GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 17th December 2019

Time: 10.00a.m. – 11.35a.m.

Present: Councillors Bailey, Bywater, Count (Chairman), Dupre, Goldsack (substituting for Councillor Criswell), Hickford, Hudson, Meschini, Schumann, Shuter, Whitehead and Wotherspoon (substituting for Councillor Bates)

217. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Bates, Criswell, Jenkins, Kindersley and Sanderson.

No declarations of interest were made.

218. MINUTES – 26TH NOVEMBER 2019 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. In noting the action log, attention was drawn to one ongoing action.

219. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions or public questions were received.

220. PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2 2019-20

The Committee considered an update report on the Council's Corporate Services performance indicators, and a summary of the performance measures monitored by Service Committees for Quarter 2 (activity taking place up to the end of September 2019). Attention was drawn to a number of changes to the report format relating to the RAG statuses being used, a covering page to each appendix to improve understanding, and the replacement of some arrows with text to clarify what was meant by good performance. The Committee was advised that Indicator 162: Number of carers receiving Council funded support per 100,000 of the population should be reported as green instead of red; this error had been identified by Adults Committee.

The Chairman welcomed the changes to the presentation of the report and the fact that it was scheduled at the beginning of the agenda to recognise that the Council was an outcome focussed organisation.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- the need to improve the listing of the RAG ratings to avoid there being a void between green and blue. It was suggested that the ratings should be ranked as numbers e.g. 0-10. **Action Required**.

- highlighted the variable performance of *Indicator 183: SARS - % completed within 40 working days (YTD)*. It was noted that this performance reflected the volume of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SARS) received in a month. Some were easy to resolve whilst others were more complicated. There had also been recruitment issues within the Information Governance Team which had corresponded with high volumes of FOI and SARS. The situation had improved and as such these indicators would show an improving picture in Quarter 3.

- queried why performance of *Indicator 191: Percentage of calls presented that are answered* was declining particularly when the target had been met consistently for the last three years. The Business Intelligence Manager reported that he would ask colleagues in the Contact Centre for an explanation. **Action Required**.

- highlighted the fact that the explanation for *Indicator 195: Requests resolved within Service Level Agreement* remained above target when performance showed that it had not been for a number of quarters.

- queried why performance was above target for *Indicator 196: Availability of Universal Business System IT Availability* but performance was declining. The Business Intelligence Manager agreed to investigate. It was suggested that there should be a commentary if performance was declining. The Chairman asked the Business Intelligence Manager to check whether the direction for improvement was up. In response, it was noted that more work might be needed as a higher level of performance was expected for this indicator. It was suggested that the Direction for Improvement box might need to be moved next to the target. **Action Required**.

- expressed concern about the performance of *Indicator 20: Average monthly number of bed delays (social care attributable) per 100,000 18+ population.*

- queried why the direction for improvement was up and the Change in Performance was improving for *Indicator 21: Proportion of adults, in contact with secondary mental health services, who are in paid employment* but the performance indicated a decline. The Business Intelligence Manager acknowledged that this might be an error. The Chairman queried how this error could be made when the information was generated by computer and asked the Business Intelligence Manager to explain why it was incorrect. **Action Required.**

- requested more clarity as to what had improved in relation to the wording for *Indicator 21: Proportion of adults, in contact with secondary mental health services, who are in paid employment*. The Chairwoman of Adults Committee reported that this indicator was a national measure and what needed to improve was set out in the indicator description.

- highlighted the need for the People and Communities Directorate to be on top *of Indicator 132: Percentage of Persistent absence (All children)*. The

Chairman of Children and Young People Committee reported that the Service Director: Education was aware and was dealing with the challenge.

- noted that Children and Young People Committee had requested that more detailed commentary be included next to the arrows. It was noted that this had been provided in the report for General Purposes Committee but had not been available in time for the publication of the report for Children and Young People Committee.

It was resolved unanimously to note and comment on performance information and take remedial action as necessary.

221. FINANCE MONITORING REPORT – OCTOBER 2019

The Committee was presented with the October 2019 Finance Monitoring Report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office, which was showing a forecast underspend of £988k. The increase in underspend was due to additional vacancies in Customer Services and additional income from Democratic and Members' Services following its repatriation from LGSS.

It was resolved unanimously to review, note and comment upon the report.

222. INTEGRATED FINANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST OCTOBER 2019

The Committee was informed that a forecast year-end pressure of £0.7m was being predicted. The increase in the revenue pressure since last month's forecast was due to additional pressures in Adults Services relating to higher than expected costs of residential and nursing care, the increasing complexity of cases being referred to the coroner, and backdated claims relating to Outdoor Education. It was noted that some of this pressure had been offset by underspends in Waste Management and reduced demand in the contract waste collected.

Members were also informed of an increase in the pressure on the High Needs Block budgets, which were funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Linked to this was a proposal to purchase existing school buildings on the Abington Woods site and repurpose them for use as a school for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability. This acquisition would release places at the Granta Special School and result in savings on DSG funded High Needs Block budgets.

The Chairman of Children and Young People Committee reported that this proposal had received unanimous support from his committee. He added that there could be revenue savings in transport budgets from being able to increase capacity at Granta and avoid the expenditure that came from placing children and young people at provisions outside of the county. The Chairman queried whether it would be sufficient to effect budgetary change. The Head of Finance reported that it was not clear at this stage how it would impact on the budget.

One Member requested that the graph on page 89 of the report should be displayed in colour with an increase in size (potentially landscape) in order to improve clarity online. **Action Required.**

The Chairman congratulated officers on being so close to a balanced budget at this stage of the year.

It was resolved unanimously to:

> Approve additional prudential borrowing of £335k in 2019/20 for the Abington Woods Special Educational Needs (SEN) scheme, as set out in section 5.7.

223. NEARLY ZERO ENERGY BUILDINGS REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Councillor Hickford declared a disclosable interest under the Code of Conduct in this report, as the tenant of Manor Farm, Girton. He was not present whilst the item was discussed or for the vote.

[Councillor Hickford left the meeting]

The Committee considered a report detailing the requirement for new buildings owned and occupied by public authorities to be 'Nearly Zero Energy Buildings' (NZEB) from January 2019 and the implications of this on current and future buildings works undertaken by the Council. Attention was drawn to the background, which included the adoption of the Cambridgeshire University's Science and Policy Exchange report, *Net-Zero Cambridgeshire – What actions must Cambridgeshire County Council take to support net-zero carbon emissions by 2050*.

In considering the main issues, it was noted that to ensure all Council new buildings could reasonably be said to be 'Nearly Zero Energy', the Council needed to demonstrate compliance with the following: a very high energy performance; and energy needs met to a very significant extent from renewable resources. Attention was drawn to some different ways to achieve compliance, and the Committee was reminded that a combination of different mechanisms had been identified as a preference at a Member Workshop on 24 May 2019. The workshop had also identified the need for a new business model for financing NZEB for schools. The Council was proposing to set up a pilot to develop a new business model where the benefit of installing higher energy standards could be shared between the school operator and the Council.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- queried how the business model would work for upgrading existing school buildings operated by Academy Trusts. Although the Trusts were responsible for maintenance, they could argue that refurbishing or upgrading assets within existing buildings should not be classified as such. The Project Director reported that the Council worked with a whole range of schools on energy measures which achieved pay back starting from day one. There was a funding mechanism to cover the cost of the loan to ensure both parties benefited from the Energy Performance Contract. The Council was currently talking to schools about installing low carbon heating systems. It was noted that there would be no upfront cost to schools but both sides would benefit from the payback over so many years. The Chairman acknowledged the importance of a mutual benefit situation as there was no obligation of the Council to upgrade non-maintained schools.

- queried how the Regulations would apply to County Farms. The Project Director reported that to be classed as a public building in the Regulations it needed to be owned and occupied by a public authority. It was noted that the Regulations would apply to all new buildings irrespective of owner or occupier from 2021. There were also exceptions in relation to certain types of building such as temporary structures or those not requiring space heating. Members requested more detail on the exceptions in order to improve understanding. **Action Required.**

- queried how the policy would apply to projects already underway. The Project Director reported that it would not apply to projects already in the planning system. However, it was important to note that designing energy efficiency measures from the start was much cheaper than retrofitting later on.

- queried the financial risk to the Council of delivering increased standards for those buildings the Council did not own and occupy such as schools where Section 106 contributions for the new build costs had been agreed with developers based on current specifications. It was queried further as to how many of these building projects were currently in transition. The Project Director reported that there were approximately ten new schools currently in the pipeline. It was therefore important that the Council found a model to help them achieve the Regulations. The Project Director offered to provide a list. She explained that the Council's ambitious approach to setting energy standards would help to minimise risk. The Chairman added that the costs for those at the planning stage were likely to be marginal. The Council was trying to minimise the risk so the capital costs were unlikely to be significant. He acknowledged that the proposed pilot removed the risk entirely. He requested that a confidential note be circulated to the Committee detailing the numbers and capital costs of those building projects post planning. **Action Required.**

- queried whether there was a risk at any stage in relation to updating existing procurements of standards being reduced. It was noted that buildings could still be very energy efficient and not achieve BREEAM or still dependent on fossil fuels.

The Chairman, with the agreement of the Committee, proposed the following amendments to Recommendation c): change "or" to "and" and add "all" after "of" and before "schools".

It was resolved unanimously to:

a) Note the requirements of the Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) regulation;

b) Approve the development of a pilot school new build project as set out in paragraph 3.4 at energy standards set out in paragraph 2.6;

c) Approve the recommendation for energy standards in paragraph 2.6 as policy for all new public buildings (where appropriate) to be built, owned and occupied by the Council from now, with the exception of all schools (see (b) above);

d) Approve work to review all procurement frameworks and new procurements to ensure that they reflect the new energy standards;

e) Require that all business cases for new and existing building construction projects include whole life cycle costs;

f) Install low carbon heating systems for any refurbishments and boiler replacements (set out in paragraph 2.8) to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and maximise energy benefits to the Council.

[Councillor Hickford returned to the meeting]

224. GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2020-21 TO 2024-25

The Committee received an overview of the draft Business Plan revenue and capital proposals that were within its remit as well as those reviewed by service committees. It was noted that to balance the budget whilst still delivering for communities the Council needed to identify savings or additional income of £21.4m for 2020-21 and a total of £68.5m across the full five years of the Business Plan. Attention was drawn to the financial overview update, which included a summary of the various material changes since October in the overall business planning position for 2020-21. The level of unidentified savings had now been reduced to £3.9m and work to identify and work up further ideas to fill the gap was ongoing. It was noted that following the election, the Local Government finance settlement was expected in mid-January in time for full Council; Members were advised that material changes were unlikely. Attention was also drawn to the assumptions and risks, the capital programme update, the overview of Corporate and Managed Services draft revenue programme and next steps.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- queried the timing of the counter fraud and compliance scheme relating to Council Tax in relation to the capital and revenue budget. The Chief Finance Officer reported that officers were working through the details with District Council colleagues. It was noted that figures had been included in the Revenue Overview for 2020-21 to 2024-25.

- highlighted the need for a clearer distinction between the Adult Social Care precept and Council Tax to make clear that no increase was proposed at this stage in Council Tax. The Chief Finance Officer reported that he would make the distinction absolutely clear in the final report. **Action Required.** He reminded the Committee that the current limit to increase Council Tax was 1.99%; it had been 2.99% for last year only.

- congratulated officers on the significant amount of work which had gone into the Business Plan to nearly achieve the savings or additional income of £21.4m. The Chairman also thanked all the political parties for working together to achieve agreement on over 95% of the budget.

It was resolved to:

a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2020/21 to 2024/25 Business Plan revenue proposals, updated since the last report to the Committee in October.

b) Comment on the draft budget and savings proposals that were within the remit of the General Purposes Committee for 2020/21 to 2024/25, as part of consideration for the Council's overall Business Plan.

c) Comment on the changes to the capital programme that were within the remit of the General Purposes Committee, as part of consideration for the Council's overall Business Plan.

d) Note the draft revenue savings proposals and draft capital programme for the whole Council, as part of consideration for the Council's overall Business Plan.

225. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2020-21

The Committee considered a report detailing the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2020-21. The Chief Finance Officer reported that the Strategy would need to be revised following the general election to reflect the nuances of the global market. Although there was now more stability in the markets, there still remained some uncertainty in relation to the impact of Brexit. He reported that an amended version of the Strategy would be presented to Council for approval in February. Members were advised that the Strategy included good and necessary borrowing. Attention was drawn to the key areas in the Strategy relating to Third Party Loans Policy, UK Municipal Bonds Agency, Scheme of Delegation, performance indicators, Minimum Revenue Provision, and the Council's approach to financial investments.

Councillor Count highlighted the importance of separating necessary from good borrowing in order to understand the impact on the Council's revenue position. He reminded the Committee of the Government's surprise move to increase interest rates offered by the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The Local Government Association had raised concerns on behalf of local authorities who borrowed this funding to build schools. It had also proposed that the PWLB should consider split rates; it was noted that Cambridgeshire was currently leading the field in this area. As yet no response had been received.

The Chairman, with the agreement of the Committee, proposed an amendment to the recommendation to make clear that the Strategy was still draft and approval rested with full Council.

It was resolved unanimously to note the draft Treasury Management Strategy for 2020-21 to be recommended to full Council.

226. DEVELOPING A JOINT APPROACH FOR PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING ADOLESCENT RISK

The Committee received a Transformation Fund bid to develop a joint approach from preventing and addressing adolescent risk. Members were asked to approve up to £50,000, contingent on other partners (Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Cambridgeshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Police) also contributing financially and in kind to the project. The funding would be used to engage ISOS to help the council understand and improve the early help system. Whilst a significant amount of work had been carried out in relation to children's social care, the Council had not yet reviewed early help. Although there was a lot of advisory work taking place, it was not joined up and there was not a coherent offer. The review by ISOS would conclude in July with a report to the Children and Young People Committee.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- requested further clarification regarding what the funding would actually cover. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding reported that a significant amount would be spent on engaging young people so that they owned the process. The Council would then come up with a model which would include an outcomes framework.

- queried how much the partners were contributing. Members were informed that the Executive Director, People and Communities had already made formal requests to the PCC and CCG who had indicated that they would consider it favourably. However, it was important to note that the Council was not looking for significant amounts. The Chairman reminded the Committee that the recommendation was contingent on partners contributing. The Chairman of the Health Committee reminded Members that the PCC already contributed to drug and alcohol services. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding reported that partners were very supportive of the need to address child exploitation which was a big problem.

- highlighted the discussions which had taken place at Children and Young People Committee. It was important to identify children at risk before they were arrested and went through the criminal justice system.

- highlighted the need to involve Think Communities in the project.

The Chairman reminded the Committee of the Council’s corporate priorities. However, the Council could not achieve these priorities on its own. It had been very successful in addressing silo thinking within the Council but it now needed the commitment of its partners.

It was resolved unanimously to:

> approve this Transformation Bid proposal up to £50K, contingent on other partners (Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridgeshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Police) also contributing financially and in kind to the project.

227. GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN, TRAINING PLAN AND APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES, AND INTERNAL ADVISORY GROUPS AND PANELS

The Committee considered its agenda plan which included the addition of a transformation bid in January for a climate change officer.

It was resolved unanimously to review the agenda plan.

Chairman