

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 2nd December 2014

Time: 10.00a.m. – 11.25a.m.

Present: Councillors Bailey, Bates, Bourke, Bullen, Cearns, Criswell, Hickford, Hipkin, Leeke, McGuire (Vice-Chairman), Orgee, Reeve, Rylance, Sales, J Schumann (substituting for D Brown), M Shuter (substituting for S Count) and Whitehead

Apologies: Councillors Brown and Count

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

69. MINUTES – 4TH NOVEMBER 2014 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman. The Action Log and the following updates were noted (**all required action**):

- performance indicators were being reviewed in order to consider what should be reported to service committees. General Purposes Committee (GPC) would be considering a report in relation to strategic performance indicators for reporting to GPC in 2015/16.
- information had been sent to Councillor Reeve in relation to spending on support staff, and officers would follow up if necessary.
- a Business Planning Workshop had taken place involving representatives from each service committee. However, it was acknowledged that more work was needed to bring together service committees as part of future budget setting.
- the Director of Customer Services and Transformation had forwarded the request from GPC to the Head of Community and Cultural Services regarding the possibility of offering a chargeable service to complete online concessionary bus pass applications. It would now be considered by the relevant service committee.

70. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

71. MARCH – ESTOVER ROAD SITE – DECLARATION SURPLUS

The Committee received a report detailing a proposal to declare the Estover Road Site in March surplus to requirements and authorise the disposal of the property. The Council did not require the site for operational delivery and it had been held as a

strategic site for a number of years. An opportunity had arisen within the Fenland Local Plan to seek planning consent for development and to dispose of the site, for which the site needed to be confirmed as formally surplus to the council's requirements. Attention was drawn to the background, and it was noted that the Committee had also requested and received a copy of a report from the Football Association (Eastern Region) commissioned by the County Council.

During discussion, Members highlighted the need for more information to be provided particularly in relation to concerns raised by March Town Council, the Estover Playing Fields Association and petitioners. It was acknowledged that there was a need to understand the planning policy implications and the commercial value of the facility. It was noted that a meeting was scheduled to take place with March Town Council.

Councillor Criswell therefore proposed that the report be deferred until the GPC meeting on 27 January 2015 to enable discussions to take place with March Town Council and for the Committee to receive further information. In seconding the proposal, Councillor Orgee reported that Local Plans were in the process of being updated so it was important to establish the impact of the 'windfall sites' policy on these new plans.

Members acknowledged the importance of listening to local voices and receiving further information. However, it was also important that the asset value was not compromised. Members were reminded that any deferral would result in the Council continuing to incur costs in relation to managing the site.

It was resolved to:

defer the report until the meeting of General Purposes Committee on 27 January 2015 to allow for discussions taking place with March Town Council and to obtain more information.

72. LANDBEACH – FORMER ARCHAEOLOGY STORE WORTS FARM – DECLARATION SURPLUS

The Committee was informed that the County's Archaeology Store in Landbeach was no longer required for the storage of archaeological artefacts as alternative arrangements had been made. Members were therefore asked to formally declare the site surplus to the Council's requirements in order to conclude an advantageous sale. They were informed that the value of the main barn and granary with the planning consent for conversion to two dwellings exceeded the Director of Finance's delegated limit.

Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Leeke spoke in favour of the recommendation as the Archaeology Store was no longer required for operational purposes.

It was resolved unanimously to:

declare the County's former Archaeological Store in High Street, Landbeach as surplus to requirements and authorise the disposal of the property on detailed terms to be agreed by the Director of Finance.

73. OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS

The Committee considered an update on the Business Planning Process. The report included three appendices containing Finance Tables, Community Impact Assessments, and the Council's Vision and Priorities. Members were informed that there was an error in recommendation d) i) which should read paragraph 5.5 and not 5.3. The Committee was reminded that earlier in the business planning cycle it had agreed the retention of £2.5m of revenue funding to be used pending proposals. An informal workshop had since taken place to prioritise savings proposals against this funding. The Chief Finance Officer advised the Committee that the report included two methodologies for distribution however a further option available would be to retain the sum as a provision within the GPC budget if it so wished.

One Member suggested that the Committee should not take a decision regarding the £2.5m revenue funding at this time. Instead a decision should be deferred until 6 January 2015 in order to consider how the funding could be used to generate income in the future. Councillor Bullen proposed an amendment to defer a decision in relation to recommendation d) to the next meeting on 6 January 2015, seconded by Councillor Reeve.

During discussion of the amendment, members made the following comments:

- expressed concern regarding any proposal not to allocate the funding to service committees. Members were reminded that they had considered and reached consensus at a recent workshop regarding how this resource could be allocated to services of most need. The funding would enable these services to invest in order to improve budget procedures for the future and to relieve the budget pressure in the succeeding year. Children and Young People Committee (CYPC) was considering decisions, which would involve major reorganisation and redundancies and would be impossible to reverse in the future. It was noted that this funding could help it avoid taking such drastic measures. In response, one Member reminded the Committee that workshops were not decision making bodies.
- expressed concern that the allocation of the funding to service committees was short-term. It was suggested that the deferral was needed in order to consider how future revenue streams could be created. The Council would be facing similar problems in the future and it was therefore important to plan for the long-term. The Chief Finance Officer drew attention to the provision of housing primarily for rent on page 64 of the Finance Tables.
- highlighted the fact that many of the prioritised savings proposals for consideration against the £2.5m were of a preventative nature, which would provide savings in the future. It was suggested that there was a need to uncouple this proposal from the proposal inferred in the amendment to dispose of surplus land in order to provide income to invest in long-term projects. The Committee was informed that the amendment was not about disposing of surplus land but instead the Council should develop it in order to achieve a greater return on its investment. It was suggested that a concerted strategy was need for finance generation.

- highlighted the importance of easing the pain for the Council's residents. It was suggested that this funding should not be seen as extra funding as it was just funding which had not been used last year. It was noted that this funding would make next year's savings more achievable for Children, Families and Adults.
- highlighted the drastic funding situation facing the Council in future years. There was concern that the £2.5m was only delaying the inevitable. One Member queried the right time to consider future funding. It was noted that the proposal inferred in the amendment would not release revenue funding immediately.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

During discussion of the report, members made the following comments:

- clarified the situation relating to the proposed saving of £300,000 against falls prevention, which had been raised at the informal workshop. The Chairman of Health Committee reported that the Committee had asked the Director of Public Health to investigate whether it could take on the burden of funding this annual provision. It was proposed that the Public Health Directorate should fund £100,000 on a recurrent basis and £200,000 on a non-recurrent basis for two years. It was also proposed to conduct an evaluation exercise to identify the effectiveness of this funding in order to consider whether the Directorate should take on this pressure on an ongoing basis. It was important to note that the Clinical Commissioning Group currently commissioned a Falls Prevention Service, which would be delivered by UnitingCare Partnership. District Councils also commissioned home checks as part of their Strength and Balance Programme. The Directorate therefore needed to prioritise work in order to reduce pressure on Adult Social Care.
- highlighted the need to co-ordinate the multi-agency approach to falls prevention. The Committee was informed that the Cambridge City Health and Wellbeing Partnership was also prioritising work in relation to falls prevention. It was suggested that there should be one strategy for this work involving partners, which should possibly be co-ordinated by the Adults Committee and CYPC. The Chief Finance Officer reported that the Health Committee proposal had not yet been reflected in the Finance Tables. He highlighted the need for clarity regarding funding relating to a multi-agency approach.
- highlighted the need to be clear about the timescale in the building of key infrastructure for Cambridgeshire on page 3 of Appendix C. Page 11 of the same Appendix did make reference to a timescale. There was also no reference to timescale in Section 2.4 of the report so it was not clear when some schemes would commence. The Sawston Primary scheme, for example, was unlikely to commence until 2021/22. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the Business Plan operated to different timelines to the Capital Strategy. The Council had a ten year capital programme so many items were outside the timeline of the current Business Plan. He acknowledged the need to update the capital tables to reflect the information in Section 2.4. The Chairwoman of CYPC reported that it was difficult to be precise about the school building programme. The Chairman of Economy and Environment Committee (E&EC) reported that together with the

Vice-Chairman, he was meeting regularly with schools when development was coming forward.

- highlighted the need to have discussions with District Councils regarding the possibility of taking over the infrastructure of Shape Your Place. One Member commented that Shape Your Place unlike the Council's feedback system was very user friendly. The Chief Executive acknowledged that there was work to do to improve the Council's feedback systems. **Action Required.**
- highlighted the need to consider the Business Plan consultation. It was noted that reference had been included in the report with a link to the consultation material.
- highlighted the impact of various external delays, which were outside the Council's control, on the Mobilising Local Energy Investment (MLEI) project, which had been supported by both GPC and E&EC. It was noted that funding for staffing the project would run out in August 2015, which would mean that there would only be a very small number of staff available to develop projects. This short-term cash flow would therefore have a detrimental effect on the long-term future of the project to generate a significant return. However, it was noted that, if the project continued, the team would be able to pay for itself in four years.

Councillor Leeke proposed an amendment to the recommendations to top slice from the £2.5m to provide £100,000 for the next two years to enable the team to continue before the project was able to pay for itself.

During discussion of the proposed amendment, members made the following comments:

- queried why GPC was being asked to consider this proposal when there was still time for E&EC to consider this issue as part of the budget proposals for Economy, Transport and Environment (ETE) Services.
- suggested that the MLEI Project could be seen as a corporate project, which could be funded from General Reserves as an Invest to Save Scheme. It was noted that there were a number of renewable energy schemes connected with the project included under Corporate and Managed Services on page 65 of the Finance Tables.
- reminded the Committee that there had been delays in the MLEI Project before. It was suggested that this gap in funding would need to be subject to negotiation within ETE. E&EC would continue to review the Project as it developed in order to establish what funding was needed. The Chairman of E&EC reported that the Committee had received reports covering the risks.

The Vice-Chairman asked the Chief Finance Officer to clarify the funding situation relating to the MLEI Project. Members were informed that funding for the operational administration costs detailed on page 44 of the Finance Tables would cease in August 2015. The Council was required to get efficiency projects totalling £15m off the ground

in order to avoid repaying grant back to the European Regional Development Fund. He informed the Committee that he had provided for this as part of last year's budget closedown in case the Council did have to repay the grant. The Solar Farm detailed in the capital programme on page 65 had been included in the programme before the MLEI Project had started but it had now been embraced by the project. He informed the Committee of the various funding options, which included the General Reserve or the ETE Services office reserve of £3m, which might or might not be earmarked for other projects.

Councillor Bates proposed an amendment to invite E&EC to consider the future of the MLEI Project, seconded by Councillor Bourke. As a result, Councillor Leeke agreed to withdraw his amendment. On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

In considering Section 5.5 of the report, it was proposed by the Vice-Chairman, and seconded by Councillor Bates, to agree the second approach to adopt a broad allocation methodology of £2m to Children, Families and Adults and £0.5m to ETE. On being put to the vote, the proposal was carried.

It was resolved to:

- a) comment on the Business Planning proposals that had been approved by Service Committees.
- b) agree the Strategic Framework for the 2015-20 Business Plan.
- c) note the remaining milestones in the Business Planning Process.
- d) confirm the use of £2.5m funding held in retention for the Business Planning Process as follows:
 - agree the second approach to adopt a broad allocation methodology of £2m to Children, Families and Adults and £0.5m to Economy, Transport and Environment.
- e) note and endorse the updates provided around revenue and capital funding for Customer Service & Transformation, and LGSS Managed services.
- f) invite Economy and Environment Committee to consider the future of the Mobilising Local Energy Investment Project.

74. GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee was asked to review its agenda plan. It was noted that the item on Risk Management had moved from 6 January to 27 January and the item on the Impact of Local Government Finance Settlement would be included as part of the Business Plan update.

It was resolved unanimously to note the agenda plan.

Chairman