

Birmingham City Council
Finance Board Meeting
7th February 2024 13:30hrs – 16:00hrs

Attendees:

Chris Tambini, Commissioner & Chair	Simon Field, Head of Business Improvement and Support
Jackie Belton, Commissioner	Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member for Finance
Pam Parkes, Commissioner	Councillor Roger Harmer, Leader of Lib Dems
John Biggs, Political Adviser	Councillor Paul Tilsley, Lib Dem Finance Lead
Richard Brooks, Director of Strategy, Equality and Partnerships	Elizabeth Thomas, DLUHC Chief of Staff
Fiona Greenway, Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Tom Smith, DLUHC Chief of Staff
Tim Bell – Consultant – Finance	William Moody, PA, Commissioners Support Unit
Mohammed Sajid, Head of Financial Strategy	

Apologies:

Councillor John Cotton, Leader	Paul Clarke, Director of Council Programmes, Performance, and Improvement
Deborah Cadman, Chief Exec	
Max Caller, Lead Commissioner	
Eleri Roberts, AD for Communications	
Peter Sebastian, Head of Financial Strategy	

1. Welcome

- 1.1. Chris Tambini welcomed everybody to the meeting.

2. Minutes of last meeting & actions update

- 2.1. Actions in the last meeting covered.
- 2.2. Notes were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Capital Programme (Mohammed Sajid)

- 3.1. Mohammed explained to the meeting that BCC is trying to reduce borrowing to nil on the general fund. This is with HRA excluded. The key principles were set out as per the papers provided to the meeting.
- 3.2. Commissioners were concerned that there are relatively large borrowing requirements for fleet and waste. Mohammed explained that before these schemes are approved a full business case would be produced.
- 3.3. Commissioners have noted the teams' efforts but would like Mohammed and team to consider options to bring the borrowing down to zero within two years so as to reduce the pressure on the revenue budget.

4. Budget Update (Fiona Greenway)

- 4.1. Cabinet is set for the 27th Feb 2024. The budget is due to be published on the 19th February. Commissioners will have sight of the budget before this date.

- 4.2. BCC is awaiting the outcome of the EFS letter, the outcome is expected to land on W/C 26th February 2024.
- 4.3. 5th March 2024 is the proposed date to vote on the budget at City Council.
- 4.4. BCC has received confirmation from the Government that they have authority to go above the referendum limit for increasing council tax. The Government were however, advising that this is BCC's decision.
- 4.5. CLT and Finance are looking at the rest of the directorate delivery plans, including any savings which are £1m+. Challenge sessions have been held with a submission of each delivery plan to Commissioners, Cabinet and CLT.
- 4.6. Budget timeline is on track.
- 4.7. A S25 report is being drafted by Fiona and team as we speak. This will be a significant document which will require a legal opinion.
- 4.8. There was a discussion on Council Tax where Councillor Tilsley expressed that the potential increase in Council tax would not be positive. Commissioners saw this as a key component to eventually set a balanced budget.

5. Delivery Update (Richard Brooks)

- 5.1. Chris Tambini gave the background to the CPMO which was presented to the last Finance Board. The purpose this item was for an update on progress to be provided by Richard given how important this is to delivery of savings.
- 5.2. Richard provided an update including progress engaging with service directorates to understand their requirements and recruitment of four additional resources as there are still vacancies within the team.
- 5.3. Chris Tambini expressed that Commissioners have major concerns that quick enough progress isn't being made with the CPMO. The need for far improved arrangements for delivery of savings was discussed in November, and we are now in February with only skeleton service and undeveloped plans.
- 5.4. Commissioners advised BCC that the CPMO needs to be set up with far more urgency. There is some basic information that has not been captured including the level of existing CPMO resource within the Council. A detailed discussion followed where a number of points were made about the operation and establishment of the CPMO.

6. AOB (all attendees)

- 6.1. None.

7. Date of next meeting (Chris Tambini)

- 7.1. 20th February 2024 13:30hrs.

Actions:

- A further update on progress establishing the CPMO be brought to the next meeting. This update must reflect that this is a key risk in the delivery of the budget.