is the issue an identified priority for the Council or partners?

Ability to change - priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence. Think about what difference Scrutiny could make and what would happen if you did not look at this issue.

Performance: priority should be given to areas in which the Council and Partners are not performing well. You should consider, the scale of the underperformance, whether it is a one off or whether there is an ongoing issue. Has the service been flagged up in an external inspection report for poor performance?

Extent: priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or a large part of the District

Replication: work programme must take account of what else is happening to avoid duplication or wasted effort

Work programmes should be determined at the start of each municipal year and reviewed and revised regularly. Any reviews not started or completed by the year end can be referred for consideration as part of the following year's work programme. The best advice is to start small, learn what works well and what does not and then be more ambitious. It is far easier to add items to the workload than to remove them.

Stage 1: Agree the Issue

The first step is for scrutiny members to be sure that the subject to be reviewed is significant. Undertaking in-depth reviews is resource-intensive – of member and officer resources. Investing such a high level of resources should only be undertaken for **high priority issues**. The following are criteria which could be used to 'check' a topic against,

to ensure that it would make a worthwhile review:

- Issue identified by members as key issue (through members' surgeries and other constituency activities).
- Performance issues within a service (e.g., significant under or overachievement of targets).
- Service considered to be important by the community (through market research, citizens' panels and so on).
- High level of user/general public dissatisfaction with service.
- Public interest issue highlighted in local media.
- High level of budgetary commitment to policy/service area.
- Persistent financial issues e.g., significant under or overspends.
- Council corporate priority area.
- Central government priority area.
- Issue raised in Inspection Reports.
- Issue referred by the Cabinet or the Audit & Governance Committee.
- New government guidance or legislation.

Stage 2: Determine the nature of member involvement

The committee will need to decide how members will drive the review. There are three possible approaches to member involvement:

- The whole committee investigates the issue.
- A task and finish working group is established to drive the investigation.
- Individual or paired members drive the review.

Vital to the whole review activity is that members take full control of which policy problems and solutions are explored and how that exploration takes place. Members need to take responsibility for, and ownership of, the outputs and outcomes of reviews.

Stage 3: Scoping Exercise

There are 4 key issues to consider when scoping the review:

- What are the core questions the review is seeking to answer? (**no more than 3**)
- What is the purpose of the Review? (**in one sentence**)
- What will **not** be included?
- What is the timescale?

Extract from the LGA Guidance on Scrutiny Work Programming

The role of scrutiny is to achieve positive outcomes for local people by undertaking a thorough, targeted examination of the council's service provision and procedures. However, it is not possible to examine every service in detail, so it is important for the scrutiny committee to prioritise and plan its workload. Some councils do this at the beginning of each year and some do it on an ongoing basis.

Planned scrutiny

Work programming is the process for determining which topics scrutiny will look at over the coming year, either at committee meetings or

in task and finish groups. This involves evaluating a number of factors to decide which topics are to be investigated and when. The process will typically involve long-listing and then short-listing topics before making a final decision.

Responsive scrutiny

Whether planned scrutiny takes place at the beginning of the year or on an ongoing basis, the priorities for scrutiny need to be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. This makes sure scrutiny can be flexible and responsive to high-priority issues or policy changes that occur throughout the year.



The scrutiny topic selection process

Each council has its own method for selecting topics for scrutiny; in some councils there may be a very structured selection process, whilst in others it may be more informal. Whatever level of detail is involved, the general process should include the following activities.

1. Identify issues

You can identify potential issues by:

- consulting with all members of scrutiny committees, senior officers, cabinet members and council officers
- looking at corporate priorities, business plans and the Forward Plan of the council (and the council's neighbours)
- considering events and decisions in the council's calendar that could require an input from scrutiny, such as setting budgets
- evaluating previous council performance and identifying any follow-up work required to previous scrutiny work
- carrying out work to engage with local people, for example through surgeries, local media, opinion surveys and online forums.

2. Prioritise topics

Identify and prioritise potential scrutiny topics, considering the resources they would require and the level of impact they could achieve.

3. Plan scrutiny work

Decide which scrutiny topics to review and include them in the work programme.

4. Review and evaluate

Review progress and evaluate outcomes to demonstrate the value added by scrutiny.



Criteria for selecting scrutiny topics

The following criteria provide a useful guide for prioritising and selecting which topics are suitable for scrutiny to review.

Topics **are** suitable for scrutiny when:

- scrutiny could have an impact and add value
- the topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people
- the resources are available that would be required to conduct the review, in terms of manpower and budget
- it avoids work duplication elsewhere
- the issue is one that the committee can realistically influence
- the issue is related to an area where the council, or one of its partners, is not performing well
- the issue is relevant to all or large parts of the local area
- the review would be in the council's interests.

Topics **are not** suitable for scrutiny when:

- the issue is already being addressed elsewhere and change is imminent
- the topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there)
- scrutiny involvement would have limited or no impact upon outcomes
- the topic may be sub-judice or prejudicial to the council's interest
- the topic is too broad to make a review realistic
- new legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year
- the topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change.

Defining scrutiny topics

For every item on the work programme/new referral, it should be clear:

- What is the issue/activity/project under consideration?
- What is scrutiny being asked to do?
- What are the reasons for/expected benefits of involving scrutiny in the matter?
- Is there a specific deadline for the piece of work?



Exercise 1 – prioritising topics

Consider the issues that are important to the people you represent in your ward. List the five issues you think are the most important, then put them in order of priority; make a note of your reasoning. Do you know all the information you need to handle complaints effectively? Consider these statements to identify any gaps. If you answer 'no' to any of them, take some time to find the answers from your council's website or your work colleagues.

1

2

3

4

5

Think about how you would translate these into strategic issues. Here is an example:

The issue

A number of residents have been complaining that the trees in the local area are not being pruned regularly enough, becoming a hazard and presenting a potential danger to the public. Complaints include difficulty in walking on the pavement, damage to tall vehicles, trip hazards from tree roots and gardens being overshadowed by trees.

Strategic considerations

The council needs to consider how it allocates its Environmental Services' resources so that it can be efficient whilst also meeting the needs of local residents. It can look at:

- how services are procured, commissioned and contracted
- which are the most hazardous streets and where the biggest improvements can be made
- prioritising and planning a programme of work for tree pruning.

**Proposed Work Programme for 2022-23 for the
Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting Date	Item
28 June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Year Outturn for Corporate PDP for 2021-22 • Review of Council's Assets Task & Finish Group Final Report • Determine Review Programme for 2022-23
6 October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially Resilient Council PDP – Qtr 1 Progress Report April to June 2022 • Scrutiny Review (to be determined)
15 December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially Resilient Council PDP Progress Report July to September 2022 • Scrutiny Review (to be determined)
30 January 2023	This meeting is for consultation on the budget/financial strategy only
21 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially Resilient Council PDP Progress Report October to December 2022 • Outcome of Scrutiny Review(s) – Preparation of Annual Report

Suggestions for Reviews:

- The Council's Website
- Members Induction Process and Support
- Review of proposals for Hybrid Working for Employees - review started in 21/22 but not completed



Scrutiny Review Template

Review Title
Scope of the Review / Terms of Reference
Reason for Scrutiny
Membership of the Review Group
Key Tasks / Review Plan
Sources of Evidence
Timescale