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Tel : Bideford (01237) 428700

Date: 8 March 2023

SUPPLEMENT
PART I - (OPEN SESSION)

9.	QBR3 (Pages 2 - 5) QBR Questions & Answers
	Meeting Organiser: Kirsty Brown Dem Services 01237 428768
	Centre for Public Scrutiny – website http://www.cfps.org.uk/

Budget Monitoring – Agenda Page 13

Question from Ian Harper

Note Legal and Governance well above budget as is Community and Places.

David Heyes, Finance Manager and Section 151 Officer

There are various under and overspends contributing towards the overspend of £857k in the legal & governance area, but the single largest is the expenditure on temporary accommodation in connection with homelessness, circa £1m.

Agency costs are referred to, what are these and where do we use agency staff.

The Council has always utilised agency staff in areas such as refuse collection and street cleansing. However, in light of the current difficulties in the recruitment market the Council is experiencing severe difficulties recruiting to “white collar” jobs and has had to resort to engaging agency staff at very significant increased cost. Examples of areas where agency staff have been engaged at increased costs are:

- Housing Benefit Admin
- Council Tax
- Property Manager
- Homelessness admin

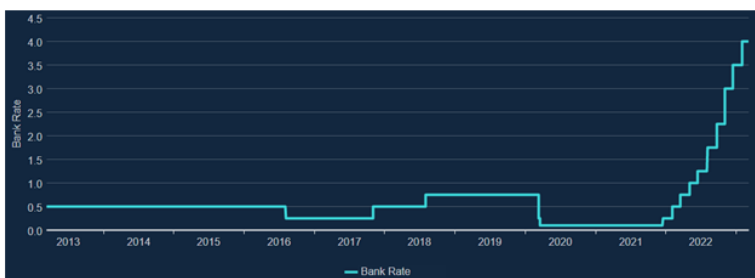
Investments – Agenda Page 15

Question from Ian Harper

Investments note Nationwide is a poor performer against others.

David Heyes, Finance Manager and Section 151 Officer

The return on the Nationwide investment, the placement was made in July 2022, just as interest started to rise significantly. At this time the Council was at its maximum allowed counter party limit with Goldman Sachs as per our Treasury Management policy. For information the Bank of England Base on the 7th July was 1.25%, the chart below shows the increases throughout the remainder of 2022.



Theme 1

Local Economy - Agenda Page 18 - 21

Question from Ian Harper

It is very good to see Bideford promoted are other areas in District going to receive similar treatment?

Chris Fuller, Economic Development Officer

This has been made possible by funding and capacity support from DCC, which enable the multi-stakeholder regeneration board which then supported the approach (rather than it being a pure TDC project). We are keen to utilise Shared Prosperity Funds for wider regional marketing, but we are also determined to do that in harness with local partners where possible.

Theme 2

Communities, Health and Housing – Agenda Pages 22 - 26

Questions from Ian Harper

Homeless Strategy could a timeline be given for completion please.

Staci Dorey, Head of Legal & Governance

Unfortunately, the strategy has not been a priority at this stage, however we are currently working very closely with the housing team, and we are working very hard on homelessness as a whole. Ultimately the current post is vacant however the Head of Legal and Governance will seek to prepare a strategy for presentation within the next 6 months. A project team is currently working with the Housing Team and the Head of Legal and Governance is attending Audit and Governance with updates as the project progresses. When the review is finalised we will seek to have the strategy in place

Questions from Stephen Dengate

Recognise the pressures to provide data for some areas such as LE546,560,561,562,563. Important these measures are recorded in the QBR4 report and, where possible, the trend forecast is also available.

Staci Dorey, Head of Legal & Governance

We hope they will be available at the meeting, apologies just not in time for publishing when the agenda went out.

Question from Councillor Langford

Homelessness Strategy - funding secured for pods. Is this funding fully secure as the pods are not in place yet? Is there a deadline?

Staci Dorey, Head of Legal & Governance

Yes, the funding has been secured and the pods have been ordered. The team are currently installing the infrastructure ready for their delivery on the 22nd March 2023

Question from Ian Harper

Affordable Housing

How many have been built in last 5 years and in that time how many new builds have been completed?

Helen Smith, Planning Manager

Measure	Description	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
NI154	Net Additional Homes Provided	253	243	227	119	186
NI155	Number of Affordable homes delivered (gross)	11	34	51	12	40

Question from Stephen Dengate

NI155. Can we start forecasting the delivery of affordable units against a timescale? If not, when will this be possible? What is our projected shortfall against target this year?

Helen Smith, Planning Manager

It is not possible to accurately forecast affordable housing delivery, but we do log the individual plots that are permitted for affordable housing and then track them through to completion – including where possible details of house type, size, etc. This detail often however is only realised with full permissions or when we approve reserved matters; at outline stage, we just log the percentage or number of affordable houses that are expected.

We do not have a projected shortfall but for information the target for this year is 171 and as at quarter three there has been 5 delivered.

Theme 3

Our Environment Our Future – Agenda Pages 27 - 30

Questions from Councillor Langford

Play Strategy

Do we know why there is a delay on the Rural Prosperity Fund money? Is there a possibility it won't come?

Chris Fuller, Economic Development Officer

It is an enormous frustration. A webinar on 8.3.23 confirmed that the funding is still proceeding but will not be confirmed until after the budget, with delivery then expected to begin at the start of the 23-24 financial year.

Theme 4

Our Council – Agenda Pages 31 - 36

Question from Stephen Dengate

BV012. Are there any more areas of Wellbeing support needed for staff? This rate appears to be above the UK average (ONS) and the TDC target set.

Sarah Ayres, HR & Communications Manager

All staff have access to our occupational health service where they can receive either one to one counselling support or support with medical issues. In addition, we implemented an Employee Assistance Programme (Lifeworks) from September last year which gives staff 24/7 access to support for personal and financial issues. Lifeworks also offers a range of well-being support and resources on a wide variety of topics.