

## **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday, 15th September 2015

**Time:** 10.00a.m. – 1.20p.m.

**Present:** Councillors Bailey, Bullen, Cearns, Count (Chairman), Hickford, Hipkin, Jenkins, Kavanagh (substituting for Councillor Walsh), McGuire (Vice-Chairman), Nethsingha, Orgee, Reeve, Rouse (substituting for Councillor Criswell), Schumann (substituting for Councillor Brown), Shuter (substituting for Councillor Bates), Tew and Whitehead

**Apologies:** Councillors Bates, D Brown, Criswell and Walsh

**Also in**

**Attendance:** Councillors Harford and Leeke

### **143. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **144. MINUTES –28TH JULY 2015 AND ACTION LOG**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. The Action Log and following updates were noted:

- the detailed proposals to be presented to the Committee regarding the associated costs of implementing the new Operating Model would be considered as part of the Business Plan process and presented to the Committee in November. **Action Required.**
- the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) apologised to Councillor Jenkins for the confusion around the date for his briefing on any potential contract disputes.

One Member challenged the response to the investigation on how the shortfall in Park and Ride income was predicated. He reported that Economy and Environment Policy and Service Committee had been informed that the projection figures were incorrect as they were based on the wrong assumptions and further work was therefore needed. In response to a query from the Chairman, it was noted that the Committee had not agreed a recommendation in response to this issue. The Chairman was concerned that General Purposes Committee should not repeat the work of the Economy and Environment Policy and Service Committee. It was noted that General Purposes Committee had requested an action which had been completed.

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that the Recruitment Strategy Report would be taken to Children and Young People Policy and Service Committee on 8th December and Adults Policy and Service Committee on 1st December before being presented to General Purposes Committee. He reminded the Committee that it had asked officers to come back with an action plan in October. He was therefore concerned that the decision to defer this report had been taken without any reference to the Chairman of

General Purposes Committee. The Chief Executive acknowledged that the Chairman should have been consulted.

#### **145. PETITIONS**

No petitions were received.

#### **146. INTEGRATED RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST JULY 2015**

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. This was primarily due to the Government decision to delay the Care Act funding reforms until 2020. Members were informed that an assumption had been made that Government would not recover £873k for this function. It was also noted that there had been an increase in debt charges mainly due to favourable variances for Minimum Revenue Provision and Interest Payable.

Members were reminded that the Committee had agreed a recommendation at its last meeting inviting Committee Chairs to report at the next meeting of General Purposes Committee on actions in place to address emerging overspends. Attention was drawn to the actions detailed in Appendix 7 of the report. The Chairman invited the Chairs to address the Committee as follows:

- Councillor Tew, Chairman of Adults Policy and Service Committee, reported that Children, Families and Adults (CFA) would need to cut services as it could not cut care packages which it had a legal obligation to provide. The Chairman of General Purposes Committee highlighted the need to review the interpretation of what constituted a statutory minimum. The Vice-Chairwoman of Adults, Councillor Bailey, reported that the Committee had managed to reduce its overspend from £4m to £1.8m. Although it was not possible to cut a percentage off care packages, it was possible to review people's needs which changed all the time. She was keen to achieve a better understanding of the staffing structure which would be considered in detail at a future Spokes meeting. She added that it was not proposed to cut front-line staff.
- Councillor Whitehead, Chairwoman of Children and Young People Policy and Service Committee, reminded Members that CFA was a demand led service governed by national legislation. The Committee had considered how it could reduce the budget long-term but it was difficult to make short-term reductions. There was the dilemma that if it cut non-statutory services such as early help this would result in bigger overspends in the future. There was a danger that reducing staff costs further could increase pressure on remaining staff. The Chairman of General Purposes Committee informed Members that they would need to take unpalatable decisions in the future. The Chairwoman added that the Service had earmarked funding for any possible emergencies resulting from the increase in risk.
- in the absence of Councillor Bates, Councillor Cearnas as Vice-Chairman of Economy and Environment Policy and Service Committee was invited to address

the Committee. Councillor Cearns reported that he had not been informed of the need to stand in for Councillor Bates nor involved in the compilation of the report from the Committee.

- Councillor Jenkins, Chairman of Health Policy and Service Committee, drew attention to the fact that Public Health was forecasting a balanced budget at year end. However, he was disappointed that the Government had made an in year budget cut in grant. The Committee would be meeting to see how this could be addressed.
- Councillor Hickford, Chairman of Highways and Community Infrastructure Policy and Service Committee, explained that the Economy, Transport and Environment (ETE) report covered both Economy and Environment, and Highways and Community Infrastructure Committees. He reported that there was a small overspend relating to Park and Ride which would be covered partially by increased income from bus lane enforcement. He gave assurance that his Committee would achieve a balanced budget.
- Councillor McGuire, Chairman of the LGSS Joint Committee, reported on actions to manage the £1m overspend in the LGSS Managed budget. Members were informed that the Council now expected to receive £281k in rental income from Castle Court if planning permission was granted this month. County Farm rent reviews and investments in energy reduction had resulted in an additional £170k. It was proposed to release the £475k reserve for IT Asset Replacement and carry forward demand. It was also proposed to release the £225k redundancy budget to help achieve a balanced budget.

During discussion, members made the following comments:

- expressed nervousness regarding the assumption made on the funding for the Care Act.
- queried what was meant by ETE having a number of budgets that could easily be varied. The CFO explained that the spend for a number of ETE budgets could be influenced. It was noted that Highway Maintenance spending could be varied in the short-term although there were likely to be long-term consequences. One Member suggested that moving funding from Highway Maintenance was contrary to policy. The CFO reminded the Committee that the Council determined the allocation of budgets in its Business Plan. However, it was noted that activity led to a number of variables in year which were managed via the rules set out in the Council's Constitution. The Chairman of Highways and Community Infrastructure Policy and Service Committee acknowledged that the wording in the report was unfortunate.
- asked how the Community Transport budget could be varied. One Member expressed concerned about where the Cambridgeshire Future Transport project was heading and that any cut in funding would have major implications. The CFO agreed to report to a future meeting. **Action Required.**
- expressed concern that resources required for City Deal schemes had impacted directly on other Council activities when Members had been assured that this would

not be the case. The Chairman reported that he had taken this issue up directly with the Executive Director: ETE. The CFO explained that there had been a short-term redirection of resources to get the City Deal up and running. However, it was important to note that the City Deal was fully funded. One Member drew attention to the Yaxley to Farcet Scheme which had been delayed previously by landowner problems. The Local Member was concerned that he had only recently found out at Economy and Environment Policy and Service Committee that it was now being partly delayed because of the decision to redirect resources to the City Deal. The CFO agreed to provide the Local Member with a note as to how this would be rectified. **Action Required.** One Member commented that the decision to redirect resources highlighted the fact that the Council did not have enough staff. It was noted that staffing costs had been budgeted for in the City Deal.

- highlighted the fact that a number of issues had been considered at Economy and Environment Policy and Service Committee including Ely Crossing. It was noted that this scheme would now be completed by the end of 2017.
- noted that the Council would receive £3.578m in Section 106 contributions for the Guided Busway at some point. Members were informed that this funding was dictated by the level of development for Northstowe. It was queried whether the Council was certain the Section 106 funding for Northstowe would be delivered. Members were informed that new legislation had impacted on delivery as the Council could only pool five developments, which had resulted in the CB1 developers not contributing. The Chief Executive agreed to provide a briefing note on the CB1 Development. **Action Required.**
- highlighted the need to bear in mind that General Purposes Committee should not encourage cuts in services in the short-term to meet budget savings which could in the long-term result in the Council avoiding higher costs. The Chairman explained that it was the responsibility of each Policy and Service Committee to identify actions to achieve a balanced budget in order to avoid storing up a problem for the future. The CFO reminded the Committee that there was £16m in the general reserve to mitigate for unforeseen circumstances.
- suggested a sensible increase in Council Tax. It was proposed that any referenda should be timed to coincide with the referenda taking place in 2017.
- expressed disappointment at the standard of some of the reports as it was not always clear as to what should be cut to achieve a balanced budget. The Chairman acknowledged the need for the Committee to receive a report at its next meeting about how each Policy and Service Committee planned to achieve a balanced budget. **Action Required.**
- queried the impact of unaccompanied foreign children on the CFA budget. It was also queried whether social workers were being risk averse and whether the Council was providing a 'gold plated' service compared to other authorities for Looked After Children.

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 the use of the further £1.0m capital carry forward funding in 2015/16 (section 6.5).
- c) Approve the increase of £3.578m to the Prudential Borrowing requirement in 2015/16 (section 6.5).
- d) Approve the -£17.5m rephasing of Economy, Transport and Environment's (ETE's) Department for Transport (DfT) Grant requirement in 2015/16 regarding City Deal (section 6.5).
- e) Approve that the Independent Living Fund (ILF) grant of £1,037,438 be allocated in full to Children, Families and Adults (CFA) in 2015/16 (section 7.1).
- f) Approve that the additional Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) funding of £247,899 received in 2015/16 be transferred to the General Fund at year end, to replenish the County's resources used in the first instance to fund this activity (section 7.1).
- g) Approve the updated corporate performance scorecard for 2015/16 (section 5.1).

#### **147. STRATEGY FOR SUPPORTING NEW COMMUNITIES**

The Committee considered a report detailing the specific opportunities and challenges faced by Cambridgeshire County Council in responding to the needs of new communities. A strategy for supporting new communities had been developed in order to plan proactively for growth sites and ensure the Council had the necessary support in place to meet needs as they emerged. The strategy vision reflected community involvement and partnership working. There was a financial gap in the initial years of development and attention was drawn to Appendix 7 of the report detailing how this funding challenge would be approached. If forward investment in preventative activity was endorsed then it would need to be reflected in the Council's business planning process. Members were advised that a supplementary table detailing member feedback accompanied with an officer response and proposed action had been circulated.

The Chairman invited Councillor Harford who was a member of the Northstowe Joint Development Consultative Committee (JDCC) and Chairman of a Task and Finish Group at South Cambridgeshire District Council reviewing whether the results of a previous review had been adopted to address the Committee. Councillor Harford acknowledged the work of the officers in preparing the strategy. She reported that the insularity of the County Council and a silo mentality had been an impediment to moving forward. However, she drew attention to Northstowe as a great example of where County and District officers had worked well together. She stressed the importance of involving the NHS and Police who would both gain most from being engaged. She

highlighted the importance of organisations not thinking individually but instead taking responsibility for delivering public services as a whole. She acknowledged that more work was needed to ensure developers contributed to the success of new developments. In conclusion, she highlighted the need to reflect how all public organisations collaborated.

In response to questions, Councillor Harford commented as follows:

- the Northstowe project was the first time that District Council Members had felt that County Council officers were really accessible. One Member commented that the same could not be said for District Council officers who had not made themselves accessible to meet with him.
- acknowledged that it was very difficult to engage the NHS although Dr Bailey a GP from Cambourne had shared his experience with the Task and Finish Group. She highlighted the need for all NHS parties to be engaged including GPs and officers responsible for NHS buildings. The Chairman of Health Policy and Service Committee reported that public health issues relating to Northstowe were on the Committee's agenda.
- welcomed the close working between organisations which had not been apparent in 2007. It was important that all public organisations were encouraged to work as one big team.

During discussion, members made the following comments:

- highlighted the tension between early investment in preventative services to achieve a pay off at a later date and possible cuts to non-statutory services in order to achieve a balanced budget. Early investment was sensible but it was not clear how it would be allowed in terms of business planning. It was noted that there were fifteen new community projects in Cambridgeshire which all had early needs. Although the vision was commendable, it was unclear given the financial strictures how the strategy would be realised.
- welcomed the strategy but felt that it did not go far enough. It needed to focus on the needs of the community and how they could be supported by the County Council. It was disappointing that the strategy was not a partnership strategy, and it was also unclear how it would be delivered. There therefore needed to be a clear mechanism for delivery on the ground.
- suggested that the strategy was a worthy but flawed document which identified real issues but contained no solutions. It was a product of silo thinking rather than the proactive pulling together of separate strategies. The key to a successful new community was to get the built environment right rather than just developed houses. It was therefore important to do things differently in consultation with all partners.
- highlighted the importance of partnership. It was proposed that the County Council contribution needed to be seen as part of a greater strategy particularly as it was felt that some elements of the strategy were running contrary to the pressures the Council was under.

- suggested that the strategy felt more like an academic document than a working one. Attention was drawn to increased demographic pressures and the need to track and monitor those people moving into the county using Council services. It was also suggested that the Council should review whether it did enough to draw money in to the County from developers. One Member queried whether the time had come for a less aggressive growth strategy.
- queried the need to consider where the Council put its priorities. CFA was currently funding a New Communities Team to facilitate new developments and a community centre/hub. The Chairwoman queried whether Section 106 funding could be used to fund salaries for the staff facilitating new developments. She was concerned that this non-statutory function might be subject to budget cuts in the future.
- highlighted the fact that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment had identified that new communities were not typical in the early stages as they had a greater number of young people and children. The priority needs had been identified as follows: provision of lifetime homes; formal and informal green spaces; and identification of early social infrastructure. It was acknowledged that some of the needs had been included in the strategy. However, there needed to be an overarching document supported by the County Council and District Councils.
- highlighted the point of the strategy which was to give the County Council a clear steer regarding the needs of new communities when having robust conversations with developers. Officers acknowledged this point and reported that they also had aspirations to take the strategy further forward than just the County Council. Partnership working was key and there would be multi agency working groups to action this work.

Given the comments on partnership working, the Chairman proposed, with the unanimous agreement of the Committee, to add an additional recommendation (d) in order to encourage all public services to work together to design a community which supported itself. It was proposed that a joint approach should be agreed within a specific timescale. The Chairman was also concerned that recommendation (b) did not identify how the Council would address the shortfall. Again with the unanimous agreement of the Committee, he proposed to delete “specifically” and add “the Council considers ways to”. Finally there was unanimous agreement to add “to finalise the County Council’s strategy” in recommendation (c).

It was resolved to:

- a) To comment on the Cambridgeshire County Council Strategy for Supporting New Communities;
- b) To endorse the recommendation that the Council considers ways to address the funding shortfall which occurs in the first years of each new development through business planning;
- c) To delegate authority to the Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services in consultation with the Chairman to finalise the County Council’s strategy, incorporating the feedback from committee members; and

- d) With partners to agree a joint approach to creating sustainable new communities for consideration by this Council by the end of 2015.

**148. LESS THAN BEST CONSIDERATION DISPOSAL –  
CROMWELL MUSEUM BUILDING, HUNTINGDON**

The Committee received a report detailing options for dealing with the Cromwell Museum. Members were reminded that the withdrawal of County Council funding for the Museum was one of the Council's business plan savings. The Council owned the freehold for this small 12<sup>th</sup> Century Grade II building. Huntingdon Town Council had approached the Council with a proposal that it acquire the freehold of the building, that it become responsible for the structure of the asset, that the Museum Trust become responsible for the internal condition of the asset, and that the Town Council allow the Trust to continue to operate the building as a museum devoted to the life of Oliver Cromwell. It was noted that a proposal to transfer the freehold for a peppercorn payment would require approval from General Purposes Committee to a less than best consideration.

The Chairman reported that Local Member, Councillor Peter Brown, was fully supportive of this proposal.

During discussion, members made the following comments:

- queried why the Town Council would not accept a 999 year lease. The CFO reported that the Town Clerk who had been unable to attend the meeting had confirmed that it was Town Council policy to only accept an asset with a freehold rather than a lease. Any transfer would still be subject to a covenant restricting the use of the property.
- queried why the Town Council was only prepared to accept the freehold. There was real concern that the proposal did not safeguard the future of the Museum. The Trust had not yet been established and the Museum had not received its re-accreditation. It was felt that the County Council should only be paying the Town Council a contribution of £5,000 towards immediate maintenance work rather than £20,000. The value of the building at £45,000 was also queried and there was concern that the Council was giving away £1,250 in income rights as well as providing archive storage at nil rent. There was particular concern that there was nothing to stop the Town Council changing the venue to a cultural asset resulting in the need for the Council to remove its collection.
- queried whether the covenant safeguard could be breached. It was noted that it was possible to take legal action to enforce a covenant but there were risks. It was easier to take action in relation to forgoing on a lease.
- reported that Cabinet had wanted to dispose of the Museum. There was a need to avoid a silo mentality in order to allow one public authority to transfer an asset to another public authority for the benefit of local people. It was noted that the Town Council was trying to acquire different properties for storage, which would remove the need for the County Council to provide archive storage. In response, a former



member of Cabinet reported that there had been no discussion about giving the Town Council the freehold.

- queried whether the Council would still have to pay maintenance costs if it agreed a leasehold. It was noted that a long lease of over 99 years would result in maintenance obligations passing to the Town Council. In response to a query, it was also noted that an incentive package had been offered to the Town Council with a long lease.
- reminded the Committee that the Town Council was not prepared to accept a leasehold. It was felt that the Council should not test the Town Council further as it could lose patience. It was a good arrangement for the use of the building in order to provide a benefit to the people of Huntingdon and beyond.
- expressed concern that if the Town Council refused to take on the leasehold it could result in the closure of the Museum.
- queried the costs involved in negotiating access rights with the purchaser of the former probation offices. It was noted that the costs related solely to time at the moment but there could be legal costs in the future.

Given the concerns about guaranteeing the Museum's future, Councillor Bailey proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Schumann, to remove "freehold" and add "999 leasehold" and add at the end "in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee". On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

It was resolved to:

approve a transfer of a 999 leasehold of the Cromwell Museum building to Huntingdon Town Council at less than best consideration for continued use as a public museum on detailed terms agreed by the Head of Strategic Assets in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee.

#### **149. BUSINESS PLANNING - SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE DRAFT 2016-26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report setting out an overview of the draft Business Plan Capital Programme for Corporate and Managed Services. One Member welcomed the proposals for housing.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2016-17 Capital Programme for Corporate and Managed Services; and
- b) comment on the draft proposals for Corporate and Managed Services' 2016-17 Capital Programme and endorse their development.

## **150. EAST BARNWELL COMMUNITY CENTRE**

The Committee received an update following a decision at the last meeting to consider two options for the delivery of a mixed development at East Barnwell. Discussions had taken place with the Christ the Redeemer Church who owned the largest of the three sites. The Minister had been very supportive but he did not hold the assets. The CFO explained that there was now a real opportunity to move this project on. It was important to bear in mind that the Council was dealing with an external partner which might slow progress slightly. However, the CFO would be mindful of any delays which were beyond acceptable, and this might result in the Council then developing its own facility.

Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Whitehead thanked the officers for the work which had taken place. She acknowledged the benefit of using a bigger land area in order to ameliorate the conflict between the interests of residents, and the community and sports facilities. Councillor Bullen who had been involved in the development discussions welcomed this report as the best outcome for the site.

The Chairman proposed, with the unanimous agreement of the Committee, to amend recommendation (c) to reflect the standard process for dealing with business cases.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Note the feedback from the adjoining land owners;
- (b) Agree that the Council should continue developing proposals for a mixed use development in partnership with the Christ the Redeemer Church with a target of agreeing Heads of Terms within 6 months;
- (c) That consideration of the Business Case be undertaken by the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, the Member for Abbey Division, the Investment Review Group and the East Barnwell Strategy Group.

## **151. TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER ONE REPORT**

The Committee considered the first quarterly update on the Treasury Management Strategy 2015-16, approved by Council in February 2015. Attention was drawn to an error in Section 10.2 which required the replacement of the word "Cabinet" with General Purposes Committee.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the Treasury Management Quarter One Report 2015-16.

## **152. ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS - REVISED PROTOCOL FOR STRATEGIC ASSETS**

The Committee considered a protocol for improved engagement of Members in strategic asset matters.

A member of the Treasury Management Group welcomed the protocol to ensure the engagement of Members. His comments were supported by the Chairman who thanked the officers for their work.

It was resolved unanimously to agree the approach proposed.

#### **153. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER UPDATE**

The Committee received a report detailing the current status of corporate risk. Attention was drawn to the following changes: the increase from amber to red of risk 1b 'Failure to deliver the current five year business plan'; the combining of risks 14 and 16 to a single new risk 28 'Lack of capacity to respond to rising service provision'; and a new risk 27 'The Pension Fund is materially under-funded'.

One Member suggested that the whole council should be concerned that the number of risks was increasing. She highlighted a number of other risks which should be reviewed as follows: risk 22 'The Cambridgeshire Future Transport programme fails to meet its objectives within the available budget'; and risk 20 'Non compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements'. She also had concern about the level of risk associated with risk 15 'Failure of the Council's arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children and adults'.

Other Members commented on risk 1b 'Failure to deliver the current five year Business Plan'. It was suggested that the pace of the transformation agenda should be moved forward as a key part of the action plan. There was concern that sufficient attention had not been given to the magnitude of the situation and the action needed to address it. Another Member suggested external input to review the Council's budget. The Chairman reminded the Committee of the arrangements to appoint a new Chief Executive.

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

#### **154. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – JULY 2015**

The Committee was presented with the July 2015 Finance and Performance report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office. One Member requested a separate column in future 'Income and Expenditure – Overall Position' tables detailing the original budget position. **Action Required.**

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

#### **155. 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.

It was resolved to:

- a) review its Agenda Plan attached at Appendix 1;
- b) review and agree its Training Plan attached at Appendix 2;
- c) agree the following appointments:
  - Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel appoint Councillor Bullen to replace Councillor Reeve;
  - appoint Councillor Boden to represent the County Council on Camsight;
  - Councillor Count to be the Council's representative on the Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire District Councils Shared Services Board; and
  - appoint Councillor Boden to represent the County Council on the Isle of Ely Society for the Blind.

Chairman