

COUNCIL MEETING

4 July 2022

PUBLIC QUESTION 1

Name of person submitting the question: Mr Bernard Brown

Member to whom the question is to be put: Councillor Dixon

Question

A Question on the Corporate Plan

In late May 2022 a Freedom of Information request was submitted asking for a comparison between target and achievement of 14 priority objectives for the elapsed period to 31 March 2022. The response given by the Council showed the following:

Of the 14 targets from the Corporate Plan only 3 had been achieved.

None of the targets for Cost savings / reductions or revenue increases had been achieved.

Is it accepted this is an unacceptably high failure rate which means the true Financial Stability of the Council has been allowed to drift into an increasingly dangerous state?

What specific steps will the Administration take to rectify this failing performance by 31 March 2023?

Answer

I totally reject the statement that the “true financial stability of the Council has been allowed to drift into an increasingly dangerous state”. Members and officers of this Council have been working hard post COVID-19 to deliver the required savings, along with ensuring that we promote and invest in the economic activity of the district. We are confident that the steps being taken will deliver a budget that removes reliance on reserves and in fact returns money to reserves by the timescale referred to in the Corporate Plan. No one has ever stated this would be an easy or quick process.

For clarity, the Corporate Plan is a dynamic document and from time to time it will be necessary to change targets and deadlines. It is linked to the Medium Term Financial Plan, which is also a live document, and is periodically reviewed for affordability. The next review will take place in the next few weeks and reported to Members in the autumn as part of the budget setting process. The Corporate Programme Board, made up of Officers and Members also meets regularly to review progress of both the Corporate Plan progress and the Financial Stability Programme.

As Mr Brown is aware from the answer given to his question at the full Council meeting in January, it would have been very easy to simply stop delivering services, make more staff redundant and slash expenditure to meet our financial targets. We specifically chose not to do that and instead want to protect services that local people value and want to see continued. As stated previously and in line with Cabinet

decisions, the way we are doing this is through discussion with our Town Councils and the outcome of these discussions will be reported through the democratic process later this year. Cabinet has already agreed a 'Plan B' if these discussions are not successful.

Furthermore, through the Council's regeneration investment there will be income streams coming on-line this year that will further contribute towards the financial stability of this Council in the long term.