

Chairman - Councillor E G R Jones

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| I E Davies    | J Hood     |
| R J Draper    | R A James  |
| A T A Godfrey | D B Price  |
| A S Harp      | P Roycroft |

Cabinet Member - Councillor K S Williamson - Resources Portfolio

Cabinet Member - Councillor F A Finlay - Environment and Health Portfolio

Cabinet Member - Councillor R M Smith - Leisure Portfolio

Officers in attendance:-

|               |   |   |
|---------------|---|---|
| Mr T Clegg    | - | Chief Executive                             |
| Mr B Kean     | - | Head of Finance                             |
| Mr P Kendrick | - | Head of Technology                          |
| Mr N Raby     | - | Head of Human Resources                     |
| Mrs T Redpath | - | Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager |
| Mr R Simpson  | - | Customer Services Group Manager             |
| Mr R Wolfe    | - | Revenues and Benefits Manager               |
| Mr A Bailey   | - | Scrutiny Officer                            |

**RSC8 Minutes**

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 14 June 2018, having been published in Digest No 244, were submitted and signed.

**RSC9 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M G Dodson and A J Perkins (Sub D B Price).

**RSC10 Council Tax and Business Rates Arrears Submitted for Approval to Write-Off - Called-In Item - Part Confidential**

The following matter had been published in the Members' Digest No 245 of 3 August 2018 and had been called in to this Committee by Councillors R J Draper, A T A Godfrey and A M Loughran for the following reason:-

"To consider the implications and processes of writing off Council Tax and Business Rates".

Councillor R J Draper discussed the following reasons behind his call-in of this matter:-

- The rationale for continuing to charge Council Tax when in arrears
- The scheduling of Council Tax arrears payments
- The need for ethical enforcement arrangements

The Cabinet Member (Resources Portfolio) and the Revenues and Benefits Manager provided the following response:-

- An explanation of the summary of amounts collected and written off (attached as a **SCHEDULE** to the Minutes)
- The Council's statutory duty to collect Council Tax
- Case Law demonstrated that current payments were collected before arrears
- Ethical enforcement required debtors to provide their employment details to the Council
- The Council's performance at collecting Council Tax was good
- Not collecting Council Tax arrears would send out the wrong messages

The Committee then discussed the following aspects of the report:-

- The need for further information in relation to the cost of Council Tax collection and the property bands affected by arrears
- The need for continued scrutiny of the mechanisms in place to collect Council Tax arrears
- The Council's Bailiffs obtained their fees from recovery of the debt
- The fact that the percentage of Council Tax written off was very small (currently 0.1%)

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the decision of the Cabinet in relation to the Council Tax and Business Rates Arrears Submitted for Approval to Write Off, as set out in Minute No CAB16/18, be noted.

#### RSC11 **Resources Portfolio - Final Accounts 2017/2018**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance (V3 12/8/18) in relation to the Final Accounts position for the Resources Portfolio for the financial year ended 31 March 2018.

Members were informed that the revenue outturn for the Resources Portfolio for 2017/2018 was £45,695 less than the budget of £6,567,380 and the capital outturn for 2017/2018 was £29,763 less than the budget of £50,000.

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the report with the Head of Finance:-

- Members Services
- Corporate IT Equipment

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the Final Accounts position for the year ended 31 March 2018 be noted.

## RSC12 **Performance Reporting 2018-21**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager that set out details of the new performance reporting arrangements that included the following three distinct elements:-

- Performance at a glance
- Narrative update against business objectives
- Improvement report

The performance and financial management details for those areas within the remit of the Committee for the quarter 1 period up to 30 June 2018 were also provided.

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the report with the Cabinet Member (Resources Portfolio), the Cabinet Member (Leisure Portfolio), the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance, the Customer Services Group Manager, the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager and the Revenues and Benefits Manager:-

- LI37 - % compliance with the delivery of key outcomes and key performance targets within individual contracts - discussion focussed around the need to ensure compliance with the Council's two major contracts - Leisure and Waste
- LI39 - Days taken to process new Housing Benefit/Council Tax claims
- Ref 3.1.2.2 - Manage and co-ordinate the Authority Peer Review in order to provide an objective view of the plans that we have put in place - the Committee congratulated Officers on the positive outcome from the Peer Review
- Ref 3.1.3.1 - Support the accommodation rationalisation including One Public Estate (OPE)
- Ref 3.1.5.1 - Support the implementation of Staffordshire County council's district Place Based Approach (PBA) in order to mitigate the impact of service reductions and to improve multi-agency working
- Ref 3.1.8.1 - Design and implement and programme of member training and development
- Ref 3.2.2.7 - Encourage and support our residents following the introduction of Universal Credits

- Environment Portfolio - Abavus modules
- Concern at the level of staffing vacancies across all portfolios

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the performance management data relating to areas of activity within this Committee's remit be noted.

**RSC13 Work Programme - Resources Scrutiny Committee**

Considered the report of the Head of Law and Administration, which presented the Resources Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme (V3 12/9/18) for the forthcoming meetings up to February 2019.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the Work Programme (V3 12/9/18) be approved, subject to the amendments made at the meeting.

CHAIRMAN

**Stafford BC. Resources Scrutiny Committee 20 September 2018****Summary of Amounts Collected and Written Off****Council  
Tax**

|           | <b>Collectable<br/>(£,000)</b> | <b>Collected<br/>(£000)</b> | <b>Collected<br/>(%)</b> | <b>Written Off<br/>(£,000)</b> | <b>Written Off<br/>(%)</b> |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2017-2018 | 72,064                         | 70,898                      | 98.4%                    | 103                            | 0.1%                       |
| 2016-17   | 67,845                         | 66,649                      | 98.2%                    | 114                            | 0.2%                       |
| 2015-16   | 64,507                         | 63,275                      | 98.1%                    | 220                            | 0.3%                       |
| 2014-15   | 62,784                         | 61,266                      | 97.6%                    | 123                            | 0.2%                       |

**Business  
Rates**

|           | <b>Collectable<br/>(£,000)</b> | <b>Collected<br/>(£000)</b> | <b>Collected<br/>(%)</b> | <b>Written Off<br/>(£,000)</b> | <b>Written Off<br/>(%)</b> |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2017-2018 | 50,150                         | 48,982                      | 97.7%                    | 344                            | 0.7%                       |
| 2016-17   | 48,366                         | 47,189                      | 97.6%                    | 311                            | 0.6%                       |
| 2015-16   | 46,788                         | 45,938                      | 98.2%                    | 262                            | 0.6%                       |
| 2014-15   | 45,485                         | 44,570                      | 98.0%                    | 159                            | 0.3%                       |

Please note that not all of the costs of write offs are borne by the Borough Council

- For Council Tax we bear around 10%
- For Business Rates we bear around 28%