

Scrutiny Committee Agenda



Contact: Ron Schrieber, Democratic Services Officer
Telephone number 01235 422524
Email: ron.schrieber@southandvale.gov.uk
Date: 20 September 2017
Website: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

A meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

will be held on Thursday, 28 September 2017 at 7.00 pm

Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB

Members of the Committee:

Councillors

Debby Hallett (Chairman)
Alice Badcock (Vice-chairman)
Mike Badcock
Edward Blagrove
Vicky Jenkins

Mohinder Kainth
Sandy Lovatt
Chris Palmer
Judy Roberts

Preferred Substitutes

Yvonne Constance
StJohn Dickson
Dudley Hoddinott
Simon Howell
Monica Lovatt

Ben Mabbett
Chris McCarthy
Emily Smith
Reg Waite
Catherine Webber

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio, email and easy read. For this or any other special requirements (such as access facilities) please contact the officer named on this agenda. Please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Reed', is written in a cursive style.

Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Agenda

Open to the Public including the Press

Council's Vision

The council's vision is to take care of your interests across the Vale with enterprise, energy and efficiency.

1. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence and the attendance of substitute members.

2. Minutes

(Pages 5 -10)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Scrutiny Committee minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2017 (attached).

3. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4. Urgent business and chairman's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chairman determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chairman.

5. Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

REPORTS AND ISSUES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6. Performance review of The Beacon, Wantage

(Pages 11 - 22)

To consider the report of the head of waste, leisure, parks and environmental health (attached).

7. Financial outturn 2016/17

(Pages 23 - 44)

To consider the report of the head of finance/principal accountant (Capita) (attached).

8. Council tax reduction scheme 2016/17

(Pages 45 - 54)

To consider the report of the head of finance (attached).

9. Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

(Pages 55 - 58)

To review the attached scrutiny work schedule. Please note, although the dates are confirmed, the items under consideration are subject to being withdrawn, added to or rearranged without further notice.

10. Exclusion of the public

To consider whether to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

- (i) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

11. West Way, Botley

To consider the report of the head of corporate services (to follow).

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 27 July 2017 at 7.00 pm

at the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Debby Hallett (Chairman), Alice Badcock (Vice-Chairman), Mike Badcock, Ed Blagrove, Mohinder Kainth, Sandy Lovatt, Chris Palmer, Dudley Hoddinott (In place of Judy Roberts) and Katie Finch (In place of Vicky Jenkins)

Officers: Mark Stone, Phil Ealey, Helen Novelle, Sally Truman and Susan Harbour

Also present: Councillor Elaine Ware

Sc.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Vicky Jenkins, her substitute was Councillor Katie Finch; and from Councillor Judy Roberts, her substitute was Councillor Dudley Hoddinott.

Sc.2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2017 were approved by the committee as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

Sc.3 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.4 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The Chairman introduced herself to new members of the committee.

She stated that a principle objective of the Scrutiny Committee was to increase the engagement of members, Cabinet members and officers. Her aim was to move scrutiny "upstream" so that it is contributing to policy making at the pre-decision stage.

She stated that Scrutiny Committee does the following things:

- Holds Cabinet members and senior officers accountable for the decisions which they make and the services which they deliver;
- Helps to improve decision making;

- Informs members of the public of what the council does and how it does it;
- Provides the opportunity to learn from our performance, to do more of what works, and to stop or change what does not work.
- Scrutiny likes to receive good news too, and well-prepared policy and performance reports that show successes, as well as problem areas.
- Scrutiny is an opportunity for members to learn how officers think and work and also for officers to learn about how members look at things. It is a chance for everyone to learn about different perspectives. That all leads to a richer and more fertile ground for doing good work.

Adding value: members were requested to collate all grammar, punctuation, typos, formatting issues etc and send to Democratic Services who will forward it to the relevant officers. The meeting and preparation time should be used to find options for improving the policy or strategy which is being scrutinised. Members were encouraged to look for recommendations on the substance of what they saw and to find ways to make it simpler, fairer, cheaper, more transparent, better business practice, or to add another perspective.

Members of the committee commented that the current set of reports were well structured and straight forward to read. They commended the officers and felt that this represented an improvement in the format and content of reports.

Sc.5 Public participation

None.

Sc.6 Corporate Delivery Plan

The Corporate Delivery Plan had come to Scrutiny in advance of going to Cabinet and would return to Scrutiny on a six-monthly basis, with updates and showing progress against targets (“RAG” statuses). It would next come to Scrutiny in November and would include details of what had stood in the way of progress. The current report was a baseline report.

The committee discussed this item and related topics.

The Corporate Delivery Plan used a mix and match approach to project management methodology to fit the needs of each project.

Members were advised that any questions of clarification should be sent to the Policy and Partnerships Manager who would get a response from the relevant officer and circulate it to committee members. Any strategic issues should be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee review of the Plan in November.

In response to questions from councillors, the Acting Chief Executive clarified the current position on the Unitary Council bid. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils had submitted a unitary application to the Secretary of State which had been well received. Following the general election, the proposal continued to be the policy of these councils but there was no government workplan or sufficient majority to enable this to be decided at present. The councils were working on the assumption that this will **not** be subject to a decision within the next two years.

Councillors discussed the Plan and raised a number of issues which resulted in the following action points.

In order to provide more consistency across all activities on the Corporate Delivery Plan:

- Provide each activity with a unique identifier code;
- Check dates and relevant quarters for activity;
- Report on Q1 – Q16 to reflect the lifetime of the plan, or include the year in which action will happen
- Clarify which projects are across years and which are ongoing (and to make clear that Neighbourhood Plan support is ongoing);
- Include the specific benefits to be achieved by a project/action;
- Include percentage of project completed and whether it is on track or not
- Increase in housebuilding compared to last year – needs to be a new target each year, not an ongoing action;
- Add headings to identify strategic objective in the Corporate Plan;
- Clarify whether activity is South or Vale or both;
- Present any reasons for timetable slippage on activities;
- All actions should be SMART;
- Provide review dates for activities.

Sc.7 Temporary Accommodation Provision 2017-2022

The Cabinet portfolio holder, Councillor Elaine Ware, introduced the report.

The Council had a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation to certain homeless households. It fulfilled this duty by using either hotels or its own housing stock.

The Temporary Accommodation Provision report addressed how Vale Council could effectively meet demand for temporary accommodation over the next five years. The report recommended that the council's two hostels be converted into self-contained units. This would enable the council to meet future demand in suitable temporary accommodation. A capital budget had been identified to fund the conversion of the hostels.

Phil Ealey, the Housing Needs Manager also spoke to the report. A more proactive approach was required to manage future demand for temporary accommodation and to make it more responsive to customer need, based on forecast projected future demand.

Option E, to reconfigure both the Wantage and Faringdon hostels into self-contained units, would be the most cost effective. The current accommodation could be used more effectively. South Oxfordshire District Council, which currently made use of Vale council's temporary accommodation, would invest in its own stock and free up places for Vale residents. Many of the residents in the hostel accommodation were vulnerable residents, and shared facilities could cause problems when there are no wardens on site. Option E provided the best option for the residents. There was sufficient money in the capital provision for new properties which could be diverted to the refurbishment of the hostels.

The Scrutiny Committee debated this item. Concern was raised as to whether there was a contingency included for the project going over budget. The officer confirmed that there was a ten percent contingency built into this budget. The committee required more details on the transitional plan during the refurbishment, including the cost implications. This could not be fully completed until the project was agreed by Cabinet, however, the plan was in

place to work with Registered Social Landlords to use “decant” properties as part of the transitional plan.

The committee considered that the decision on the best option should be made based on the focus on duty of care to vulnerable residents and not just on the financial issues.

In response to councillor questions it was confirmed that:

- The average stay in temporary accommodation was three to six months;
- The majority of homeless applicants came from the Abingdon area.

Concern was raised about moving vulnerable people away from their communities for a period of three to six months. However, the housing needs team concentrated on preventing homelessness and were successful in locating over 90 per cent of potentially homeless households in their local areas. Temporary accommodation was the last resort for homeless families. Homelessness prevention rates were very high in Vale and South Council areas, compared to other areas of the country.

The Committee requested the homelessness prevention figures from the officer who reported as follows:

SUCCESSFUL HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION CASES

| Year | Number as of 31.03. |
|---------|---------------------|
| 2014/15 | 355 |
| 2015/16 | 460 |
| 2016/17 | 559 |

An increase of 57 per cent over three years.

HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

| Year | Number as of 31.03. |
|---------|---------------------|
| 2014/15 | 18 |
| 2015/16 | 8 |
| 2016/17 | 9 |

A reduction of 50 per cent over three years. Nationally, there has been a 50 per cent rise in temporary accommodation numbers since 2010.

GROSS VALE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION EXPENDITURE:

| Year | £ |
|---------|--------|
| 2014/15 | 71,883 |
| 2015/16 | 55,201 |
| 2016/17 | 20,773 |

A reduction of 71 per cent over three years. Nationally, expenditure on temporary accommodation had risen by 30 per cent since 2013.

RESOLVED to:

- a) request that the transitional plan come back to Scrutiny if Cabinet approve the report and recommendations.
- b) request that the officer add actions to the Corporate delivery plan for Vale.

Sc.8 Joint Housing Strategy

Councillor Elaine Ware, the Cabinet portfolio holder, introduced the item. She offered her apologies if the Committee were expecting a strategy that covered all aspects of housing. This strategy aimed to deal with the challenge of delivering new build properties. Following the concerns raised by the Scrutiny Committee Chair, Councillor Ware proposed that the title of the report be amended to read “Housing Delivery Strategy” and that paragraph 17 be deleted.

Other areas of housing related work were covered by separate strategies, policies and procedures. There was a separate Homelessness Strategy and document for temporary accommodation provision, which fell under the remit of the development and housing services; and matters relating to Disabled Facilities Grants, energy efficiency and the private housing sector were covered by the environmental health team. The planning department also had responsibilities for the delivery of housing.

A Housing Delivery Strategy was a key document for councils – underpinning corporate goals and providing clarity on the councils’ priorities for housing delivery, which was particularly important given the task of delivering challenging numbers of new homes. This was a high-level document setting out the direction of travel over the next ten years that would enable the councils to take a proactive approach in driving the delivery of housing.

This approach was not just about accelerating the delivery of a certain number of homes, but was centred on developing the role of “Housing Delivery Enabler” which would put greater emphasis on delivering the right types of homes, in the right area and to required standards, seeking out new opportunities and partnerships and finding solutions to problems impacting on development progress.

Of particular importance, was the need to develop much of the future housing in partnership with local people, - chiefly in coordination with Neighbourhood Plans, but also through capturing the capacity for innovation, opportunity and passion that existed in other parts of our district community – including local major employers, community land trusts etc.

The Strategy would support other important planning and housing documents such as the Homelessness Strategy, temporary accommodation provision, the Local Plan and the future development of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

As this was a high-level document, it did not include specific detail, but provided an action plan of intention and initiatives to be built up over a ten year period, leaving the councils far better able to influence and direct the type of housing development that supported opportunities for current and future residents, employment, leisure and education.

The committee raised its concern that this joint strategy had come separately to South and Vale Scrutiny Committees and wanted to ensure that in future these joint strategies would come to the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

The purpose of the strategy is to get deliverability and it is important whatever the Strategic Housing Market Assessment numbers are. The action plan is about delivery rather than absolute numbers.

The committee noted that paragraph 17 of the Interim Head of Housing's report would be removed from the Strategy, but that the work it mentioned, would need to be done elsewhere:

“Because the strategy is focussed on delivering the councils' significant new-build housing targets, this Joint Housing Strategy does not address other aspects of housing provision that are sometimes included in other Local Authority Housing Strategies, such as raising quality of existing private sector housing stock, providing disabled facilities grants to improve accessibility of existing housing etc. which are addressed by South and Vale's Environmental Health Service”

This strategy is about delivering the housing numbers but also about delivering the type of housing which is actually needed in the local area.

A detailed action plan would be implemented following the adoption of the Strategy which would add further details.

RESOLVED to:

- a) commend the strategy to Cabinet, together with the comments of the members of the committee as part of the consultation process;
- b) send the comments of Vale Scrutiny Committee to South Cabinet as part of the consultation process as it is a joint strategy;
- c) recommend that the Strategy is updated and comes back to Scrutiny Committee for review in the light of any major infrastructure projects such as the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and the possible reservoir;
- d) request that the Action Plan should come back to Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis, to keep the committee abreast of progress;
- e) request that joint strategies come to the Joint Scrutiny Committee in future;
- f) add the Joint Housing Delivery Strategy to the Corporate Plan.

Sc.9 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale Scrutiny Committee meetings

The committee noted these and expressed the need for further work needed to be carried out to ensure a workable and useful workplan.

Action points:

- The committee would like to see the energy plan at Scrutiny in November;
- Councillors are encouraged to raise issues in advance of the Scrutiny committee to ensure that the correct heads of service can be present.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Scrutiny committee



Report of head of waste, leisure, parks and environmental health

Author: Jo Paterson

Telephone: 01235 422253

Textphone: 18001 01235 422253

E-mail: jo.paterson@southandvale.gov.uk

Cabinet member responsible: Charlotte Dickson

Tel: 01235 767848

E-mail: charlotte.dickson@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

DATE: 28 September 2017



Performance review of The Beacon, Wantage

Recommendation

Scrutiny committee is asked to review The Beacon's performance against targets (2016-2017)

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to update scrutiny committee on the actions taken in response to its recommendations from September 2016, to consider progress made towards The Beacon's 2017/18 targets and for the committee to make further performance improvement suggestions to the cabinet member for leisure.

Strategic objectives

2. The provision of The Beacon contributes towards achieving the Vale Council's strategic objective "sustainable communities and well-being" and the corporate priority of "expanding the range and quality of activities at The Beacon, Wantage". It also contributes towards achieving the strategic objective of "running an efficient council".

Background

3. The vision for The Beacon is that it will be seen as the heart of the community. It is a facility offering opportunities for residents to enjoy celebrations, performances, business use and a thriving coffee shop.

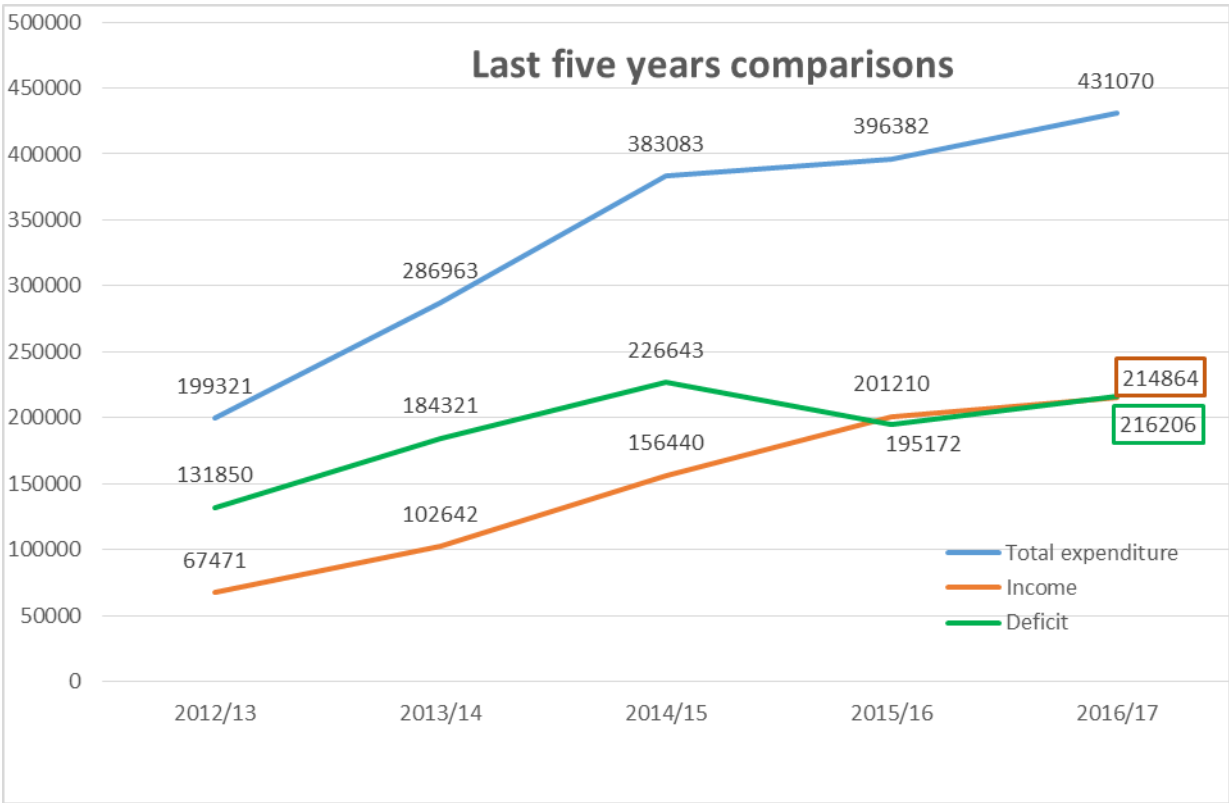
4. The Beacon business case sets out the key objectives for the facility which we are reporting against as they make up our key performance indicators.

The key performance indicators for 2016/17 are:

- increase in revenue and a reduction in the overall operating deficit
- increase in occupancy with more people using the venue more often
- attract new audiences and users
- improve the customer experience to ensure repeat business
- raise awareness of the facility and improve communication

Increase in revenue and in the overall operating deficit.

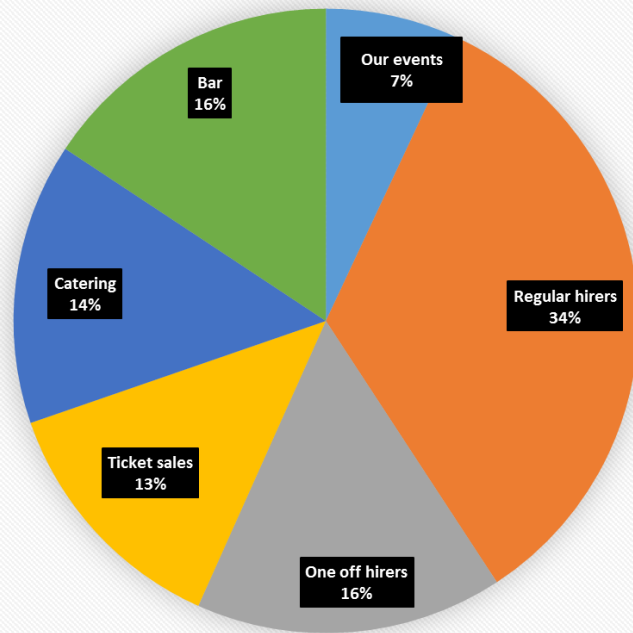
5. The income increased from £201,210 in 2015/16 to £214,864 in 2016/17. There was also an increase in expenditure. This was primarily as a result of booking higher profile performers which in turn created the increase in income. Overall there was a slight increase in the operating deficit.



In 2016/17 The Beacon exceeded its income target for the fourth successive year. Whilst the expenditure is higher than initially predicted the team are continually looking at ways to reduce expenditure and confident that the measures implemented will help to reduce the operational deficit going forward.

This graph shows how the income is broken down and demonstrates that our regular hirers are still our main source of income

Where our income comes from



■ Our events ■ Regular hirers ■ One off hirers ■ Ticket sales ■ Catering ■ Bar

Increase in occupancy

- The total average occupancy for Saturday and Sunday is 336 hours per week. To calculate the total occupancy for the year, multiply 336 by 52 weeks, which is 16,464.
- The industry standard for this type of facility is around 40 per cent occupancy, which equates to 6585 hours per year, or just under 550 hours a month. Our occupancy has more than doubled in the last five years and is now at 38 per cent. Our aim is to reach the industry standard of 40 per cent by 2020.
- When considering the number of hours that the facility is occupied progress is being made towards reducing the operational deficit. In 2012/13 it cost the council £50.86 for every hour the building was occupied and by 2016/17 this cost had fallen to £34.38 representing a significant improvement in value for money.

| Year | Net financial position £ | Total hours of occupancy | Percentage of bookable hours | Average cost per occupied hour £ |
|---------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2012/13 | -131,850 | 2589 | 16 | 50.86 |
| 2013/14 | -184,317 | 4064 | 25 | 45.30 |
| 2014/15 | -226,644 | 5070 | 31 | 44.65 |
| 2015/16 | -195,172 | 6060 | 35 | 32.21 |
| 2016/17 | -216,205 | 6270 | 38 | 34.38 |
| | | | | |

Attract new audiences and users

9. During the year 2016/17 The Beacon has gained four new regular hirers and attracted new audiences by introducing a more varied programme.
10. We have introduced National Theatre live, which has had some very successful events, including Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead and Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.
11. The audience with Paul Merson event was a sell-out and 95 per cent of attendees were new to the Beacon.
12. We have attracted acts, such as Larry Lamb, Ian Siegal and Cara Dillon and as the reputation continues to grow the plan is to continue to secure acts that help to attract new audiences. Over the next few months we have live shows from comedians Rich Hall and Phill Jupitus, and we have an audience with footballing legend Ray Parlour next spring.

Improve the customer experience to ensure repeat business

13. Customer service remains a top priority for The Beacon and the staff are regularly complimented for their excellent friendly and efficient service.
14. We have also upgraded the building with improvements to the bar area. This included a new wooden floor, new furniture, improvements to the lighting and an audio loop installed throughout the building.
15. In the coffee shop a display screen has been installed, the glass cabinet removed to the foyer and a range of sandwiches and salads introduced to complement the cakes and snacks previously available.
16. We have also introduced an online booking system which has made purchasing tickets much easier and more accessible. This has modernised the business with advanced ticket sales increasing there is a greater certainty for the business. The system allows us to capture more information on our customer that has helped to tailor marketing activities to encourage repeat business.

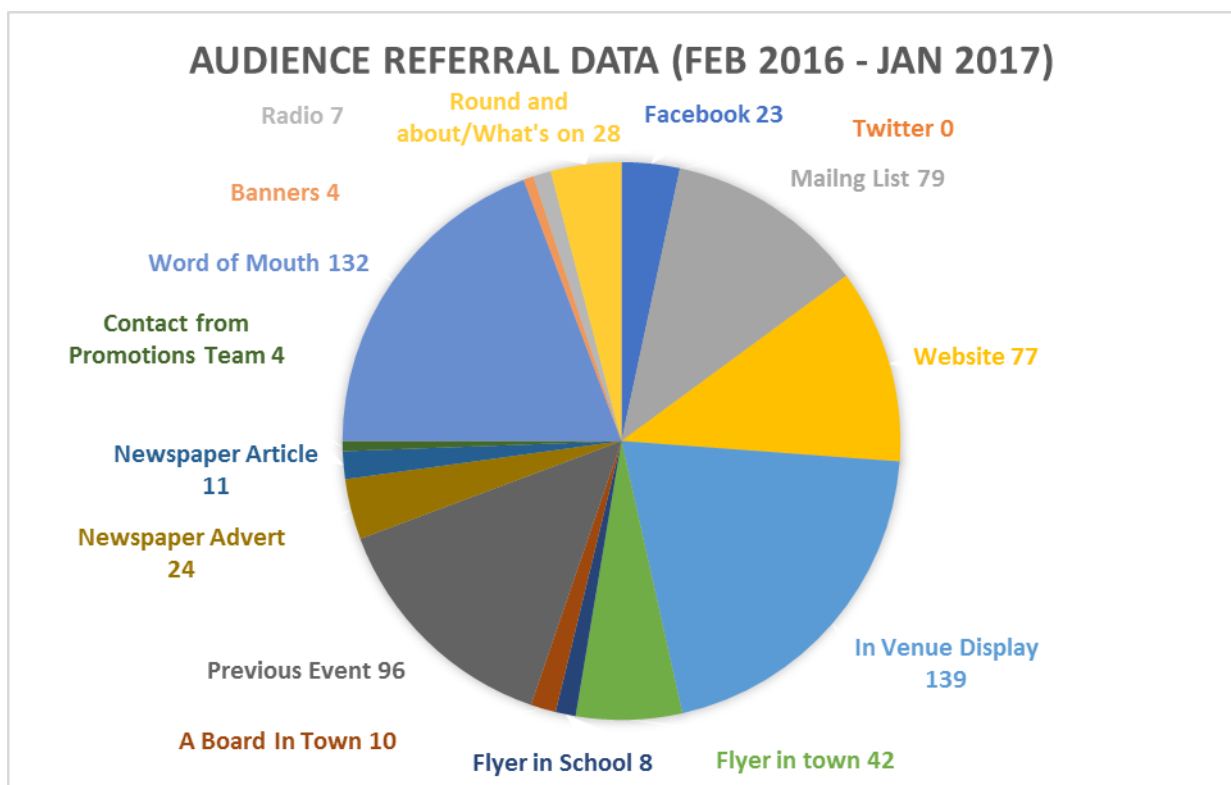
Raise awareness of the facility and improve communication

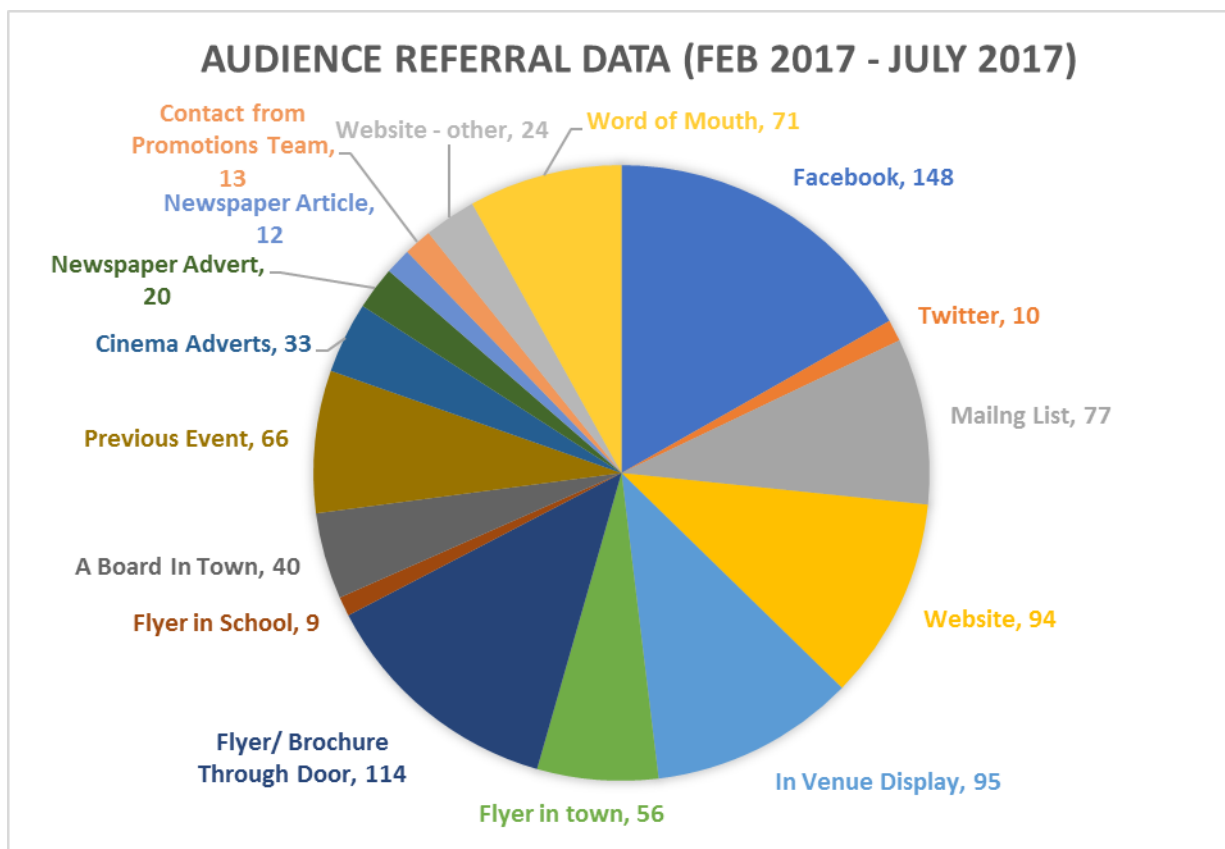
17. We have continued to raise our profile through social media and our online presence and this has had a positive impact on ticket sales

Online Audience growth (April 2016 – March 2017):

- Mailing list: 644 up to 904 (up 40 per cent)
- Facebook: 814 up to 1195 (up 47 per cent)
- Twitter 468 up to 683 (up 46 per cent)

The graphs below show a changing pattern to how customers learn of the activities and events taking place at The Beacon with more referrals from social media platforms.





18. In September 2016, the Committee recommended the Cabinet member for leisure

- To implement a detailed performance plan for The Beacon and, if possible, include this, or reference to it, in the forthcoming leisure provision strategy.
- That future key performance indicators should not be based solely on reducing the operational deficit but should also measure customer and staff satisfaction
- That next year's performance review should include not only positive comments received from new and returning customers but also negative comments, complaints and lessons learned.

Beacon performance plan

19. The Beacon now has a business performance plan which sets out the future direction of the facility and gives the team focus. This document has been developed with input from the Beacon board which includes the head of corporate strategy, head of finance and cabinet member for leisure.
20. The Beacon performance plan includes an action plan with individual targets for each of the KPIs. A progress report on these targets can be seen in appendix A
21. These targets include not only attendance figures and income targets but also look at customer and staff satisfaction, targeting new audiences, increasing the secondary spend and a greater involvement in the community and local events

22. We have a target that states that compliments will make up at least 80 per cent of the comments received.

97 comments have been received on comments cards, via Facebook and in person since September 2016

- 87 compliments - 89.6 per cent
- 5 complaints - 5.2 per cent
- 5 suggestions - 5.2 per cent

23. We are setting up a new system through our online booking system, Ticketsource. This will generate emails to all attendees after a performance so that data is gathered whilst the experience is still fresh in people's memories rather than waiting and doing one annual survey.

24. We also have cards on reception and in the coffee shop where customers can leave their comments and suggestions.

Below are some of the comments, suggestions and complaints we have received since September 2016

- Venue and staff rated as excellent - Amazing friendly highly recommended
- Some low carb and sugar snacks would be nice
- Issue around parking for NT Live due to KA parent evening
- Fantastic venue, friendly staff and a fabulous place to go
- Staff and venue both rated excellent, but commented on Monkey Mayhem session being quite expensive
- Needed more bar staff for the amount of people at the venue. Bigger selection of drinks needed too"
- What an amazing night we all totally enjoyed it. The guests were blown away by the set up and layout, food, drink, disco and of course the waiters. I have to say your team were fantastic from start to finish, nothing was a problem
- It is unnecessarily warm in the coffee shop
- The most friendly staff I have ever experienced
- Fantastic evening just a shame on arrival at 8:00pm ... there were no cold beers left in the fridges!
- Thank you so much for a fab facility with fab staff.
- Posted on Twitter during the Ian Siegal event – "... they're ain't no better show anywhere on the globe tonight - bring on the 2nd half"

Lessons learned

25. The team are constantly looking to improve the service offered to customers and streamline the way they work on a daily basis. From comments we have received, and as a result of situations that have arisen, the following areas have been included in the lessons learned log.

- be aware of other events locally that may impact on the car park, for example King Alfred's School parent's evenings. Advise our customers that the car park will be busy and recommend alternative places to park
- have an additional fridge in the bar for ice creams during children's events to support the target of increased secondary spend

- the importance of the marketing post and the need for staff to communicate when they are covering other work areas to avoid duplication or omission
- outreach community events need a hook to get people to sign up to the mailing list, such as free tickets or a prize draw
- consider keeping the bar open after events as well as before and during, where appropriate
- healthy food options and savoury food to be available in the coffee shop
- explore different suppliers and do more research on what will sell well for lunches, reduce the choice and quantity ordered to get a better return
- more bar staff and a wider selection of drinks was requested but this is not practical because of limited space and the bar is not open every day so more stock may lead to wastage. Pre-ordering of interval drinks is a way of reducing queues at busy times
- increasing the number of beers in the fridge by removing some soft drinks for certain types of events, eg Paul Merson, and utilising the food fridge in the kitchen to stock additional cold beers
- consider opening the coffee shop when events are on upstairs, if appropriate

Conclusion

26. The committee is asked to note the update on performance at The Beacon since 2016, and make any further suggestions to the cabinet member for leisure

The Beacon action plan 2017-18

Increase occupancy

| | KPI | To date | Comments |
|--|---|------------------|--|
| Increase the number of shows and performances we put on 'An audience with ...' | 3 events per year | Achieved | Larry Lamb, Paul Merson and Ray Parlour |
| Live music | 4 events per year | Achieved | Zoots, Ian Siegal, Cara Dillon and T-Rextasy |
| Comedy nights | 3 events per year | Achieved | John Robbins, Jeremy Hardy and Rich Hall |
| Children's shows | 8 events per year | Achieved | Sarah and Duck (2), Hunting the Snark (2), Morgan and West, Pantomime (3) |
| Increase number of celebrations (children's parties, adult parties, christenings, wakes and wedding receptions) | 30 events per year | 10 (April – Aug) | |
| Increase number of rooms that are in use by running more of our own activities during the weekdays eg. Art classes, Language school, Wine tasting Adult education (eg ICT) Run school holiday activities | 2 new activities a year £100 per month per activity £300 per year | Not achieved | Trialled self-defence and photography courses but neither had a good take up Still researching viable options |

Increase revenue

| | KPI | To date | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Charge for the printing and selling of third party tickets. | 10% charge on all third party tickets sold | 4 events and £794.20 income | |
| Increase the bar usage by creating specific events such as quiz nights. | Increase in income to £35,000 | On track | |
| Increase sales in the coffee shop by establishing regular groups and events eg. book club, knit and natter, poet or author recitals Create a lunchtime menu working with local suppliers Improve the gross profit of the coffee shop | 2 groups/events per year Minimum 60% mark up on all products | German speaking group | Sandwiches trialled New supplier being sought |
| Secondary spend targets: Adult Shows Children Shows Cinema (inc NT) Introduce tuck shop and investigate merchandise for all events | £5.00 per head £1.00 per head £2.00 per head £25 profit from merchandise per show | £6.50 (4 shows) £1.17 (2 shows) £2.45 (8 events) Not achieved | Research suppliers and agree rates with performers for selling their products |
| Attendance targets: Internal classes Adult cinema Children's cinema | 10 per class 60 per screening 65 per screening | Not achieved 97 average 81 average | No regular classes have been set up as yet |

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------------|----------------------|--|
| NT Live | 40 per screening | 45 average | |
| Shows | Exceed break-even point | 3 exceeded, 1 failed | Ian Siegal event was short of break even by 21 tickets, but was a very well received event by those who did attend |

Attract new audiences and users

| | KPI | To date | |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Attract new users by hosting a variety of different events and promoting via social media to new audiences. | 2 events per year | Paul Merson 95% new audience | Morgan and West magicians booked for November |
| Attend business breakfasts (and potentially host future ones) Run a careers fair in partnership with local businesses, the job centre and local schools and colleges. | 6 per year 1 per year | 4 attended to date | Need to arrange this in partnership with King Alfred's Academy |
| Introduce school's films Disability/dementia friendly screenings | | Macbeth in Feb attracted 307 students | |

Improve customer service

| | KPI | To date | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Recruit volunteers to usher at NT live | Volunteers recruited to help | Achieved | |
| Support work experience students who wish to work at the Beacon, including adults returning to work via the job centre | 2 school placements 2 job centre placements | Achieved (1 taken on as casual) Achieved (1 taken on as casual) | |
| Create a customer feedback card to regularly monitor satisfaction at all events Work with the consultation officer to provide a full customer satisfaction survey | Gain feedback at 6 events a year Collect 30 or more feedback cards on site 20% response to online surveys completed after each event | 12 cards to date completed | We will be using Ticketsource to survey customers after events rather than doing an annual survey |
| Comments and complaints log to be kept up to date | Compliments to make up 80% or above | 89.6% positive | |
| Raise food hygiene rating | Rating of 4 or above | | Have not had a recent inspection so no new rating |

Raise awareness

| | KPI | To date | |
|---|------------|----------|--|
| Create a seasonal brochure detailing everything we have on offer including selling advertising space to our regular hirers to promote their activities. | 2 per year | Achieved | |

| | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Increase awareness of the coffee shop by adding coffee shop posts to the Beacon Facebook page | 6 posts per year | 4 to date | |
| Attend community events in Wantage and surrounding area to promote our activities and shows. Run a clubs and societies day to promote the facility to local clubs whilst promoting them to the local residents. | Attend 3 community events per year | | Booked to attend two events but the staff that signed up to attend both left Compiling a comprehensive list of clubs and societies. Plan to run this in Spring 2018 |

Staff support and satisfaction

| | KPI | To date | |
|---|--------------------------------|----------|--|
| All staff to have completed mandatory training | Annually review at PDP | On track | Courses have been attended where available. HR issues have made this quite challenging |
| All staff to be set their own development targets and given the opportunity to gain further qualifications and skills as required | Include in PDP | On track | |
| Staff satisfaction to be measured on a scale of 1 -10 at each one to one meeting and the results recorded annually | Job satisfaction of 7 or above | | Average score 7.66 Results for the team range from 5 to 10 |

Scrutiny Report



Report of Head of Finance/Chief Accountant (Capita)

Author: William Jacobs/Simon Hewings

Telephone: 01235 422480/01235 422499

Textphone: 18001 01235 422480/18001 01235 422499

E-mail: William.jacobs@southandvale.gov.uk

simon.hewings@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

Cabinet member responsible: Robert Sharp

Tel: 01367 710549

E-mail: robert.sharp@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: Scrutiny

DATE: 28 September 2017

Financial outturn 2016/17

Recommendation(s)

Scrutiny committee is recommended to note the overall outturn position of the council as well as the outturn of individual service areas.

Note: If committee members wish to raise specific questions please send these in advance if possible to either the committee clerk or the Chief Accountant (Capita). Please be aware that if questions are not submitted in advance, it may not be possible to answer these in detail at the meeting. In addition, if committee members wish specific heads of service to attend the meeting this should also be raised in advance.

Purpose of Report

1. To report the final year end position for revenue and capital expenditure against budget for the financial year 2016/17.

Strategic Objectives

2. The allocation of financial resources within the revenue and capital budgets needs to match the objectives agreed by the council. The outturn report shows how these resources have been used in year.

Background

3. The attached papers contain summarised schedules of revenue and capital expenditure for 2016/17; they also present an explanation of the significant variances

against budget. This is presented by service, and follows the format of the budget monitoring reports produced during the year.

4. This report has been presented to Cabinet briefing and has provided the opportunity for cabinet to discuss the outturn with senior management, and also for individual portfolio holders to further discuss with their heads of service.

Revenue outturn 2016/17

5. In February 2016 the council approved a net expenditure budget of £11.5 million. This increased to £12.8 million as a result of budget carry forwards and supplementary estimates. The net expenditure at year end was £11.1 million – this equates to a variation of £1.7 million, which has been transferred to the council's reserves.
6. Of the £1.7 million variation to budget, £874,000 represents budgets carried forward into future years, and £510,000 represents unbudgeted government grant income for Didcot Garden Town. In addition, investment income was £171,000 above budget. The remaining underspend has been transferred to revenue reserves.
7. Appendix 1 analyses income and expenditure across the service areas. This appendix shows the expenditure budget was £51.0 million compared to an actual spend of £50.1 million resulting in an under spend of £0.9 million. This under spend is approximately 1.8 per cent of total expenditure.
8. The income budget was £38.3 million compared to actual income of £39.1 million, giving an over achievement in income of £0.8 million or 2.1 per cent.
9. Table 1 below summarises the outturn position by service. More detail of variances is shown at Appendix 2.

Table 1: summary of revenue budgets and variance

| Summary of revenue budgets and variances | Budget £000 | Actual £000 | Variance £000 | Notes |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Client team - 5 Councils Partnership | 1,719 | 1,705 | (14) | a |
| Strategic management board | 442 | 377 | (65) | |
| Corporate strategy | 5,149 | 4,906 | (243) | |
| Development and housing | 1,872 | 714 | (1,158) | |
| Economy leisure and property | 49 | 50 | 1 | |
| Finance | 356 | 468 | 112 | |
| HR, IT & technical services | 1,072 | 1,035 | (37) | |
| Legal and democratic services | 1,344 | 1,421 | 77 | |
| Planning | 1,231 | 960 | (271) | |
| Contingency | (22) | 0 | 22 | |
| Direct service expenditure | 13,212 | 11,636 | (1,576) | |
| Investment income | (411) | (582) | (171) | b |
| Net expenditure | 12,801 | 11,054 | (1,747) | |

Notes:

- a) Client team line contains housing benefits and rent allowance funded by government grant as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: housing benefits and rent allowances

| | Budget £ | Actual £ | Variance £ |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Rent allowances payments | 28,839 | 29,223 | 384 |
| Government grants benefits | (279) | (279) | 0 |
| Government grants income | (27,852) | (27,771) | 81 |
| Rent allowance overpayments recovered | (1,263) | (1,979) | (716) |
| Net position | (555) | (806) | (251) |

- b) The council's treasury management outturn report was considered by Joint Audit and Governance Committee on 25 September and will be considered at a future meeting of cabinet and council.

Capital

10. The original capital budget for 2016/17 including growth was agreed in February 2016 at £11.6 million. Details of the changes to the capital programme in year are summarised in table 3 below:

Table 3: movement on capital programme

| | 2016/17 £000 |
|---|-------------------------|
| Original capital budget 1 April 2016 | 10,284 |
| Agreed growth | 1,305 |
| Roll forward from prior years | 3,063 |
| Additions in year (externally funded) | 787 |
| Budget profiling from future years | 60 |
| Schemes deleted (including reduction in contingency budget) | (1,050) |
| Slippage into future years (see Appendix 4) | (8,003) |
| Working budget 31 March 2017 | 6,446 |

11. Capital expenditure for 2016/17 was £5.0 million. Detail of the variance of spend against the capital programme working budget is shown in appendix 3 to this report.
12. During the year, budget holders review their projects and identify those where delays mean that the current working budget will not be spent in year. The budget profile is then moved to reflect the new spend profile and budgets are slipped into future years if applicable. Slipped budgets remain committed for use in future years. During the year £8.0 million, including the capital contingency budget, was slipped in this way. A list of these schemes is shown in appendix 4.

Capital receipts¹

13. The original capital receipts budget for 2016/17 was agreed in February 2016 at £1.0 million. The budget remained unchanged throughout the year. Actual new capital receipts in year amounted to £1.0 million. This was primarily from the sale of two properties, totalling £0.9 million. The remaining receipts relate to easements over land and lease variations.

Analysis of the revenue underspend

14. The variations between budgeted and actual income and expenditure are summarised in table 4 below.

¹ Capital receipts exclude grants and contributions, they normally relate to disposal of assets.

Table 4: summary of major variances against revenue budget

| | Total variance | Income variance | | Expenditure variance | | | | Under-spends c/fwd to 2017/18 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | Grants and contributions | Other income | Employee costs | Supplies and services | Third party payments | Other gross expenditure | |
| | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| Client team - 5 Councils Partnership | (14) | 81 | (227) | (59) | 155 | 159 | (123) | 0 |
| Strategic management board | (65) | 0 | (4) | (3) | (65) | 8 | (1) | 36 |
| Corporate strategy | (243) | 0 | 190 | (285) | (111) | (11) | (26) | 224 |
| Development and housing | (1,158) | (511) | 41 | (56) | (548) | 3 | (87) | 576 |
| Economy leisure and property | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Finance | 112 | 0 | (22) | (3) | 136 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| HR, IT and technical services | (37) | (8) | (12) | (12) | 0 | 14 | (19) | 0 |
| Legal and democratic services | 77 | 22 | (27) | 13 | 65 | 0 | 4 | 38 |
| Planning | (271) | (35) | (155) | (144) | 60 | 9 | (6) | 0 |
| Contingency | 22 | 0 | 0 | 185 | 0 | 0 | (163) | 0 |
| Direct service expenditure | (1,576) | (451) | (216) | (363) | (308) | 182 | (420) | 874 |
| Investment income | (171) | 0 | (171) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Net expenditure | (1,747) | (451) | (387) | (363) | (308) | 182 | (420) | 874 |
| Working budget | 12,801 | (28,287) | (11,016) | 8,172 | 4,898 | 9,722 | 29,312 | |
| Percentage variance | (13.6)% | 1.6% | 3.5% | (4.4)% | (6.3)% | 1.9% | (1.4)% | |

15. We have analysed the outturn position to identify explanations for the significant variations from budget, excluding a number of budgets that have a net zero impact on the council's bottom line. The following key reasons for variances have been identified.

Over achievement of income budgets

16. Excluding treasury management income, there is an overachievement of income budgets of £667,000. Significant income variances are detailed in the following paragraphs.

17. In development and housing the overachievement of income reflects unbudgeted government grant income of £510,000 for Didcot Garden Town. This offsets an under achievement of income on temporary accommodation due to a reduction in demand.

18. Other significant income variances are as follows:

- Planning income was £190,000 above budget, primarily in development management and building control.
- Client team 5 Councils partnership income was above budget by £146,000. Car park income was £64,000 greater than budget, as was taxi licence income which was £63,000 over. This is off set against housing benefit and rent allowance income which was £81,000 under budget as shown in table 2 above.
- Corporate strategy under achieved income by £190,000. This was principally due to reduced volumes of recycling which impacted on the recycling credit income.

Underspends in employee budgets

19. The under spend on employee costs was £363,000. Within services the under spend totalled £548,000 but the council budgets at 98 per cent of staff costs which, when taken into account, reduces this underspend to £363,000.
20. Corporate strategy was £285,000 below budget. £137,000 relates to delays in progressing the Wessex leisure centre project which, as a one-off scheme has been carried forward into 2017/18. The remaining under spend primarily relates to staff vacancies within environmental protection and food/health and safety.
21. Planning was £144,000 under spent on employee costs. There were vacancies within development management and building control.

Overspends in supplies and services budgets

22. There were a number of significant over and under spends in supplies and services across the council which totalled a net under spend of £308,000. The budget was £4.9 million and this represents an under spend of just over 6.3 per cent. The main variances are detailed in the paragraphs below.
23. Client team was £155,000 over spent. This is primarily due to a contribution towards bad debt provision for housing benefits.
24. Finance was £136,000 over spent. This was mainly due to the insurance budget being understated following a review of the insurance cover arrangements.
25. Development and housing was £548,000 under spent. Of this, £339,000 relates to a one-off budget for accelerated housing which has been carried forward into 2017/18. There are also underspends of £65,000 on nightly paid accommodation in the homelessness team, and £98,000 in housing development.
26. Corporate Strategy was £111,000 under budget. This is predominantly due to a budget of £73,000 for one off grants, funded from New Homes Bonus, that have been awarded but are yet to be claimed. This budget has been carried forward into 2017/18.

Over spend in third party payments

27. Third party payments were £182,000 over spent. This is principally due to the reprofiling of contract costs for Capita and Vinci resulting from the Five Councils Partnership.

Over spend in other variances

28. Other variances were under spent by £421,000. This was primarily in client team where rent allowance payments were under spent by £332,000 and is discussed earlier in this report. Offsetting this, premises costs for investment properties and mobile home parks were overspent by £180,000. In addition to this the general contingency budget was £163,000 under spent.

Comparison to previous year revenue outturn

29. A comparison of the 2015/16 outturn to the 2016/17 revenue outturn with an adjustment for housing benefits is shown in table 5 below:

Table 5: 2015/16 and 2016/17 revenue outturn

| | 2015/16 Total £000 | 2015/16 Housing benefits £000 | 2015/16 Other £000 | 2016/17 Total £000 | 2016/17 Housing benefits £000 | 2016/17 Other £000 |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Income | (1,864) | (782) | (1,082) | (838) | 81 | (919) |
| Expenditure | (506) | 866 | (360) | (909) | (332) | (577) |
| Net expenditure | (1,358) | 84 | (1,442) | (1,747) | (251) | (1,496) |

30. Excluding housing benefits, the majority of the under spend in both years relates to over achievement of income. In 2016/17, £510,000 of the income variance related to additional grant income for Didcot Garden Town, which was not budgeted for.
31. Housing benefit and rent allowance income was a significant reason for the variance in 2016/17. This payments are notoriously difficult to predict however it is offset against its related income.
32. The under spend on expenditure budgets has increased from £506,000 in 2015/16 to £909,000 in 2016/17, but if housing benefits are excluded from the analysis, then the under spend has increased by £217,000.

Financial, legal and any other implications

33. The financial implications are as set out in the body of the report. There are no other implications of this report.

Conclusion

34. The council has underspent on both revenue and capital, following the trends of recent years. The nature and reasons for these variances are detailed within this report and the appendices contained herein.

Appendices:

1. Revenue outturn – expenditure and income variance
2. Revenue outturn – commentary on major variances
3. Capital outturn – summary and commentary
4. Capital outturn – slippage

Background Papers

- Statement of Accounts 2016/17
- Budget papers for 2016/17

Vale of White Horse DC variance by income and expenditure 2016/17

Appendix 1

| Service area | Expenditure | | | Income | | | Total | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| | Budget £000 | Actual £000 | Variance £000 | Budget £000 | Actual £000 | Variance £000 | Budget £000 | Actual £000 | Variance £000 |
| Client team - 5 Councils Partnership | 33,662 | 33,793 | 131 | (31,943) | (32,088) | (145) | 1,719 | 1,705 | (14) |
| Strategic management board | 442 | 382 | (60) | 0 | (5) | (5) | 442 | 377 | (65) |
| Corporate strategy | 8,369 | 7,936 | (433) | (3,220) | (3,030) | 190 | 5,149 | 4,906 | (243) |
| Development and housing | 2,225 | 1,537 | (688) | (353) | (823) | (470) | 1,872 | 714 | (1,158) |
| Economy, leisure and property | 49 | 50 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 49 | 50 | 1 |
| Finance | 357 | 490 | 133 | (1) | (22) | (21) | 356 | 468 | 112 |
| HR, IT and technical services | 1,221 | 1,204 | (17) | (149) | (169) | (20) | 1,072 | 1,035 | (37) |
| Legal | 1,493 | 1,576 | 83 | (149) | (155) | (6) | 1,344 | 1,421 | 77 |
| Planning | 3,250 | 3,168 | (82) | (2,019) | (2,208) | (189) | 1,231 | 960 | (271) |
| Contingency | (22) | 0 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | (22) | 0 | 22 |
| Direct service expenditure | 51,046 | 50,136 | (910) | (37,834) | (38,500) | (666) | 13,212 | 11,636 | (1,576) |
| Investment income | 0 | 0 | 0 | (411) | (582) | (171) | (411) | (582) | (171) |
| Net expenditure | 51,046 | 50,136 | (910) | (38,245) | (39,082) | (837) | 12,801 | 11,054 | (1,747) |

Vale budget monitoring report as at 31 March 2017

| | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Client Team - 5 Councils Partnership | 2,241,872 | 1,718,523 | 1,705,279 | (13,244) | | 2,016,991 | (311,713) | |
| Strategic management board | 332,599 | 442,128 | 377,216 | (64,912) | | 428,898 | (51,682) | |
| Corporate Strategy | 5,006,967 | 5,149,172 | 4,905,864 | (243,308) | | 5,041,257 | (135,393) | |
| Development & Housing | 801,554 | 1,872,238 | 713,602 | (1,158,636) | | 1,468,767 | (755,165) | |
| Economy Leisure & Property | 49,731 | 49,411 | 49,869 | 458 | | 11,264 | 38,605 | |
| Finance | 161,778 | 355,740 | 467,834 | 112,094 | | 355,740 | 112,094 | |
| HR IT & Technical | 1,024,669 | 1,072,255 | 1,034,751 | (37,504) | | 1,045,442 | (10,691) | |
| Legal & Democratic | 1,268,489 | 1,343,789 | 1,421,498 | 77,709 | | 1,368,640 | 52,858 | |
| Planning | 1,193,015 | 1,230,905 | 959,726 | (271,179) | | 901,909 | 57,817 | |
| Contingency | (179,137) | (22,130) | 0 | 22,130 | | (165,571) | 165,571 | |
| | 11,901,537 | 13,212,031 | 11,635,639 | (1,576,392) | | 12,473,337 | (837,699) | |

| Client Team - 5 Councils Partnership | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|--|----------------------------|---|--|
| Client Team - 5 Councils Partnership | 0 | 2,047,550 | 2,353,117 | 305,567 | Higher than expected costs on outsourced services | 2,481,002 | (127,885) | Lower than predicted costs on outsourced services |
| Customer services, Licensing and Land Charges | 84,058 | (273,167) | (359,681) | (86,514) | Increased income from licensing and land charges compared to budget | (322,167) | (37,514) | |
| Human Resources | 525,667 | 433,889 | 438,840 | 4,951 | | 433,889 | 4,951 | |
| IT Operations | 572,293 | 316,973 | 355,247 | 38,274 | | 316,973 | 38,274 | |
| Finance and Procurement | 1,427,189 | 1,066,012 | 1,022,926 | (43,086) | | 1,066,012 | (43,086) | |
| Property | (1,026,263) | (1,624,361) | (1,561,255) | 63,106 | Under achievement of rental income | (1,645,693) | 84,438 | Under achievement of rental income |
| Revenues and Benefits | 658,928 | (248,373) | (543,916) | (295,543) | R&B recovery income higher than budget due to the new 5 councils contract. | (313,025) | (230,891) | R&B recovery income higher than budget due to the new 5 councils contract. |
| Client Team - 5 Councils Partnership | 2,241,872 | 1,718,523 | 1,705,279 | (13,244) | | 2,016,991 | (311,713) | |

| Strategic management board | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|--|----------------------------|---|--|
| Council Chair | 11,510 | 11,510 | 12,259 | 749 | | 11,510 | 749 | |
| Corporate Management Team | 320,089 | 429,618 | 363,958 | (65,660) | The main underspend is on the devolution budget and a budget carry forward request for £36,500 has been submitted as the work is ongoing and the budget will be needed in 2017/18. | 416,388 | (52,430) | The main underspend is on the devolution budget and a budget carry forward request for £36,500 has been submitted as the work is ongoing and the budget will be needed in 2017/18. |
| Enterprise Zone | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 0 | | 1,000 | 0 | |
| Strategic management board | 332,599 | 442,128 | 377,216 | (64,912) | | 428,898 | (51,682) | |

| Corporate Strategy | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--|-------------------------|--|--|
| Communications | 140,488 | 129,317 | 113,050 | (16,267) | | 129,317 | (16,267) | |
| Corporate Strategy Admin | 71,385 | 66,060 | 57,754 | (8,306) | | 60,363 | (2,609) | |
| Private Sector Housing | 67,747 | 66,757 | 65,354 | (1,403) | | 66,457 | (1,103) | |
| Environmental Protection | 416,472 | 411,222 | 369,532 | (41,690) | | 403,222 | (33,690) | |
| Food/Health & Safety | 311,089 | 306,389 | 271,687 | (34,702) | | 289,076 | (17,389) | |
| Community Grants | 410,849 | 477,056 | 379,636 | (97,420) | £72,797 required to cover outstanding grants offered in 2016/17 and in previous years. | 477,044 | (97,408) | £72,797 required to cover outstanding grants offered in 2016/17 and in previous years. |
| Civic Centres | 221,774 | 211,994 | 216,206 | 4,212 | | 215,085 | 1,121 | |
| Leisure | 16,306 | 195,166 | 57,932 | (137,234) | Delays on appointment of the design team regarding the Wessex Leisure Centre. A budget carryforward has been requested | 85,120 | (27,188) | |
| Leisure Centres Contract | (1,146,266) | (1,160,046) | (1,138,136) | 21,910 | | (1,138,136) | (0) | |
| Parks & Open Spaces | 676,290 | 674,300 | 700,294 | 25,994 | | 644,252 | 56,042 | Higher than expected costs on outsourced services |
| Public Conveniences | 114,260 | 114,010 | 113,230 | (780) | | 109,196 | 4,034 | |
| Sports Development | 53,850 | 61,135 | 58,498 | (2,637) | | 40,180 | 18,318 | |
| Sport & Recreation | 229,462 | 214,047 | 252,781 | 38,734 | | 214,212 | 38,569 | |
| Waste Services | 3,423,261 | 3,381,765 | 3,388,047 | 6,282 | | 3,445,869 | (57,822) | Increased volume in brown bin customers compared to the previous year |
| Corporate Strategy | 5,006,967 | 5,149,172 | 4,905,864 | (243,308) | | 5,041,257 | (135,393) | |

| Development & Housing | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------|--|-------------------------|--|--|
| Housing Development | 292,535 | 289,502 | 208,685 | (80,817) | Budget established for fees and hired services was intended to pay for studies over a six year period linked to the delivery of the housing strategy. This will be required in future years to review the impact of strategy delivery. | 239,502 | (30,817) | |
| Housing Needs | 349,972 | 344,732 | 345,939 | 1,207 | | 400,364 | (54,425) | Numerous small variations from prediction have lead to this variance |
| Housing Register & Homelessness | 0 | 84,089 | 40,124 | (43,965) | | 74,986 | (34,862) | |
| Development & Regeneration | 159,047 | 1,153,915 | 118,854 | (1,035,061) | Receipt of unbudgeted Didcot Garden Town grant £510k. Government grant income has not been spent in accordance with profiled spend due to delays in key projects, such as Station Gateway South, and a decision not to recruit new staff until the Garden Town delivery Plan was completed and approved. | 753,915 | (635,061) | Receipt of unbudgeted Didcot Garden Town grant £510k. Government grant income has not been spent in accordance with profiled spend due to delays in key projects, such as Station Gateway South, and a decision not to recruit new staff until the Garden Town delivery Plan was completed and approved. |
| Development & Housing | 801,554 | 1,872,238 | 713,602 | (1,158,636) | | 1,468,767 | (755,165) | |

| Economy Leisure & Property | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| ELP Support | 49,731 | 49,411 | 49,869 | 458 | | 11,264 | 38,605 | |
| Economy Leisure & Property | 49,731 | 49,411 | 49,869 | 458 | | 11,264 | 38,605 | |

| Finance | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|--|----------------------------|---|--|
| Arts Development | 40,050 | 39,700 | 40,142 | 442 | | 39,700 | 442 | |
| Assurance & Audit | 121,727 | 265,370 | 377,757 | 112,387 | The insurance budget understated and includes retrospective costs. Following a review of the cover arrangements, the insurance premium increased by 41% to provide adequate cover. 'Works in progress', 'all risks' and 'additional expenditure' figures needed to be revised upwards as they were not recorded in the previous year's renewal information submission. The budget for 2017/18 has been amended | 265,370 | 112,387 | The insurance budget understated and includes retrospective costs. Following a review of the cover arrangements, the insurance premium increased by 41% to provide adequate cover. 'Works in progress', 'all risks' and 'additional expenditure' figures needed to be revised upwards as they were not recorded in the previous year's renewal information submission. budget for 2017/18 has been amended |
| Audit | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | |
| Financial management | 0 | 50,670 | 49,936 | (734) | | 50,670 | (734) | |
| Crowmarsh Fire Insurance Claim | 0 | 0 | (0) | (0) | | 0 | (0) | |
| Finance | 161,778 | 355,740 | 467,834 | 112,094 | | 355,740 | 112,094 | |

| HR IT & Technical | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|---|----------------------------|---|---|
| Street Naming | 8,161 | 8,161 | 5,239 | (2,923) | | 11,161 | (5,923) | |
| Climate Change | 66,438 | 66,118 | 64,361 | (1,757) | | 61,118 | 3,243 | |
| Consultation | 57,771 | 57,771 | 41,388 | (16,383) | | 52,771 | (11,383) | |
| Corporate Planning | 135,658 | 143,284 | 115,508 | (27,776) | | 138,284 | (22,776) | |
| Corporate Services Project | 38,331 | 82,281 | 141,696 | 59,415 | 5 Councils recharge for procurement and implementation are higher than expected | 82,281 | 59,415 | 5 Councils recharge for procurement and implementation are higher than expected |
| Drainage | 66,275 | 65,315 | 28,319 | (36,996) | | 65,315 | (36,996) | |
| Economic & Property | 175,296 | 185,366 | 142,943 | (42,423) | | 170,553 | (27,610) | |
| Community Grants | 2,000 | 2,000 | (2,310) | (4,310) | | 2,000 | (4,310) | |
| HITR Management | 45,942 | 33,942 | 47,935 | 13,993 | | 33,942 | 13,993 | |
| IT Applications | 390,477 | 390,017 | 409,341 | 19,324 | | 390,017 | 19,324 | |
| IT Operations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | |
| Health & Safety | 14,049 | 14,049 | 18,479 | 4,430 | | 14,049 | 4,430 | |
| Youth Issues | 24,271 | 23,951 | 21,851 | (2,100) | | 23,951 | (2,100) | |
| HR IT & Technical | 1,024,669 | 1,072,255 | 1,034,751 | (37,504) | | 1,045,442 | (10,691) | |

| Legal & Democratic | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|---|----------------------------|---|--|
| Community Safety/CCTV | 178,082 | 175,922 | 194,232 | 18,310 | | 186,634 | 7,598 | |
| Democratic Services | 443,698 | 442,878 | 446,617 | 3,739 | | 442,878 | 3,739 | |
| Electoral Services | 245,403 | 245,043 | 281,420 | 36,377 | | 245,043 | 36,377 | |
| Legal Services | 401,306 | 479,946 | 499,229 | 19,283 | | 494,085 | 5,144 | |
| Legal & Democratic | 1,268,489 | 1,343,789 | 1,421,498 | 77,709 | | 1,368,640 | 52,858 | |

| Planning | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|--|----------------------------|---|--|
| Building Control | (78,328) | (79,868) | (140,717) | (60,849) | Higher than expected income. Ongoing vacancies led to reduced expenditure on salary costs | (185,863) | 45,145 | |
| CIL | 43,275 | 43,275 | 49,131 | 5,856 | | 37,407 | 11,724 | |
| Development Services | 234,149 | 222,109 | (80,677) | (302,786) | Ongoing permanent vacancies led to reduced salary costs. Lower than expected expenditure on Professional Fees. Higher than expected income | 50,634 | (131,311) | Lower than forecast spend on advertising. Higher than forecast fee income. Lower than forecast expenditure on salaries. |
| Planning Policy | 993,919 | 1,045,389 | 1,131,989 | 86,600 | Higher than predicted expenditure on consultants, agency staff and specialists in relation the Vale Local Plan). Higher than predicted expenditure on professional fees for advice and specialist input to the Vale Local Plan | 999,732 | 132,258 | Higher than forecast expenditure on professional fees for advice and specialist input to the Vale Local Plan. Higher than forecast expenditure on specific work in relation to Vale Local Plan |
| Planning | 1,193,015 | 1,230,905 | 959,726 | (271,179) | | 901,909 | 57,817 | |

| Contingency | Original Budget Full Year £ | Working Budget £ | Actual Spend £ | Current variance | Explanation of current variances >£50,000 | Forecast last Quarter £ | Variance between outturn and last forecast £ | Explanation of forecast variances >£50,000 |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|---|----------------------------|---|--|
| Contingency | (179,137) | (22,130) | 0 | 22,130 | | (165,571) | 165,571 | |
| Contingency | (179,137) | (22,130) | 0 | 22,130 | | (165,571) | 165,571 | |

Vale of White Horse DC 2016/17 capital budget monitoring

| | Budget | Outturn | Outturn variance |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| Client | 180 | 165 | (15) |
| Corporate strategy | 5,070 | 4,043 | (1,027) |
| Development & housing | 263 | 254 | (9) |
| Finance | 226 | 142 | (84) |
| HR, IT & technical | 675 | 421 | (254) |
| Planning | 32 | 0 | (32) |
| | 6,446 | 5,025 | (1,421) |
| Percentage | | | -22% |
| Capital contingency (unspent) | 0 | | |
| Total working budget | 6,446 | | |

Note: Budget is the full year working budget, Percentage is the total variance excluding contingency as a ratio of the budget

Explanation of significant variances

Corporate strategy

Disabled Facility Grant expenditure is demand led and current projects may be underway and not fully funded at the end of the year. Where this occurs budget is carried forward to cover this commitment. At the end of the year £443,000 was carried forward.

Project delays have resulted in an underspend in the leisure centre budgets of £130,000. This is a rolling budget and the underspend has not been carried forward.

Retention monies relating to the extension at White Horse Leisure Centre has resulted in an underspend of £120,000. This has been carried forward to 2017/18.

Community grants fund was underspent by £81,000, this relates to grants committed but unclaimed by year end. All of this budget has been slipped into next year.

Finance

Delays in the building of new housing developments in the area have resulted in the public arts budget being underspent by £179,000. These are funded by s106 agreements and have been carried forward to 2017/18.

HR, IT & technical

Flood relief schemes have been delayed. The underspend of £161,000 is committed and has been carried forward to 2017/18.

Vale of White Horse DC slippage of capital schemes from 2016/17 to later years

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Strategic management board | £000 |
| North Hinksey rail crossing | 83 |
| Fencing at Redbridge Hollow | 5 |
| New website | 25 |
| Contingency | 1,500 |
| | 1,613 |
| Client team | £000 |
| Improvements to Charter WC | 150 |
| Licensing software | 3 |
| Wallingford Road wall | 10 |
| Renovation charter car park | 775 |
| Car park signs | 12 |
| Car park lighting improvements | 59 |
| Changes to Rye Farm car park | 45 |
| Refurbishment of property assets | 130 |
| | 1,184 |
| Corporate strategy | £000 |
| WHLTC capital investment | 123 |
| Faringdon leisure centre | 15 |
| Wantage leisure centre | 94 |
| Wantage/Grove leisure facility | 610 |
| Abbey meadows and garden improvement | 210 |
| WHLTC fitness extension | 75 |
| WHLTC car park extension | 10 |
| Squash court Faringdon | 75 |
| Faringdon pitch | 741 |
| Wantage leisure facilities | 46 |
| Wantage memorial park | 9 |
| | 2,008 |
| Development and housing | £000 |
| Refurbish Abingdon temporary accommodation | 17 |
| Housing Abingdon | 920 |
| Refurbish Tiverton House | 185 |
| Elmside, Faringdon | 7 |
| Housing allocations | 13 |
| Open market homebuyer scheme | 26 |
| Housing association programme | 387 |
| | 1,555 |
| Finance | £000 |
| Public art projects | 12 |
| Public art GWP | 87 |
| | 99 |

Vale of White Horse DC slippage of capital schemes from 2016/17 to later years

| | |
|--|--------------|
| HR, IT and technical services | £000 |
| Sparsholt sewage works | 200 |
| Abingdon riverbank works | 583 |
| Additional plots at MHP | 440 |
| Gas boiler Abbey House | 17 |
| Sewage works | 17 |
| Upgrade of sewage treatment works | 47 |
| Woodlands watercourse | 30 |
| IT infrastructure investment | 10 |
| Broadband | 20 |
| Wantage public convenience | 55 |
| Abbey meadow public convenience | 70 |
| | 1,489 |
| Legal & democratic services | £000 |
| Community safety partnership grants | 6 |
| CCTV capital works | 49 |
| | 55 |
| Total | 8,003 |

Scrutiny Committee Report



Report of Head of Finance

Author: Paul Howden

Telephone: 01235 422484

Textphone: 18001 01235 540385

E-mail: paul.howden@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

Cabinet member responsible: Robert Sharp

Tel: 07816 481 452

E-mail: robert.sharp@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 28 September 2017

Council tax reduction scheme 2016/17

Recommendation

That Scrutiny Committee considers the report and reports any observations to the Cabinet member for Finance

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update members on the effect the council tax reduction scheme (CTRS) has had on its council taxpayers during **2016/17**. This has become an annual report following the report taken to the Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2015.

Strategic Objectives

2. The council is required by statute to adopt a reduction scheme to help those on low incomes to meet their council tax liability. By having a scheme in place we are helping to achieve the strategic objective of "running an efficient council".

Background

3. Prior to April 2013 there was a national scheme of financial assistance called "**council tax benefit**" which was available to taxpayers on low incomes to help

them meet their council tax liability. This scheme had been in operation since 1993.

4. Following changes introduced by the Local Government Finance Act 2012, this council adopted its own local “**council tax reduction scheme**” to take effect from 1 April 2013. This was against a backdrop of reduced Government funding of approximately ten per cent compared to the funding given for the previous council tax benefit scheme.
5. In common with the other district councils in Oxfordshire, the local scheme more or less mirrored the previous council tax benefit scheme which meant that no residents saw a reduction in their entitlement.
6. The ten per cent reduction in Government funding was counteracted by the council’s implementation of technical reforms to the council tax system whereby more council tax was charged on empty properties and second homes.
7. The final scheme that was adopted was for one year only and the council was therefore required to formally adopt a scheme for 2014/15.

The scheme since 2014/15

8. It was proposed that the scheme adopted for 2014/15 should require everyone (**excluding those of Pension Age and certain protected groups - people with disabilities, war widows and war disabled pension recipients**) to pay **at least 8.5 per cent** of their council tax (which was **£138.98** based on a Band D property in **2016/17**). This meant that the maximum reduction that anyone could receive would be **91.5 per cent** of their council tax liability.
9. Cabinet believed that the reduction in Government funding mentioned in paragraph 6 above should be spread fairly across all council tax payers (apart from the protected groups mentioned above), not just those who were not claiming a reduction. Cabinet’s rationale being that the proposed reduction scheme **should encourage unemployed people to seek work** - which was a stated Government policy intention for localising council tax support in the first place

In addition to a flat 8.5 per cent reduction across the board, Cabinet also proposed that some further modifications should be made to entitlement in respect of specific categories of claimant and, following comments received from an eight week public consultation and feedback from Scrutiny committee, Cabinet adopted the following scheme:

- entitlement for working age claimants would be capped at **91.5** per cent of their council tax liability, except for these protected groups - people with disabilities, war widows and war disabled pension recipients
- removal of the second adult rebate scheme
- entitlement for properties in bands F, G and H would be capped to band E council tax levels

- the four week “run on” entitlement would be extended to thirteen weeks (from 4 weeks) when a claimant moves into work
- personal allowances and non-dependent deductions for working age claimants would be uprated by one per cent each financial year commencing 1 April 2014

10. In addition, Cabinet decided to introduce a discretionary hardship fund (DHF) to help those claimants experiencing financial hardship. The criteria of which is attached as **Appendix 1**

Financial Implications

11. By reducing claimants’ entitlement it has obviously reduced the scheme costs. To date the current predicted savings are:

Table 1

| Group | Numbers affected | (Saving)/Cost |
|--|------------------|----------------------|
| Reducing maximum entitlement to 91.5 per cent (i.e. 8.5 per cent reduction) | 1,477 | (£144,414.40) |
| People who receive a reduction because they live with another adult who is on a low income | 4 | (£1,764.36) |
| People who will have their entitlement capped to a band E rate | 17 | (£6,921.20) |
| People who move into work and continue to receive the same level of reduction | 98 | £18,948.60 |
| NET SAVING | | (£134,151.36) |

12. These savings will be apportioned between the Vale, Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner (Thames Valley). It was originally estimated that the savings to be gleaned from the modifications would be **£220,000 p.a.** However, the **CTRS caseload has reduced significantly** over the last two years which is good news as this means the overall **CTRS bill has reduced** and more residents are paying council tax.

13. The modifications to the CTRS has had the following direct financial impact on individual claimants as follows:

Table 2

| Group | Average annual (reduction)/increased award | Highest annual (reduction)/increased award |
|--|--|--|
| Reducing maximum entitlement to 91.5 per cent (i.e. 8.5 per cent reduction) | (£98) | (£169) |
| People who receive a reduction because they live with another adult who is on a low income | (£441) | (£500) |
| People who will have their entitlement capped to a band E rate | (£407) | (£696) |
| People who move into work and continue to receive the same level of reduction | £193 | £391 |

Collection rates and debt recovery implications

14. The impact on the council tax collection rate for 2016/17 was as follows:

| | Net debit | Payments received | Percentage collected |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Accounts without CTRS | £80,530,396 | £79,711,204 | 98.98% |
| Accounts with CTRS | £1,728,777 | £1,499,830 | 86.76% |

15. It can be seen from the table that the collection rate from CTRS taxpayers (**86.76 per cent**) is significantly lower than non-CTRS cases. However, this is on a par with South Oxfordshire District Council which has **not** modified its scheme. Historically, the collection rate comparisons between CTRS/old council tax benefit cases and non-CTRS cases have always shown this trend, but the interesting point as far as Vale is concerned is that the modified scheme has not really affected collection rates.

16. As at March 2017 there were **5,214** live CTRS claimants (5,279 in April 2016) whilst **1,465** were working age claimants who were liable to pay **8.5 per cent** of their council tax (the remainder being pensioners and other protected groups such as disabled claimants).

17. During 2016/17 there was post reminder council tax recovery action (**i.e. Magistrates court action**) against **101** (119 in 2015/16) of the taxpayers who were previously in receipt of 100 per cent council tax help and are now liable to pay **8.5 per cent** of their council tax. These taxpayers have been subjected to summons costs of £65 (as a minimum) and further costs of £45 where Magistrates have issued liability orders in the council's favour. **30** (25 in 2015/16) council taxpayers paid in full after court action whilst **71** (94 in 2015/16) still have a balance outstanding. **It should be noted that these are all working age council taxpayers who received prior notice of the council's revised CTRS scheme** and have been sent bills and notices (which also prompts them to contact the council) prior to court action.

There are a further **68** cases (135 in 2015/16) which have not been subjected to post reminder recovery action yet, but still have outstanding balances. These will in the main, be taxpayers who have contacted the council and agreed payment plans to clear their liabilities.

Discretionary Hardship Fund (DHF)

18. As mentioned above, a discretionary hardship fund of **10 per cent** of the anticipated overall savings was agreed. This originally equated to **£22k** and was funded by the County Council (**£18,000**); the Police (**£2,400**) with Vale (**£1,600**).

19. During 2016/17 we received only 2 DHF applications. One successful applicant was awarded **£83**.

Legal Implications

20. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Risks

21. There are no risks arising from this report.

Equality implications

22. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

23. In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 2012, the council adopted a council tax reduction scheme for 2014/15 and has rolled the same scheme forward. The rationale of it was to introduce a scheme that is fair on all residents; protects the vulnerable; and, **encourages residents back to work by the inclusion of work incentives**. The same scheme will apply in financial year 2017/18.

Vale of White Horse District Council

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Discretionary Hardship Awards (DHA)

1. Background

From 31 March 2013, Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was abolished. Council Tax Benefit was a national scheme where the Government funded the amounts paid out in CTB awards in full. In its place, each council had to design its own Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for working age claimants. In the financial year 2013-14, the council decided not to make any changes to the old CTB scheme and keep it as its local CTRS. For the financial year 2014-15, the council decided that, with the exception of disabled people, people in receipt of war disability pensions and war widows, the maximum amount of benefit which can be received was reduced to 91.5% of their council tax and anyone in Council Tax bands F, G and H would have their reduction assessed on a band E equivalent. Second Adult Reduction was also abolished.

Due to the above changes, the council has introduced a hardship scheme for those who may suffer financial hardship because of them. The main features of the scheme are that

- the scheme is purely discretionary; a claimant does not have a statutory right to a payment.
- applications will only be considered from council taxpayers who were resident at a property as at 31 March 2014 (i.e. applications from new occupants from 1 April onwards will not be considered).
- only applications from claimants who have been affected by the changes to the CTRS will be accepted.
- the amount that can be paid out in any financial year is cash limited.
- the administration of the scheme is for the Revenues and Benefits Client Team to determine.
- DHA's can only meet the maximum Council Tax liability.
- DHA's are not payments of council tax reduction .

2. The Revenues and Benefits Service Protocol relating to DHA

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to specify how the council operates the scheme and to indicate some of the factors that will be considered when deciding if a DHA can be made. Each case is treated strictly on its merits and all customers will be treated equally and fairly when the scheme is administered. The council is committed to working with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other interested parties in the district to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits and this will be reflected in the administration of the scheme. Where the evidence provided indicates that a claimant is not claiming another state benefit that they may be entitled to, the council will advise them to make such a claim and provide details of other agencies in the district who may be able to help them with such a claim.

2.2 Statement of objectives

The Revenues and Benefits Client Team will consider making a DHA to claimants who meet the qualifying criteria as specified in this guidance. The Revenues and Benefits Client Team will treat all applications on their individual merits and will seek through the operation of this policy to:

- alleviate poverty.
- encourage and sustain people in employment.
- help those who are trying to help themselves.
- keep families together.
- support vulnerable members of the local community.
- help claimants through personal and difficult events.
- support young people in the transition to adult life.

The Revenues and Benefits Client Team considers that the DHA scheme should be seen as a short term emergency fund. It is not and should not be considered as a way round any current or future entitlement restrictions set out within the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

2.3 Claiming a Discretionary Payment

A claim for a DHA should be made in writing (an application form will be provided) signed by the claimant. However in certain exceptional circumstances an award could be made without an application being received – this is at the discretion of the Revenues and Benefits Client Team.

Claims may be accepted from someone acting on behalf of the person concerned where written authorisation for that person to act on behalf of the claimant is held.

2.4 Period of Award

In all cases, the Revenues and Benefits Client Team will decide the length of time for which a DHA will be made on the basis of the evidence supplied and the facts known. The award will be limited to the financial year in which the application was made and will not roll over into the following financial year.

2.5 Making a Discretionary Award

In deciding whether to make a DHA the Revenues and Benefits Client Team will take into account:

- the amount by which council tax reduction has dropped due to the introduction of the 2014/15 revised CTRS.
- the financial circumstances of the claimant, their partner and any dependants and any other occupants of the claimant's home.
- the income and expenditure of the claimant, their partner and any dependants or other occupants of the claimant's home.
- any savings or capital that might be held by the claimant or their family.
- the level of indebtedness of the claimant and their family.
- the exceptional nature of the claimant and their family's circumstances.
- the amount available in the DHA budget at the time of the application.
- the effects of other welfare benefit changes affecting the claimant.
- DHA can only be considered for a period where council tax reduction is payable.
- Any other special circumstances brought to the attention of the Revenues and Benefits Client Team.

2.6 Changes of Circumstances

The Revenues and Benefits Client Team may need to revise an award where the claimant's circumstances have materially changed.

2.7 The right to seek a review

Discretionary Awards are not payments of council tax reduction and are therefore not subject to the statutory appeals mechanism.

The Revenues and Benefits Client Team will operate the following policy for dealing with appeals about (i) a refusal to make a DHA, (ii) a decision to award a reduced amount or, (iii) a decision that there has been an overpayment.

- A claimant (or their appointee or agent) who disagrees with a decision relating to DHA's may dispute the decision. A request for a review shall be made in writing within one calendar month of the written decision about the DHA being issued to the claimant.
- The review will be carried out by the Revenues and Benefits Client Manager.

- Where the Revenues and Benefits Client Manager decides not to revise the original decision he will notify the claimant of his decision in writing, setting out the reasons for the decision.
- The decision of the Revenues and Benefits Client Manager will be final and binding. The claimant may challenge whether the correct amount of DHA has been applied to the council tax account to the Valuation Tribunal for England. Any other aspect of the decision making may only be challenged via the judicial review process (or by complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if maladministration is alleged).

2.8 Overpayments

The council will consider and seek to recover any DHA found to be overpaid. Normally this will involve issuing an invoice to the claimant.

2.9 Fraud

The council is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. A claimant who tries fraudulently to claim a DHA by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under the Theft Act 1968. Where the council suspects that such a fraud may have occurred, the matter will be investigated as appropriate and this may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

Schedule for Scrutiny Committees 2017/18

(further items to be added to schedule as required)

| Meeting date | Council | Agenda items | Purpose of Report | Cabinet members | Lead Officer | Head of Service |
|--------------|--------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Mon 2 Oct | Joint | 5 Councils' Partnership | To review the implementation of the contracts | David Nimmo-Smith/Robert Sharp | Mark Stone | Mark Stone |
| Thurs 26 Oct | Vale | Wantage and Grove Leisure Facility | To consider the outcome and analysis from the public consultation on the Wantage and Grove leisure facility and the proposed final facility mix. | Charlotte Dickson | Ben Border | Ian Matten |
| Tues 28 Oct | South | Corporate Delivery Plan – progress review | To scrutinise progress against the Corporate Delivery Plan | John Cotton | Sally Truman | Andrew Down |
| | | CIL | To consider the draft strategy and comment on/make recommendations to Cabinet | John Cotton | Cathie Scotting | Adrian Duffield |
| Thurs 30 Nov | Vale | Corporate Delivery Plan – progress review | To scrutinise progress against the Corporate Delivery Plan | Matthew Barber | Sally Truman | Adrianna Partridge |
| | | Energy Plan | | | | |
| Tues 5 Dec | Joint | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--|---|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Tues 23 Jan | South | | | | | |
| Thurs 25 Jan | Vale | | | | | |
| Tues 6 Feb | South | Review of Final Draft Budget | To consider and comment on the draft budget prior to its consideration by Council | Jane Murphy | William Jacobs | William Jacobs |
| Thurs 8 Feb | Vale | Review of Final Draft Budget | To consider and comment on the draft budget prior to its consideration by Council | Robert Sharp | William Jacobs | William Jacobs |
| Tues 6 March | Joint | Community Safety Partnership Annual Report | To update the committee on the progress that the South and Vale Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is making to reduce crime and the fear of crime | Elizabeth Gillespie/Eric Batts | Liz Hayden | Margaret Reed |
| | | Spend on commuted housing sums | To receive an annual report on the status of commuted sum payments received and expenditure to date, including measurable Key Performance Indicators. | Lynn Lloyd/ Elaine Ware | Helen Novelle | Gerry Brough |
| Tues 27 March | South | | | | | |
| Thurs 29 March | Vale | | | | | |
| Tues 29 May | South | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Thurs 31 May | Vale | Science Vale marketing campaign | To receive an annual monitoring report on the success of the campaign | Mike Murray | Joy Kellaway | Gerry Brough |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------|--------------|--------------|

Potential items for future meetings (date to be determined):

For Joint Scrutiny

- Unitary process
- Budget process
- Review of communications strategy
- Review of planning procedures

For Vale Scrutiny

- Oxford-Cambridge Expressway
- Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan
- Housing build rate
- Houses that people can afford
- Partnership grants

An annual “Ask the Leader” item for the Leader of the Council to answer the committee’s and the public’s questions.

Items for future South Scrutiny Committee (date to be determined):

- Oxford-Cambridge Expressway
- Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan
- Staffing matters
- An annual “Ask the Leader” item for the Leader of the Council to answer the committee’s and the public’s questions.

The Cabinet work programmes can be accessed via the following links:

South

<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=121&RD=0>

Vale

<http://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=507&RD=0>

Meeting Start times: Joint: 6:30; South: 6:30; Vale: 7.00; 5CP: tbc