

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM – 10 OCTOBER 2023

Present:

Councillors Terry (Chair), Ennis and Mitchell.

K Magee	Unite
A McNamara	National Education Union (NEU)
K Gumbrell	National Education Union (NEU)
M Palfrey	Unison
Kathryn Cook	Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development
Teresa Kaine	HR Services Manager
Julie Quarmby	Committee Services

Apologies: Councillor Brock

1. PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2023

The proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting held on 15 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes/Actions of the following meetings were received:

- Corporate Health and Safety Committee – 21 September 2023
- Joint Trades Union Committee – Actions

3. FINANCE - UPDATE

Darren Carter, Director of Finance, attended the meeting and gave a verbal update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the current in-year budget position. He explained that there was currently a forecast overspend of around £4m, including a Brighter Futures for Children overspend of £5.8m, rather than the surplus of £2.781m that had been forecast when the budget had been set in February 2023.

Darren Carter explained that the budget situation had become more challenging due to larger than expected increases in pay, inflation, and unavoidable demand pressures, including increased homelessness and children's social care costs. He noted that it had become very challenging to mitigate overspending in the current year and for the next financial year and advised that CMT were going through a budget challenge process to explore the measures that could be taken to bring the current in-year overspend down.

Darren Carter noted that the budgetary pressures being faced by RBC were not unique and RBC was not close to needing to issue a Section 114 notice but it was important that action be taken now to manage overspending in order to allow the Council to set a balanced budget without needing to utilise its reserves.

Darren Carter expressed the opinion that, given the wider national context, it was likely that Central Government would need to take action to address the budgetary pressures felt across Local Government. Such actions could potentially take the form of targeted

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grant funding eg for Adult Social Care but, far more likely, would take the form of allowing Councils to raise Council Tax beyond the current permitted amount allowed.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

4. ELECTRIC FLEET

Darren Carter, Director of Finance, gave an update on the Council's electric vehicle fleet. He explained that the most recent purchase of vehicles had been made using a budget underspend, meaning that there were no capital or borrowing costs associated with the purchase. The Council had considered the business case for the purchase of electric vehicles and had balanced these against the Council's response to the climate emergency and commitment to achieving net zero status. The electric vehicles were more expensive to buy but had a longer asset life and they had been purchased to replace existing vehicles that were at the end of their life.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

5. HR POLICY UPDATE

Teresa Kaine, HR Services Manager, attended the meeting and reported that the current policies under review were Breastfeeding, Workload and Wellbeing & Mental Health. The Trades Unions were being consulted, and the revised policies would be submitted to the Personnel Committee for agreement in November.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION - UPDATE

Kathryn Cook, Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, gave a verbal update on the work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Kathryn explained that the Big Conversation had now ended and the staff input had been used to draft the EDI Strategy. An easy read version of the Strategy would be produced and Trades Unions would have the opportunity to see the strategy and the delivery plan at JTUC on 18th October before it was finalised and submitted to Personnel Committee on 16 November 2023.

Kathryn Cook noted that it was harder to engage with some teams than others and that work was underway to build a communications and engagement plan so that all employees would be aware of the strategy and what it means for them.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

(The meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.52 pm).