

INCOME MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

15th November 2023

Present: Councillor James Stanley in the Chair

Councillors Desayrah, Murray, Norfolk and Piotrowski

Officers: Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources
Alan New, Lead Commissioner for Leisure, Play and Health & Wellbeing

11 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Desayrah for Councillor Riaz, Councillor Norfolk for Councillor Gregson.

12 Declarations of Interest

None.

13 Public Participation

None.

14 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15 Quarter 2 Performance Report For 2023/24

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 2 performance for Income Management for 2023/24. The Head of Finance presented the report and highlighted the main points. It was highlighted that gross income generated from property for Quarter 1 was for 2 quarters of income and should therefore be corrected. The Quarter 1 figure was consistent with the same period for 2022. It was also noted that the Government has approved an increase in statutory planning fees, to take effect from December.

Officers responded to questions and comments from Sub-Committee Members. In the ensuing discussion, a question was asked about income from garden waste collection and the suggestion was made that it could continue throughout the year. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources stated that he understood there was insufficient demand to justify this, but Officers will take the point away for consideration.

In response to a question regarding bereavement income, the Head of Finance stated that the volume of cremations has reduced, in part due to a shift in the number of direct cremations, which are price driven.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee note the Council's quarter 2 performance for 2023/24.

16 **Freedom Leisure - Proposed Fees & Charges For 2024**

The Sub-Committee considered the proposed Fees and Charges submitted by Freedom Leisure for the period 1st January to 31st December 2024 inclusive. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained that the proposal from Freedom Leisure was to increase their prices by an average of 4.6% across the various categories.

Members noted that the proposal had been discussed and supported by Communities Committee. The Lead Commissioner for Leisure, Play and Health & Wellbeing was in attendance and he responded to questions from Members on detailed aspects of the proposal.

He explained that the Advance 50 discount applies to “pay as you go” activities and not on annual direct debit fees. This is because eligible persons may have a chance in circumstances over the course of a 12 month period.

Members noted that this report will go to the Council meeting on the 28th November 2023 for final approval.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee agree to recommend to the Council the approval of the proposed Fees and Charges submitted by Freedom Leisure for 2024, covering the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024 inclusive.

17 **Commercial Strategy Update**

The Sub-Committee considered an update report on progress with the Commercial Strategy 2021-24, which had previously been approved by this Sub-Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained that, as the Strategy was due for renewal, it was appropriate to review progress and consider in what direction to move forward.

In summary, each of the Strategy’s strategic aims and objectives had been met. A key focus of the Strategy was on setting a risk appetite for the Council and providing a decision-making framework for investment. However, the landscape for investing in income-generating assets had since changed. It was therefore proposed that the Strategy be revised to establish a set of principles for a strategic approach to:

- Commercial property acquisition within the framework of Treasury Guidance on PWLB borrowing. Under the terms of the Treasury guidance on the use of PWLB loans introduced in 2022, Councils can still invest in property using PWLB borrowing where there is a local economic benefit;
- The development of existing income-generating assets via management of existing assets, both tenanted and non-tenanted, to maximise the value of these assets within the context of the Council’s overall social, economic and environmental objectives;
- Consideration of a revised strategy to address discretionary services, i.e. establish an agreed approach to the management of discretionary services,

recognising the principle that these should be delivered as far as possible without subsidy from general Council resources.

In accordance with the above aims and objectives, the Corporate Director proposed that a revised Commercial Strategy be brought to the Sub-Committee for consideration at the January 2024 meeting.

In response to questions and comments from Members, the Corporate Director stated that members are welcome to contact him by email or telephone with suggestions for income generation or the content of a revised Strategy.

Several matters were raised in the ensuing discussion including: income generation from hedge trimming; offering Astwood Cemetery land for hire to stage events; the impact of changing travel behaviour on car park income; sharing Council services with other organisations, for example grounds maintenance; permits for commercial garden waste. The Corporate Director explained that ideas can be explored, however this should be in the context of whether there is capacity to be able to offer services to partners and whether there is sufficient evidence of demand.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee note progress against the Commercial Strategy 2021-2024 and proposals for the revised strategy to be developed.

18 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 7.43p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
24th January 2024

This page is intentionally left blank