

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 10th January 2017

Time: 10.00a.m. – 11.50a.m.

Present: Councillors Bailey, Bullen, Count (Chairman), Criswell, Dent, Hickford, Hipkin, Jenkins, Leeke (substituting for Councillor Cearns), McGuire, Nethsingha, Orgee, Reeve, Rouse (substituting for Councillor D Brown), Schumann (substituting for Councillor Bates), Walsh and Whitehead

Apologies: Councillors Bates, D Brown and Cearns

299. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

300. MINUTES – 20TH DECEMBER 2016 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th December 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of Councillor Walsh in the list of apologies. The Action Log was noted.

301. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

302. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – NOVEMBER 2016

The Committee was presented with the November 2016 Finance and Performance report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office. A year-end overspend on revenue of £636k was being forecast, which was primarily due to the overspend on the Corporate Redundancies budget. The Committee would be asked to consider a possible policy change to manage these costs at its next meeting. The IT Managed budget remained in line with projections.

One Member queried how the improved rates of collection of debt would contribute to the overall picture, as detailed on page 29. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) explained that this reflected cash flow, which would return to revenue, as well as amounts written off.

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

303. INTEGRATED RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 30TH NOVEMBER 2016

The Committee received a report detailing the financial and performance information to assess progress in delivering the Council's Business Plan. Attention was drawn to the forecast year-end of overspend of £1.8m which was the same net position as last

month. Although there had been a slight improvement in the position of Children, Families and Adults (CFA), there had been an increase in pressure on the Looked After Children (LAC) budget over Christmas.

One Member queried whether the overall outturn £1.8m overspend included the £3m for LAC. The CFO confirmed that the £3m was included in the overall £1.8m overspend figure. The Chairman added that £3m had been found throughout the organisation for this year's budget and there would need to be an increase of £3m in next year's budget. Given the recent speech by the Prime Minister on mental health, one Member drew attention to the underspend of £250k in Older People and Mental Health – Shorter Term Support and Maximising Independent and asked for assurances that this did not reflect a shortfall in services. The Chairman was happy to give this assurance.

The Chairwoman of Children and Young People Committee (CYPC) drew attention to the performance of Secondary, Primary and Special Schools in relation to those schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted. Together with the Chairman, she was particularly pleased to see the improvement in Secondary Schools from just over 50% to 66.3%. It was hoped that this performance would continue to improve.

The Chairman continued to express concern regarding the way the media attributed blame in relation to Delayed Transfers of Care. There had been a significant improvement in the County Council's performance and it was not solely to blame for this issue. He drew attention to the fact that a Government report had identified a small number of hospitals where this was a problem. Other Members commented on the complex nature of this issue and the need to work constructively with and support the Council's partners. The Council had a good working relationship with its partners which involved quarterly liaison meetings with the Health Committee. The Chairman recognised the work of partners but highlighted the need to get the media balance right. The CFO agreed to work with the External Communications Manager and Service Directors to address this issue. **Action Required.**

The Chairman drew attention to the forecast year-end overspend of £1.8m and how this would impact on the production of a balanced budget for 2017/18. The CFO reminded the Committee that there was likely to be more movement before the end of the financial year. It was important to note that the Council was better placed than last year. He explained that the Committee would receive a report at its next meeting detailing an approach to capitalisation and flexibilities in the system which could help to reduce the overspend.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Analyse resources and performance information and note any remedial action currently being taken and consider if any further remedial action was required.

304. TRANSFORMATION FUND BIDS

The Committee received a report setting out requests for investments from the Transformation Fund that were required to deliver transformational improvements in service delivery and associated savings within the 2017-22 business plan. The Chairman reported that the Community Impact Assessments for this item were

incorrect. The correct version was circulated to Members and published on the web. This also meant that Appendix B for the Business Planning Overview item was incorrect. In considering the report, some Members commented on the requests as follows:

a) Enhanced Response Service – Falls and Telecare

- welcomed the proposal which would provide peace of mind as part of an integrated pathway.
- queried who would respond if someone had a fall. It was noted that the Reablement Team would be the first point of call. Telecare would send an ambulance if it was a medical emergency. The Joint Emergency Team would attend if it was a medical emergency which did not require hospital treatment.
- highlighted the need to extend this proposal beyond people with a community alarm. The proposal was based on the number of ambulance call outs made by telecare users which were not needed; this totalled 4,500 calls. It was acknowledged that there was greater demand for this service. Conversations were taking place with the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service to respond to falls.
- queried the way the return on investment had been reflected on page 73. There was no investment shown for 2018/19 onwards. The CFO was asked to review whether an ongoing investment should be shown which would deliver a bigger saving. **Action Required.** It was also queried why there were no savings shown for 2016/17 and 2017/18. The CFO reported that a prudent approach had been taken as savings over and above investment were difficult to predict. The Chairman asked the CFO to review the savings position for 2017/18 to see whether more clarity or earlier savings could be achieved. **Action Required.** The CFO commented that the figures were presented in such a way to differentiate between business as usual.
- queried why the possible partnership with the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service was not included in the report. It was noted that discussions were still taking place with the Fire and Rescue Service about the potential for it to get involved.
- queried whether a clinician would be involved in responding to calls. It was noted that there would be no involvement from a clinician. The Service was currently working with Public Health and the Ambulance Service to develop a series of set questions for call handlers to ensure that nothing serious was missed. One Member raised concern about corporate responsibility if a call handler missed a condition which needed a medical response. It was noted that unless the call was clearly an emergency, the response times for an ambulance and the Reablement Team were likely to be the same. However, it was noted that the Ambulance Service would be able to react immediately if the call turned out to be a medical emergency. The Chairman asked the service to identify this as a risk on its risk register and monitor accordingly. **Action Required.**

- highlighted the need for there to be no silo mentality between the North and South Teams if there was a capacity issue.
 - highlighted the fact that there would be savings for both the NHS and Ambulance Trust. The Chairman queried the contributions being made by these partners. It was noted that the Clinical Commissioning Group was preparing a business case which would take 3 to 6 months about funding the involvement of the Fire and Rescue Service from the savings achieved by the Ambulance Service. The Chairman asked the Chief Executive to raise this as an issue at Public Service Board. **Action Required.**
- b) 'No Wrong Door' hub model to improve outcomes for children on the edge of care, looked after and care leavers**
- acknowledged that the proposal should go ahead but suggested that the report did not make clear the current situation and how the proposal would improve it. The Interim Service Director explained that there were a range of groups working separately with young people which made it difficult to respond to pressures. A more reactive service which would provide a known child or young person with a rapid response was needed. The Committee noted examples which included supporting Foster Carers to help children or young people with attachment disorder, which would encourage them to keep foster caring.
 - queried whether it would be a 24hour service. The Interim Service Director confirmed that it would be a flexible clock. She drew attention to an example where a key worker might sit with a child or young person who was wrecking his/her home at 10.00p.m. The proposal was about getting the whole network together via an active responsive service to secure the child or young person. It was noted that this proposal was aimed at the most challenging children and young people.
 - queried whether this was the best proposal. The Interim Service Director explained that the Council was using the best research evidence to respond quickly.
 - highlighted the fact that one of the measures of success was keeping adolescents at home. One Member raised the fact that keeping adolescents in families could be a source of many problems for children and young people. He suggested that it was not necessarily a good measure. The Interim Service Director acknowledged the point raised but commented that removing adolescents from families had a worse impact on outcomes. She explained that there was a balance. Removing very small children was likely to see improved outcomes but evidence showed that removing adolescents usually resulted in poorer outcomes and a decrease in wellbeing. The Service therefore had to make it as good as possible for these children and young people.
 - queried how the care hub process would operate. The hub would provide a place for young people to stay in order to keep families together. It would work with young people and families to reintegrate the young person back into the family. It

was acknowledged that the complete role of the hub still needed to be defined. There was also a need to identify a hub in the south of the county.

- queried how the Council managed children and young people who could be in a dangerous situation. It was noted that the Council performed well in relation to child protection. It currently had 48 children per 10,000 in the system. There were 645 LAC of which 581 were not unaccompanied asylum seeking children; this put the Council mid table in the region after being low three years ago. The Interim Service Director reported that she was chair of the Threshold Panel which met fortnightly and was attended by legal. She added that financial considerations were not part of the threshold process. She explained that it was very rare to see any inappropriate cases. Child Protection Plans were reviewed after nine months which was a legal process. It was important that children and young people did not remain in abusive situations but in relation to outcomes it was important to note that there were usually best brought up by their families.
- queried the return on investment. It was noted that funding would be needed to pump prime the proposal. It would then become part of the Service's sustainability plan.
- welcomed the proposal to train staff to provide a fostering system in order to achieve greater flexibility. One Member acknowledged the detrimental effect of removing older teenagers from families. He was of the view that the proposal would achieve better outcomes and save money.
- highlighted the importance of working on communication skills and building in a different way to manage crises. One Member suggested that these families might need to go through the Troubled Families Programme. In response, it was noted that the families covered by this proposal had already gone through this programme.
- highlighted the need to change the name 'No Wrong Door' as this approach was already used to manage crises. The name needed to reflect that someone would be there readily available at the point of need.
- queried the contribution being made by partners who would benefit from this proposal. It was noted that the Police, Health and Housing were contributing financially or in kind. It was requested that partner organisations savings should be tracked on all proposals as well as the Council's, regardless of whether they had contributed. The Chairman asked to also be kept informed of partner contributions to transformation proposals. **Action Required.**
- queried the sample size on which the figure of 86% of adolescents remained at home. It was noted that it was based on 30 to 40 adolescents. The sample size figure was likely to be similar for Cambridgeshire. The Chairman acknowledged the risk associated with this proposal given the small sample size.

It was resolved unanimously to approve the following business cases and associated investment from the Transformation Fund, and recommend their inclusion in the Business Planning Tables:

- b) Enhanced Response Service – Falls and Telecare
- c) 'No Wrong Door' hub model to improve outcomes for children on the edge of care, looked after and care leavers.

305. LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2017-18

The Committee was provided with an update on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. Members were reminded that they had received a briefing paper before Christmas. It was noted that the final 2017-18 settlement would be confirmed later in January. The Revenue Support Grant was as set out in the Business Plan. There were a couple of exceptions relating to the New Homes Bonus which was less than expected but the amount recycled to Adult Social Care was in excess of expectation. Although the changes had benefitted the County Council, it was important to note that overall the county itself was receiving less resources. The CFO offered to circulate a note prepared for Group Leaders to the Committee. **Action Required.** The Council was still awaiting the announcement of several revenue grants including the Better Care Fund. The provisional announcement was expected week beginning 9 January with the final announcement expected in late January/early February.

Members made the following comments in relation to the report:

- noted that there was unlikely to be a significant variance in the forecast Improved Better Care Fund for the next two years.
- highlighted the fact that the frontloading of the Adult Social Care (ASC) precept detailed in section 2.7 was counter intuitive. The Chairman drew attention to the table at the end of the action log which showed that impact of different rates of increase in ASC precept.
- queried whether the Council was protesting at the level of cuts it was sustaining. The CFO reported that the Council had responded in a non-political way to a number of issues, which included as part of the LGSS family and as a single authority. He agreed to circulate these responses. **Action Required.** The Chairman raised the need to lobby Government to make sure the Council was represented well in relation to the new needs assessment formula for the distribution of business rates. It was important to remember that the Council was part of a business rate retention pilot which had made available £4m extra funding to those authorities taking part. It was noted that the Local Government Association was protesting. An independent Councillor had also started a petition to ask the Government to reduce foreign aid to use it to fund social care.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- Note the impact of the provisional local government finance settlement on the Council's Business Plan.

306. OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS

The Committee received an update on the Business Planning Process. In its co-ordinating role, it was asked to comment on any of the business planning activity which had been discussed and approved by Service Committees. Members were reminded that the Business Plan was based on a 0% general Council Tax increase and a 2% increase in ASC precept. The CFO reported that there was an unbalanced budget position at the moment but with potential options to achieve a balanced position, which would be presented to the next meeting. Full Council had a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget. The CFO apologised for the wording in Appendix C which was misleading as the positives and negatives were the wrong way round. The Chairman commented that the next report would reflect the latest outturn position.

The Chairwoman of CYPC raised the need for a narrative to identify all the changes easily and the impact of reductions in budget on services. The CFO explained that the Community Impact Assessments detailed the impact of budget reductions on services.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group reported that she would be bringing alternative budget proposals to the next meeting on 24 January. She raised the importance of all Members understanding the implications of budget cuts. She highlighted two particular areas relating to the Learning Directorate, which included the support available for struggling schools and central support for the Cambridgeshire Race and Diversity Service.

The CFO reminded the Committee that there was a protocol for debating the Council's proposed Business Plan. Due to the complexity of the Business Plan and the need for financial compliance this Protocol varied the Standing Orders in relation to amendments. Any significant amendments to the Business Plan had to be submitted to the Section 151 Officer, and the Democratic Services Manager, at least five working days before the date of Full Council in order to enable the Section 151 Officer to confirm whether the proposed amendments would result in a lawful budget. Any minor amendments must be submitted to the officers above at least one working day before the date of Full Council. The Chairman urged all Groups to submit amendments to General Purposes Committee first if they wished them to have credibility.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) comment on the Business Planning proposals that had been considered by Service Committees; and
- b) note the remaining milestones in the Business Planning Process.

307. CHANGES TO ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS COMMITTEES

The Committee received a report summarising the changes to the arrangements for appointing external Auditors following the closure of the Audit Commission and the end of the transitional arrangements at the conclusion of the 2017/18 audit of the accounts.

The CFO reported that the Council could save between 10 to 20% of the fee of £120k if it entered into a partnership arrangement with its LGSS partners.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) endorse for Full Council approval the decision to opt-in to the sector led body (Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA)) for the national procurement of external auditors and ultimately the Council's external auditors from 2018/19; and
- b) ask Officers to write to the PSAA and request to meet with the Chief Officer at PSAA to seek assurance that a single auditor be appointed for the LGSS Partners setting out the clear rationale in terms of the efficiency and value for money that this would achieve.

308. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER UPDATE

The Committee received a report detailing the current status of corporate risk. In discussing the report, Members raised the need to add sufficient before "funding" to Risk 9: Failure to Secure Funding for Infrastructure. There was also a need to include the City Deal as part of this risk. In response to a query from the Chairman, the Director of Customer Service & Transformation reported that the failure to sign up to a multi-year settlement had increased the Council's risk.

It was resolved unanimously to note the position in respect of corporate risk.

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

The Committee considered its agenda plan and training plan.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) review its Agenda Plan attached at Appendix 1;
- b) review and agree its Training Plan attached at Appendix 2.

Chairman