

Development Committee

Auditorium, Shetland Museum and Archives, Hay's Dock, Lerwick

Monday 5 December 2016 at 2pm

Present:

A Cooper	M Burgess
R Henderson	A Manson
F Robertson	G Robinson
T Smith	M Stout
A Westlake	

Apologies

B Fox

In Attendance (Officers):

N Grant, Director of Development Services
J Belford, Executive Manager - Finance
A Jamieson, Executive Manager – Housing
I McDiarmid, Executive Manager – Planning
J MacLeod, Performance and Improvement Adviser
A Tait, Solicitor
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
L Adamson, Committee Officer

Chair:

Mr A Cooper, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

None

48/16 Management Accounts for Development Committee: 2016/17 - Projected Outturn at Quarter 2

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-068-F), which enabled monitoring of the financial performance of services within its remit to ensure that Members are aware of the forecast income and expenditure and the impact that this will have with regard to delivering the approved budget.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report.

In response to a question, clarification was provided on the projected overspend as a result of the underachievement of internal income on the repairs and maintenance budget, where it was explained that due to vacancies in the team, some work had to be undertaken by contractors, resulting in the projected recharges being less than anticipated.

In terms of the underspend relating to vacancies in the Housing Support Service, the Executive Manager – Housing reported on the recent redesign and proposals to extend the Service where the vacant capacity may be required. The Executive Manager – Homelessness post was being held vacant until a decision is made on whether a direct replacement is required or that the post be reviewed.

Regarding the underspend in Economic Development, the Director of Development Services referred to the current uncertainties that would have led to the reduced take up of the grant schemes. He advised however on the importance going forward to maintain the schemes, and on the proposals to promote the grant schemes to businesses and individuals. He referred to the stability funding to the Colleges last year as a result of the reduced take up on grant schemes, and anticipated some funding requirements in similar terms this financial year. During the discussion, concern was expressed in terms of the low uptake on grant schemes and on the need to monitor applications going forward. Comments were made on the importance to retain the grant schemes for the benefit of Shetland, and the need for a more targeted approach to the business sector to pass on the Council's expertise in terms of supporting businesses and to encourage take up. The Director of Development Services advised on the work to be undertaken with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) to ensure there is no duplication in the provision of grant schemes, and on the intention to approach businesses to discuss their requirements and to further promote the grant schemes. In response to a comment, the Director of Development Services referred to the ongoing piece of work by Community Planning Partners to draft a 10 year Plan to attract young people to Shetland, which he advised includes objectives to support young entrepreneurs into businesses. He advised on the intention to report to 10 Year Plan to a future meeting of the Committee.

During the discussion, concern was expressed that the delayed progress on the Chair of Creative Industries Project which it was noted was partly due to issues with the assembly of the Creative Industries team. Comments were made in terms the significant Council funding towards the project, and on the poor take up of the scheme as the project had not been well promoted to young people locally. In referring to the Project's failure to progress agreed outcomes, the Chair enquired on any mechanism to withhold Council funding until clarity on progress is provided. The Director of Development Services advised on the ongoing discussions with the other stakeholders in the projects, to seek progress on outcomes from the Creative Industries Project. Reference was made to the frank discussions and deliberations on the original decision for the Council to provide funding towards the Creative Industries Project, where it was considered necessary that a detailed report be requested to inform on how the gap in expected outcomes will be addressed and on progress going forward. The Director of Development Services undertook to request the detailed update, which he advised would be reported in due course.

Reference was made to the outcome of the Scottish Government's recent review to absorb the Board of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) into Scottish Enterprise, and comment was made on the risks to peripheral regions and the need to retain the ability locally to support businesses where appropriate. The Leader advised from a recent meeting of the Highlands and Islands Leaders, that the group agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary, to urge the Scottish Government to reconsider their approach and sought a guarantee that HIE could continue on the same basis. During the discussion, it was agreed that a similar letter be sent from

the Council to the Cabinet Secretary to endorse the comments made by the Highlands and Islands Leaders Group.

Reference was made to Section 1.5 of Appendix 1, regarding the ongoing difficulties to recruit to professional and team leader posts within the Planning Service, and the projected shortfall from planning fees due to the larger and fewer projects being assessed. While it was noted that a shortage of Planning Officers was a national problem, the Committee acknowledged the difficulties being faced by the Service. The Executive Manager – Planning provided an update on the current situation within the Service and on the challenges to try to fill the vacant posts. In response to a question, the Executive Manager – Planning advised that while there are proposals for planning fees to be increased within the next few months, he referred to the need to have experienced Planning Officers in place locally to process the complex applications. In response to a question, the Executive Manager – Planning said that the lack of available housing had been an obstacle to recruit planning officers to Shetland in the past, but he acknowledged that this was not an issue exclusive only to Planning Officers. He went on to advise on the more plentiful supply of housing in Shetland at this time.

In acknowledging the issues to recruit within the Planning Service, the Director of Development Services referred to the recent appointments of the two Team Leaders, and the calibre of these individuals to take their teams forward. He also advised from the recent Planning Performance Framework reporting, that Shetland has been exceptional in their year on year improvement within the service.

In response to a question in terms of any support from the Committee to encourage professional officers to Shetland, it was suggested that the issue would be better directed at Policy and Resources Committee. Comments were made on the Council's decision not to continue with the Graduate Placement Scheme, where its loss in terms of graduates to establish their careers in the Council was being felt today. The Leader advised that the recent adoption of the Workforce Strategy included support for graduate traineeships. He said that it was more crucial now to recruit graduates into the Council and to be more strategic in terms of recruiting to posts for the long-term, rather than just for the one year as had been the case in the Graduate Placement Scheme. The Director of Development Services took the comments onboard.

Decision:

The Development Committee **RESOLVED** to review the Management Accounts showing the projected outturn position for Quarter 2.

49/16

Development Committee Directorate Performance Report: 6 Month/2nd Quarter 2016/17

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-54-16-F), which highlighted progress against Council priorities from the Council's Corporate Plan by the Development Services Directorate.

The Director of Development Services summarised the main terms of the report, and he provided updates on a number of the projects, actions and performance indicators as set out in the Appendices.

In reporting from Performance Indicator GE02 – Gross Weekly Pay, the Director of Development Services highlighted that the gross weekly wage in Shetland of £649.60 was significantly higher than in Scotland and the UK. In that regard, he advised that the figures were from a national survey, and therefore questioned their accuracy for Shetland. He also referred to the widening gap on inequalities in Shetland, and advised that the level of household income in the category of £10-15K has increased, while the £30K category has decreased, which he said would be a focus of the Corporate Plan going forward. During the discussion, comments were made on the relevance of some of the performance indicators, where it was suggested that more relevant Indicators could better highlight real issues. The Director of Development Services agreed that this was an issue to be reviewed.

Reference was made to the list of priority outcomes as identified in the Corporate Plan where the Development Directorate leads, as set out at Section 4 of the report, and questions were asked in terms of the proposals in place to increase the supply of housing of all tenures in Shetland. In her response, the Executive Manager – Housing advised that currently the number of new build properties in Shetland range from between 53 to 72 per year. She explained that the length of time spent in temporary accommodation can vary dramatically on a case by case basis and that families tend to be housed more quickly as they are looking for bigger properties. Locally, in response to the Abolition of Priority Need, more general needs stock has had to be converted into shared accommodation; in turn more people require a permanent housing solution. She added that the private rental market had a dramatic influence on the homeless situation in Shetland. In addition, the housing waiting list is at the lowest number it has been for many years and the number of homeless presentations has reduced. In response to a question, it was confirmed that it was planned for new Local Housing Strategy to be reported to Committee in the term of this Council. The Director of Development Services referred to the achievements from joint working between the Council's Housing Service and Hjaltdland Housing Association in terms of external funding into Shetland per head of population, which has been higher than elsewhere in Scotland, however he acknowledged the huge task going forward.

(Ms Westlake left the meeting).

In response to a question, the Director of Development Services confirmed that a report on Super Fast Broadband in the North Isles was being presented to the Special Development Committee on 13 December 2016.

Reference was made to the list of complaints as set out in Appendix 1, where particular concern was expressed on those six listed where the period elapsed ranged from between 68 to 407 days. In response to questions, the Director of Development Services acknowledged that this was an area he had to address and that it required more focus, and in that regard he confirmed that he would provide a resolution to the six long-standing complaints within the next quarter.

In referring to the issues being experienced in terms of staffing and additional workloads on the Planning Service and the impacts these are having on progressing the new Local Development Plan, it was questioned whether the focus of resources on the master planning of both the Knab Site and Staneyhill would result in all future development being in the Lerwick area rather than outwith Lerwick. A plea was made for that not to be the case, where particular mention was made to the need for development sites to be identified in the Central Mainland.

A Member advised from a recent letter circulated from the Whiteness and Weisdale Community Council complaining at the lack of Broadband and mobile connectivity in their area. He suggested that it would be useful to be informed on all “black spots” across Shetland where it is unlikely to reach an acceptable level of Broadband and mobile coverage. It was agreed that evidence gathering from each area would be useful, and the Director of Development Services undertook to liaise with Community Councils to get a better understanding on the areas not covered.

Decision:

The Development Committee discussed the contents of the report as appropriate to their remit and made relevant comments on progress against priorities to inform further activity within the remainder of this year, and the planning process for next and future years.

50/16

Development Committee - Business Programme 2016/17

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader – Administration (GL-46-16-F) which informed of the planned business to be presented to the Committee for the remaining quarters of the financial year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, and sought discussion with Officers any changes or additions required to that Programme.

The Committee Officer introduced the report.

On the motion of Mr Robertson, seconded by Mr T Smith, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Committee considered it business planned for the remaining quarters of the current financial year (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017) and **RESOLVED** to approve the Business Programme as presented.

The meeting concluded at 3.05pm.

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Chair