

**GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday, 15th March 2016

**Time:** 10.00a.m. – 1.20p.m.

**Present:** Councillors Bailey, Bates, D Brown, Bullen, Cearns, Count (Chairman), Criswell, Hickford, Hipkin, Jenkins, McGuire, Nethsingha, Orgee, Reeve, Tew, Walsh and Whitehead

**208. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**209. MINUTES – 2ND FEBRUARY 2016 AND ACTION LOG**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. The Action Log and following updates were noted:

- Item 198: the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) reported that the process detailing how the new Operating Model for Business Planning was evolving would be presented to the General Purposes Committee (GPC) Workshop on 21 March 2016. A report would then be presented to a future meeting. **Action Required.**
- Item 198: the CFO reported that the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Partnership had still not signed the Accountable Body Agreement. The Chairman suggested that if the Council did not receive an appropriate response, he would write a letter which would include a proposal to not provide the Partnership with any money until it had signed the Agreement. **Action Required.**
- Outsourcing Blue Badges: The Director Customer Service and Transformation reported that Members would receive an update in relation to work on the Contact Centre at the Workshop on 21 March 2016. It was noted that discussions had been concluded with other authorities and officers would be analysing the findings with the aim of preparing a briefing note for GPC. **Action Required.** Councillor Whitehead clarified that Blue Badge holders did not have to pay for a Residents' Parking Badge.
- Exit Interviews: The CFO reported that he would update GPC via e-mail on this action. *[Note – a report will be presented to the next Staffing Appeals Committee]*  
**Action Required**

**210. PETITIONS**

No petitions were received.

## 211. INTEGRATED RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST JANUARY 2016

The Committee received a report detailing the financial and performance information to assess progress in delivering the Council's Business Plan. It was noted that the overall revenue budget position had improved since the last meeting and was now showing a forecast year end underspend of £4.9m, which reflected an increase of £1.0m since the last month. The increase related mainly to an increase in client contribution levels and an underspend in winter maintenance. The CFO added that he had received the latest monthly figures which showed a further increase in the forecast year end underspend of £6m. He was concerned about the scale of underspend but it was important to bear in mind that it was 1% of a total revenue budget of £550m.

The CFO drew attention to the need to increase by an additional provision of £1.15m in 2015/16 the Insurance Fund to cover the Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI) Scheme of Arrangement Levy, which would become payable in the near future. He reported that he would provide GPC with a detailed briefing note in relation to claims subject to it not breaching current litigation. **Action Required.**

Attention was drawn to the Capital Programme which continued to slip resulting in a favourable variance in capital financing. It was important to note that the level of slippage was an improvement on the previous year. Finally attention was drawn to key performance indicators which had seen a slight improvement.

During discussion, Members asked a number of questions which received the following responses:

- confirmed that the MMI briefing note would include the possible total figure and a timeframe. The CFO reported that the maximum exposure figure was £14m. It was noted that the additional provision of £1.15m would be funded through the 2015/16 underspend. In response to a question on historic child abuse claims, it was noted that the Council would be liable as employer from October 1992. However, it would not be liable from the point a school had changed to an academy.
- acknowledged the need to provide a more accurate year end forecast rather than the current situation of starting badly and improving through the year. The CFO reported that GPC would be briefed on the Transformation Programme Review at its workshop on 21 March which would include how the business plan was constructed.
- acknowledged that it was sometimes very difficult to predict a pattern for demand led services. The Council had improved its profiling and was getting better at data usage. One Member expressed concern that without the relevant information the Council might be cutting services for an individual having a financial crisis. She reported that as a member of Adults Committee, she had been unaware of the issue of client contributions which had suddenly appeared. The Chairman of Adults Committee reported that the Committee were now monitoring this issue via reports to Spokes.
- confirmed that GPC would need to approve new performance indicators for 2016/17.

- acknowledged the need for Strategic Management Team to consider the impact of climate change both in relation to the positives and negatives on the risk register.  
**Action Required.**
- noted that the Council had received regular reports from the Environment Agency on the effects of the recent flooding. The Council would be responsible for repairing any damage to its roads and footpaths.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Analyse resources and performance information and note the remedial action currently being taken and consider if any further remedial action was required.
- b) Approve that the Insurance Fund be increased by an additional provision of £1.15m in 2015/16 to cover the Municipal Mutual Insurance (MMI) Scheme of Arrangement Levy that would become payable in the near future (see section 3.2.5).

## **212. TOTAL TRANSPORT PILOT SCHEME**

The principle behind Total Transport was that it did not make sense for different vehicles to collect neighbouring residents who were making similar journeys but for different purposes. Bringing separate contracts for different transport services together would provide both financial and user benefits. Attention was drawn to a report detailing a proposal for a Total Transport service in the northern half of East Cambridgeshire, replacing the currently separate arrangements for all transport services supported by the Council. A new Booking and Information Centre would provide a single point of contact for local residents wishing to access Total Transport services. Members were advised that there might be opposition regarding changes to times and mixing client groups. It was therefore proposed to conduct a consultation process, which together with the results of a formal procurement exercise, would feed in to the Committee's next meeting on 31 May.

Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Dupre reported that she had attended the last meeting of the Total Transport Working Party. She welcomed this project which aimed to bring together diverse strands of provision to address rural isolation. She supported the proposal to open up more journeys for education, employment, health and leisure and she looked forward to seeing its progress. She drew attention to one anomaly in relation to the use of concessionary bus passes. She was not clear from the report how this issue would be addressed.

In response, the Transport Policy & Operational Projects Manager reported that the current Community Transport consultation might influence any proposal put forward by officers in relation to concessionary fares in order to achieve consistency. The financial cost of these fares would need to be balanced and considered against maintaining access. The Total Transport Pilot proposal was consistent with County Council existing policy at present.

In welcoming the report, Members made the following comments:

- highlighted the fact that Pymoor near Ely had no bus service and was an area of deprivation in relation to access to services. The local school bus which stopped in the village had a number of empty seats but the driver was not allowed to let Pymoor residents on the bus. Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Bailey acknowledged that there would be issues about changing times and mixing client groups but the Council needed to focus on making the whole system work for the community which would involve compromise. She highlighted the importance of the Booking and Information Centre which it was hoped would be placed in the City of Ely Council offices.
- highlighted the fact that the Cambridgeshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was tendering for its service to hospitals. It was acknowledged that the timing was frustrating but the CCG had tried to accommodate the Council.
- requested that Local Members be informed of the number of users, particularly in relation to transport to Highfield Special School, in their division. It was noted that the Council would be writing to all Highfield Special School users and would inform Local Members of numbers accordingly. **Action Required.**
- queried the impact of the three networks of fixed bus routes on Burwell. It was noted that it was proposed to replace two vehicles with one vehicle. It was likely that the timing for the primary school would change from five to ten minutes.
- queried whether the Council had considered the option of procuring in-house. Members were informed that there was not sufficient time to procure vehicles before the pilot commenced in September. However, it could certainly be a consideration with a longer lead in time.
- queried how far the pilot would be rolled out if it was successful. The Transport Policy & Operational Projects Manager highlighted the importance of engaging with local communities. It would take a considerable amount of time to undertake this work. There was also a need to bear in mind separate transport procurement arrangements such as school transport.
- highlighted the need to include a wider scope of people in the consultation rather than just traditional groups. Members were informed that the Council was targeting different users across services including job centres. The consultation would involve an online survey backed up by social media and a paper based survey. It was hoped that Local Members would also engage with local groups. The Chairman raised the need for a Communications Strategy to promote the rationale behind the project and to target current non users of the service. **Action Required.**
- stressed the need to respond robustly to any objections from parents regarding adults travelling on school buses in order to be able to carry on providing services in the future. It was important that this project was seen as a way of saving and improving services such as providing access to other services e.g. leisure, arts and sport. However, it was acknowledged that voices of opposition should be listened to. Members were informed that there would be a Teaching Assistant on school buses with primary and secondary school pupils.

- requested information on how other areas of the country which had bid for central government funding were performing. **Action Required.**
- highlighted the importance of safeguarding and the need for more supervision on buses. The Chairman raised the need to avoid reinforcing barriers. Members were informed that other local authorities had mixed client groups with no adverse impact. It was noted that in relation to the school bus calling at Pymoor, it was likely that everyone would know each other.
- expressed concern that the retendering of home to school transport could compromise the project. It was queried whether short contracts should be considered to allow for flexibility. Members were informed that there was a need to balance the cost of small contracts against flexibility.
- highlighted the importance of dealing sensitively with any special educational needs pupil who might find change difficult.

It was resolved unanimously that the Committee affirm its support for the introduction of a Total Transport service within the stated pilot area from 1 September 2016, subject to:

- a) the outcome of a public consultation, inviting views on the detailed proposals
- b) a formal procurement exercise to establish the exact cost of delivering the new service
- c) a further paper at the Committee's May 2016 meeting, setting out the results of (a) and (b) and inviting a final decision from the Committee.

## **213. CAMBRIDGESHIRE PUBLIC SERVICES NETWORK RE-PROCUREMENT**

The Committee considered a report detailing the background to the Cambridgeshire Public Services Network (CPSN) Contract and supporting partnership which enabled the delivery of the network connectivity and related IT infrastructure services to Cambridgeshire County Council buildings and to Cambridgeshire Schools. Attention was drawn to the list of current membership detailed in section 1.2. The report included a timeline for the current CPSN contract expiry and a proposal for the procurement of a follow on contract. It was important to note that the CPSN Contract was very successful as every time a new member joined the existing costs for Cambridgeshire went down. The continuing growth of LGSS also presented an opportunity to explore an alternative procurement solution with Northamptonshire County Council.

The Chairman reported that, as the Cabinet Portfolio Holder involved in the early discussions regarding the current contract including the risks relating to threshold viability, he was pleased that the decision had been successful for the Council. It had also provided an opportunity to introduce LGSS to other partners.

In considering the report, Members made the following comments:

- queried the timeline which detailed the contract being awarded by December 2016, which was a year and half before the current contract ended. The LGSS Director of IT reported that the December 2016 date was optimistic. Although, it was not

proposed to build the network from scratch instead the process would involve buying upgrades, there were a number of issues such as central government procurement and LGSS which would make the process more complicated.

- queried whether the Council was in discussions with Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) regarding supporting CCTV cameras in Ramsay via the CPSN. The LGSS Director of IT reported that CPSN was very much a partnership which included HDC who were a member of the partnership board.
- requested that the LGSS Director of IT review the amount of time it took Members to log on at Shire Hall. It was noted that the Local Area Network was managed by Virgin Media as an additional to the CPSN contract. The CFO informed Members that the Transformation Programme was considering issues of connectivity.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the County Council's continued engagement in the Cambridgeshire Public Services Network (CPSN) shared service partnership.
- b) Endorse Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) as lead authority on behalf of the partnership to undertake procurement activities for a PSN framework based contract to replace the current CPSN contract.
- c) Approve the investigation of charging mechanisms which would enable Cambridgeshire schools continuing involvement in any future network connectivity contract whilst minimising any financial risk to the Council.

## **214. SCHEME OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

The Scheme of Financial Management (SoFM) set out the Council's financial regulations. Members were reminded that they had considered the Scheme last year following a fundamental review. It was now being updated to reflect the necessary changes of the proposed on boarding of Milton Keynes into LGSS as a partner. The CFO proposed an alteration to recommendation (c) to reflect standard practice which involved consulting the Chairman/woman of the relevant committee rather than Group Leaders/Spokes. In response, the Chairman reported that it was appropriate that the Committee should be notified of all changes. He suggested that he could ask Constitution and Ethics Committee to consider it as an action. **Action Required.**

Attention was drawn to page 81 of the Scheme relating to transformation bids. In response to a query, the CFO reported that there should not be any delay in implementing transformation bids which once approved would be imbedded within the Business Plan process. One Member commented that there was no reference to a protocol regarding dealing with such bids. The CFO reported that Members would receive a process map at their workshop on 21 March. GPC was currently the holder of the transformation fund and responsible for any decisions. A process was being developed to involve Members and it was proposed that the Investment Review Group should act as a sounding board to avoid minutiae being presented to committee.

Members were of the view, in relation to page 109, that General Purposes Committee and not Strategic Management Team should make final decisions each year about carry forward arrangements in the context of the Corporate and Service spending position. The Chairman acknowledged the need to encourage underspends but it was also important that corporate identity did not suffer. The CFO explained that the current process involved each Directorate reviewing its financial position. They then agreed a service committee utilisation sum by 30 June and the allocation as to usage was managed using the CFO's approval. The Committee requested a briefing note on how the current system of underspends was managed. **Action Required.**

One Member commented that the workshop on 21 March would cover the fact that budgets would not be delivered in the same way.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Review the updated Scheme of Financial Management (Appendix A).
- b) Recommend to Council that it approves the revised Scheme of Financial Management for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.
- c) Recommend to Council that it delegates authority to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee, to approve any changes as may be necessary from time to time to reflect and take account of changes in legislation, guidance, Council policy, decisions of the Council and any drafting changes or improvements to the Scheme of Financial Management (see section 2.5).

## **215. TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER THREE REPORT**

The Committee considered the third quarterly update on the Treasury Management Strategy 2015-16, approved by Council in February 2015.

It was resolved unanimously to note the Treasury Management Quarter Three Report 2015-16.

## **216. COMMERCIAL PROPOSALS PROTOCOL**

The Committee was reminded that one of the recommendations of the Internal Audit review of the issues that had arisen following a proposal to commercialise the third floor of the Central Library was for the Council to agree a Commercial Proposals Protocol. Attention was drawn to a revised version of the protocol which included comments from Strategic Management Team set out in Appendix 2. It was important to bear in mind that the original proposal for the Central Library would not have breached the draft protocol.

Councillor Bailey proposed a number of amendments, seconded by Councillor Count, to the draft protocol set out at Appendix 2, which were tabled at the meeting. There followed a detailed discussion about each amendment. Further information was requested in relation to the definition of a commercial proposal and the impact or non impact of setting revenue streams in excess of £50,000. In view of the need for further

information, Councillor Bailey withdrew her amendment. The Committee was of the view that this report should be withdrawn to enable further work to take place.

It was resolved unanimously to withdraw the report.

## **217. SAWSTON COMMUNITY HUB**

The Sawston community hub project had been under discussion with Sawston Village College (SVC) since late 2012, when the fire in the Morris Wing of the College (housing the public library) provided an opportunity for the Council to consider providing library facilities that were more fit for purpose as well as co-locating a number of Council services in a community hub. There was a disparity between the financial value of assets considered for exchange and as a consequence authority for disposal at less than best consideration was required from GPC. In exchange for the grant of a lease by SVC of the land adjacent to the Marven Centre with additional parking valued at £40,000, attention was also drawn to a number of options. It was important to the note that the value in use was the 'book value' rather than the value which would be realised by sale. Members reminded that the assets were located within an education site.

Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Kenney reported that Sawston was the largest village in South Cambridgeshire with a high proportion of deprivation. She explained that the development of a community hub at the Village College would therefore be very good for local residents. Following the fire, the Village College had been able to use the Morris Wing to house a new and safer reception, which avoided the need for visitors to walk through the site to register their presence. As far as she was aware the Council wanted to build a hub at Sawston and the Village College was willing to exchange the land. The community hub would improve facilities for Sawston as it would include the locality team and children's centre. It would also provide meeting rooms for local residents and car parking facilities.

Also speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Orgee drew attention to the benefits set out in section 2.9. He reminded the Committee that the new hub would be built on a site leased from SVC who would gain in exchange the part of the Morris Wing previously occupied by the library, and other buildings belonging to the Council. It was important to note that whilst the notional valuation figure for the former library was £118,000 if it ceased to be a library it would be transferred to SVC at nil value. The OWL building was currently vacant and in need of repair. It was also located in the middle of the College site which would create safeguarding problems if it was sold to a private developer. Members were reminded that the valuations were opinions only. He was concerned that this issue had been going on for sometime. The planning application for the temporary library had already been extended by one year and would need to be extended again. He therefore hoped that the Committee would support Option B.

In considering the report, Members made the following comments:

- highlighted the need for more information regarding the views of Local Members included at section 4.5.



- suggested that reference to notional book value required more explanation in the report.
- queried the final project costs which had increased. It was noted that there had been a £144k increase in costs.
- highlighted the need for consistency of approach as regards community hubs generating income. Members were reminded that the Barnwell Hub and the new Milton Road Library were required to generate income.

Both Councillors Nethsingha and Bullen had visited the site and supported Option B. Councillor Nethsingha reported that the OWL building was extremely derelict and safeguarding was a real issue at the site. Councillor Bullen added that whilst he was opposed to selling assets in general, there was no scope on the site commercialisation as all the assets were within the school parameter. Councillor Bullen proposed, seconded by Councillor Orgee, that the Committee approve Option B.

It was resolved to authorise an exchange of assets at less than best consideration on the basis of Option B (release of the Morris Wing plus the OWL Building with a combined value of £244,000.)

## **218. IT OPTIONS FOR MEMBERS**

The Committee considered a report outlining a proposal to reduce Members operating costs and provide improved services by the provision of hardware and software for Council Members. It was proposed to provide Members with laptops/tablets which used a standard Windows platform and had been procured with a 50% reduction on the retail price. The provision of software would enable Members to access Council e-mails and diaries securely through their own smartphones and personal devices. This would provide Members with the same technologies and secure access as staff. Attention was drawn to Appendix B detailing the savings which were predicated on print and other savings.

Councillor Tew proposed an amendment detailed below, seconded by Councillor Reeve:

It is requested that the Committee agree the proposals contained within this report for the provision of hardware and software for all Members who do not have their own suitable devices;

And that the hardware is paid for by Members by way of a deduction from their allowances;

And that, at the end of their tenure as a County Councillor, the hardware can be either sold back to the council or kept by the Member.

It is requested that the Committee agree the provision of software that will enable Members to access Council e-mails and diaries securely through their own devices were the member does not wish to purchase Council provisioned hardware.

Councillor Tew explained that hardware became out of date every five years. It was therefore easier for Members to pay for their own equipment which they could keep at the end of their term. The LGSS Director of IT reported that there would be a small charge to rebuild if Members were to keep the equipment.

In considering the amendment, Members made the following comments:

- expressed concern that this amendment could exclude young people and the less well off from being a Councillor.
- the provision of hardware and software would help Councillors in their role as Connectors and Community Navigators.
- queried whether Councillors could choose to use their own devices. It was noted that Councillors would not be able to access everything they could access on a fixed desk Council PC if they used their own device. The GOOD application would enable Members to access Council diaries and emails only on their own equipment.
- welcomed the use of IT in order to save paper. However, there was concern that the public perception would be that Councillors were getting something for free. The majority of Members used their own devices so they were effectively being supplied with something they would not use. The laptops/tablets already had a 50% discount and were tax deductible so would not cost Members that much.
- noted that Huntingdonshire District Councillors paid for their own equipment.
- expressed concern that all Councillors would be expected to use a @gov.uk e-mail address to guarantee security. A number of Members reported that they did not want such an address. The Chairman proposed that this issue be removed from the report and considered at a future meeting of Group Leaders. **Action Required.**
- expressed concern about the use of GOOD as a step forward. Huntingdonshire District Council had found it limited and was using Office 365 instead. The LGA and Brent Council had also moved from GOOD to Office 365. The LGSS Director of IT reported that he had reviewed the options. Office 365 was a cloud based web accessing application whilst the GOOD application was for use on smartphones and personal devices.

Before putting the recommendation to the vote, as permitted under Part 4 - Rules of Procedure, Part 4.4 - Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings, Section 18 Voting of the Council's Constitution, five members of the committee requested a recorded vote. The amendment on being put to the vote was lost.

*[Councillors Bullen, Reeve and Tew in favour; Councillors Bailey, Bates, D Brown, Cearns, Count, Criswell, Hickford, Hipkin, Jenkins, McGuire, Nethsingha, and Orgee against; Councillors Walsh and Whitehead abstained]*

*Councillor Count declared a non-statutory disclosable interest under the Code of Conduct, as he had already received the hardware and the software.*

In considering the report, Members made the following comments:

- highlighted the importance of making better use of audio and web conferencing.
- expressed concern that a significant proportion of the savings were predicated on not printing hard copies of agendas. It was queried whether these savings would be realised as a number of members would still require printed agendas. The Chairman reported that it was proposed to roll laptops/tablets out as soon as possible within the month. He encouraged everyone to be as paperless as possible with the aim of being completely paperless by 2017. It was noted that special access provision would be available for members of the public.
- highlighted the need to review the length of reports if Councillors were expected to move to a paperless system.

It was resolved to:

- a) agree the proposals contained within this report for the provision of hardware and software for all Members
- b) agree the provision of software that would enable Members to access Council emails and diaries securely through their own devices

## **219. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – JANUARY 2016**

The Committee was presented with the January 2016 Finance and Performance report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office. The Chairman asked why the performance measure target for “IT – incidents resolved within Service Level Agreement” was not 100%. **Action Required.** One Member queried the use of the Shape Your Place Grant on page 200. It was noted that the grant had to be spent on community engagement and a project proposal was currently being developed.

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

## **220. GREATER CAMBRIDGE CITY DEAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AGENCY – NOMINATION OF COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE**

The Committee received a report requesting elected member representation on a Joint Member Reference Group for the Housing Development Agency formed under the City Deal arrangements. It was proposed that a member of the Council’s Investment Review Group be nominated. Attention was drawn to a list of current members of the Group willing to perform the role. Councillors Bullen and Jenkins withdrew their names. Councillors Hickford and Sales informed the Committee why they would be suited to the role.

It was resolved to nominate Councillor Paul Sales from the Investment Review Group to represent the County Council on the Joint Member Reference Group for the City Deal Housing Development Agency.

**221. GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN, TRAINING PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES, PARTNERSHIP LIAISON AND ADVISORY GROUPS, AND INTERNAL ADVISORY GROUPS AND PANELS**

The Committee considered its agenda plan, training plan and appointments to outside bodies, partnership liaison and advisory groups, and internal advisory groups and panels. Members were advised that there was a vacancy for a County Council nominated trustee on the New Street Ragged School Trust. It was noted that GPC had the general power to appoint to outside bodies etc. but had delegated down to committees. This appointment needed to be made quickly as there was not now a meeting of Children and Young People Committee until May. Councillor David Brown proposed Councillor Joan Whitehead to the role, seconded by Councillor Walsh.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) review the Agenda Plan attached at Appendix 1;
- b) review and agree its Training Plan attached at Appendix 2;
- c) agree the appointment of Councillor Paul Sales to the Investment Review Group to replace Councillor Ashley Walsh; and
- d) agree the appointment of Councillor Joan Whitehead as a nominated trustee on the New Street Ragged School Trust.

Chairman