

Present: Councillor Peter Watson (Chairman), Councillor George Cornah (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Tom Ashton, Richard Austin BEM, Anton Dani, Paul Goodale, Martin Howard, Frank Pickett, Stephen Woodliffe and Mr Alan Pickering

In attendance: Councillor Jonathan Noble, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Officers –

Assistant Director - Finance (Deputy S151 Officer), Deputy Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer

20 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held, 8th November 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

21 APOLOGIES

No apologies were received

22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

23 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None

24 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the Committee with a report which included the current auditor appointment arrangements which covered the period up to and including the audit of the 2022/23 accounts. The report also explained that the Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited ('PSAA') was undertaking a procurement for the next appointing period, covering audits for 2023/24 to 2027/8. All local government bodies needed to make important decisions about their external audit arrangements from 2023/24. Local government bodies had options to arrange their own procurement and make the appointment themselves or in conjunction with other bodies, or they could join and take advantage of the national collective scheme administered by PSAA.

Members welcomed the changes recognising that there was now an 80/20 split focusing more on quality than price.

The Committee felt it was important that the resolution be mirrored across all three Councils in the alliance.

RESOLVED:

The Committee made the following recommendations to Full Council;

1. To accept Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer (or deputy in their absence) to communicate the willingness of the council to join the scheme, led by PSAA and to enter into the scheme after a satisfactory examination/ negotiation of the proposed terms and conditions is concluded.

Mr Alan Pickering was in support of the recommendations.

25 DRAFT BUDGET SETTING REPORT AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/23 - 2026/27

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the Draft Budget Setting report and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27 which outlined the 2022/23 revenue and capital position for the General Fund and proposals for the setting of discretionary fees and charges.

The Assistant Director (Finance) clarified;

- That the 'Smoothing Reserve' budget was to keep a linear process for losses that will not occur in future years.
- That the 2023/24 Statement had variables and the current budget was estimated on the 2019/20 spending review.

The Committee expressed their concerns regarding the proposed budget for upgrading vehicles and suggested that maintenance costs and leasing a vehicle should be considered before agreeing to buy new. The Portfolio Holder for Finance assured the Committee that Cabinet will be considering all other options before agreeing to purchase replacement vehicles.

Members went on to discuss the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) Levy, some Members expressing a view that IDBs should precept themselves, as it is a hidden cost to the Council.

ACTION: SK	RESOLVED:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Circulate information on 'Other Income'•	That the Committ

ee's comments and support for the proposed budget and MTFs be reported to Cabinet as part of the consultation on the budget, prior to consideration by Full Council on 7 March 2022.

Mr Alan Pickering was in support of the recommendations

26 WORK PROGRAMME AND TRAINING UPDATE

The work programme and training update was noted by members.

The Meeting ended at 7.45 pm