

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 20th December 2016

Time: 10.00a.m. – 12.40p.m.

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

Apologies: Councillors Bates

289. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

290. MINUTES – 29TH NOVEMBER 2016 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. The Action Log was noted. One Member raised an issue in relation to action 286 - Cambridgeshire Guided Busway Defects. The Chairman agreed to consider this issue at the end of the meeting as it would involve excluding the press and public.

291. PETITIONS

No petitions were received. The Chairman reported that he had received notice of a petition at approximately 4.00p.m. on 19 December with a request to exercise his discretion to allow the petitioner to speak. Given the lack of notice and the subject matter, he had recommended an alternate course of action which allowed the Chairman of Highways and Communities Infrastructure Committee to liaise with relevant parties to review the situation and assist in bringing forward some alternative suggestions which could be considered by the relevant Policy and Service Committee, if appropriate.

292. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – OCTOBER 2016

Before the start of the item, the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) updated the Committee on the recent publication of the provisional 2017-18 settlement. It was noted that the settlement was largely in line with expectations subject to a few nuances. The Revenue Support Grant was as set out in the Business Plan and the changes to the New Homes Bonus were in line with expectations. The Adult Social Care Support Grant had increased slightly and there was increased flexibility in the Adult Social Care precept. It was noted that the Committee would receive a formal report on the settlement at its next meeting.

The Committee was presented with the October 2016 Finance and Performance report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office. A year-end overspend on revenue of £569k was being forecast. The overspend was primarily due to additional redundancy costs as part of the staff rationalisation programme. The Council had not utilised the £1m provision for a number of years but given the current level of reductions

in staffing it was anticipated that this year the level of costs incurred would exceed this provision. There would therefore be a budget pressure of £0.5m in 2017/18.

The Chairman challenged the terminology used regarding staff redundancies. He explained that it was the result of a policy to run the organisation in a different way rather than rationalisation. A Member queried exactly how long the Council had not utilised the £1m provision. The CFO reported that it was at least four years and possibly longer. Concern was expressed by another Member regarding the loss of expertise as part of the programme particularly the fact that some people were electing to leave to the detriment of the Council.

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

293. INTEGRATED RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST OCTOBER 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 an increase of £0.3m on the overspend reported last month. The change was primarily due to the additional £0.5m in redundancy costs. It was hoped that the overspend would come down within the financial framework by 31 March 2017. The capital budget was in line with the revised forecast. Attention was drawn to the £503,941 of unbudgeted income in relation to the Thomas Clarkson Academy Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract renegotiation.

Councillor Brown proposed, seconded by Councillor McGuire, to allocate the one-off unbudgeted income, less a £190k contribution to all schools, to Thomas Clarkson Academy. In considering the proposal, one Member queried whether there had been any consultation with the Schools Forum and schools. The Chairwoman of the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee highlighted the importance of discussions with the Schools Forum as there was a particular pressure in the special needs block. She hoped that the Forum would agree to put the £190k contribution towards the high needs block.

One Member reminded the Committee that it was the Council's policy to reduce inequalities. He expressed his support for Option i) but highlighted the need for a plan and for it to be monitored. In response, the Chairman commented that both Options i) and ii) focussed on areas of disadvantage. Members acknowledged that it would be difficult to monitor an Academy but were content that Thomas Clarkson would use the funding to drive up standards. The Chairman proposed, with the agreement of the Committee, that officers should write to Thomas Clarkson Academy to ask it to use the funding to raise standards in order to achieve improvements. It was also agreed that officers should write to the Schools Forum to ask it to use its contribution to support disadvantaged pupils. **Action Required.**

One Member queried whether the £1.8m overspend included the £3m extra increment for Looked After Children. The CFO was of the view that it was included but agreed to check. **Action Required.**

It was resolved to:

- a) Analyse resources and performance information and note any remedial action currently being taken and consider if any further remedial action was required.
- b) Allocate the unbudgeted income, less a £190k contribution to all schools, to Thomas Clarkson Academy.

294. 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. In considering the report, some Members commented on the requests as follows:

- highlighted the fact that returns on investment were not consistent across the requests for investments. The Chairman suggested demonstrating returns over a five year period. **Action Required.**
 - highlighted the need for Directors of Services to scrutinise predicted savings carefully in order to identify returns against investment. The CFO acknowledged the importance of this action and reported that reviews would take place on a quarterly basis.
 - requested early sight of the savings tracker. **Action Required.**
 - queried the lack of consistency with the “Impacts on specific groups with proposed characteristics” tables on pages 112 and 114. One Member suggested the use of a model framework. The Chairman acknowledged that there were inconsistencies throughout the report. He explained that he had asked for Community Impact Assessments (CIAs) and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to be covered at a future Members’ Seminar. The same Member highlighted the need to include examples in the CIAs. The Chief Executive agreed to take action. **Action Required.**
 - highlighted the need to communicate the impact and importance of the decisions made as part of the Transformation Fund. The Chief Executive acknowledged the need to bring it to life with case studies. **Action Required.**
- a) **Using Assistive Technology to Help People with Learning Disabilities Live More Safely and Independently without the need for 24 hour or overnight care**
- highlighted the need to establish the financial benefit of this request for Health. Whilst the Council was not seeking a contribution from Health, it might help with other difficult discussions the Council might have with this sector in the future.
 - queried why this project was restricted to one user group. The Committee was informed that Assistive Technology was not restricted to one group. Members were reminded that they had already approved Phase 1 for older people and

would be asked to consider Phase 2 in June. The Council needed to be clear about how it targeted this technology, as there were different types, in order to achieve a return on investment. The Chairman of Adults Committee reported that he had spent a day being shown how this technology worked and how it could be applied across the board. He had asked that the Sensory Advisory Service be included. He had also written a briefing paper for the CFA group and had asked for an item to be included on a future Members' Seminar.

- queried whether Assistive Technology would help people with learning disabilities live more safely. In response, the Chairman of Adults and another Member highlighted where this had been the case.
- c) Recouping under-used direct payment budget allocations from service users**
- expressed concern that no action had been taken in response to an Internal Audit carried out in 2015. The CFO agreed to investigate. **Action Required.**
 - expressed concern that whilst Adults/GPC Committee had endorsed this proposal in the Summer of 2016, no action had taken place due to a capacity gap. The Vice-Chairwoman of Adults Committee reported that this lack of activity had not been reported to Adults Committee. She was concerned that the Council could effectively be paying for this request twice. The Chairman stressed that he had made clear the need to raise capacity constraints in relation to achieving savings.
- f) Total Transport**
- expressed strong support for this request. The Chairwoman of CYP Committee reported that officers were still pursuing savings in Special Educational Needs transport and day care centres. It was hoped that the flexible use of mini buses would increase the number of people attending centres.
- g) Street Lighting Synergies**
- queried how the estimate of the Break Cost of £800,000 had been achieved. The CFO was asked to provide more information in the form of a briefing note to clarify this figure. **Action Required.**
 - suggested delegating the decision regarding the Break Cost to the CFO, in consultation with the Chairman, given that it could be in the region of £500,000 to £1m.
- h) Neighbourhood Cares Transformation Pilot – A New Approach to Social Work in Communities**
- welcomed the project but highlighted the fact that there were no savings listed. One Member commented that a transformation project was expected to deliver savings. The Vice-Chairwoman of Adults Committee explained that this radical change to address the demographic time bomb needed to be tested in a small geography first. The new team would operate in isolation from the old system in order to make comparisons. The pilot would need to identify how many members

of staff it took to support a community of 10,000 before it could be rolled out across the whole county. It was noted that the Buurtzorg Model which operated in the Netherlands had achieved savings of over 40%. The Chairman reminded the Committee why the Transformation Fund had been established which was to do things in a different way in order to achieve financial returns or improve people's lives. It was not therefore restricted to achieving a return of 5:1 on investment. The CFO acknowledged the point made about savings but explained that this project had not been tested in the UK and was effectively breaking new ground. However, the Council could rely on the savings figure achieved where it had operated.

- welcomed the fact that the Council was not just immediately looking for a financial return. It was suggested that the nature of the proposal required a different monitoring process. The Chairman raised the need for Adults Committee to monitor the key issues arising from this experiment. One Member requested a copy of the criteria being used to monitor this pilot. She commented that it would be difficult to monitor whether the project was delivering if it had no proposed savings. Another Member commented that it should be possible to estimate the cost of the advantages of the project.
- queried whether pilot projects should be funded from the Transformation Fund. The Chairman acknowledged that Transformation Fund Bids were designed to deliver savings. However, there was no requirement to identify where the money would come from in order to do that. The CFO added that the objective was to drive cost efficiencies in the way services were delivered.
- expressed concern that teams would be empowered to use their judgement to spend resources without management oversight. The Committee was informed that teams would make small day to day decisions removing bureaucracy around the process. Financial controls would remain. The Vice-Chairwoman explained in detail how the project would work with the use of case studies.
- the need to review the title of "Neighbourhood Worker" as it could cause confusion with previous projects.

k) Move to Full Cost Recovery for Non-Statutory Highway Works

- highlighted the importance of District and Parish/Town Councils as well as officers having a different mind-set as detailed in the CIA. The Chairman commented that the CIA demonstrated that this request would have a positive impact on communities.
- welcomed this request as it would enable projects to be developed in a quicker and more streamlined way. The Chairman commented that this request would address the lack of progress of potential third party funding.
- highlighted the need to clarify the process so that District and Parish/Town Councils were aware when they were being charged. Members commented that the project presented a more professional approach; one Member suggested that parish councils also needed a more professional approach.

It was resolved unanimously to approve the following business cases and associated investment from the Transformation Fund for:

- a) Using assistive technology to help people with learning disabilities live more safely and independently without the need for 24 hour or overnight care
- b) Enhanced Occupational Therapy Support to reduce the need for double handed care
- c) Recouping under-used direct payment budget allocations from service users
- d) Dedicated Reassessment Team – Learning Disabilities
- e) Care Plan Review Capacity – Physical Disabilities
- f) Total Transport
- g) Street Lighting Synergies
- h) Neighbourhood Cares Transformation Pilot – a new approach to social work in communities

And note the three proposals approved by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader, as per approved delegation:

- i) Specialist Adult and Autism Support to increase independence
- j) Continuing financial re-assessment programme for client contributions
- k) Move to full cost recovery for non-statutory highway works

295. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2017/18 TO 2021/22

The Committee received a report detailing an overview of the draft Business Plan revenue and capital proposals for Corporate and LGSS Managed Services and cross-Council proposals that were within the remit of the General Purposes Committee. The Chairman reminded the Committee that it had received a briefing note from the CFO detailing the 6% Council Tax increase over three years. He asked for more information in a table detailing what this would mean. **Action Required.**

Members made the following comments in relation to the report:

- highlighted the assumption being made regarding a 2% increase in Council Tax. One Member drew attention to what the Council could do if it raised Council Tax by 4%. Another Member commented that he could not support any increase in Council Tax. The Chairman requested that any alternative budgets be presented to the next meeting.

- requested further information on the Cross Service Transformation savings on page 143. The CFO explained that the £2m for the current year as part of the Corporate Capacity Review had come to fruition and was delivering a more efficient staffing structure. The Business Plan 2017/18 included a £4m reduction in the staffing budget which had not been identified and was part of an ongoing programme. One Member reiterated his concerns about the loss of some members of staff. The Chairman of the Staffing and Appeals Committee commented that a lot savings were about staff leaving rather than about redundancies.
- highlighted the need to debate the significant change to the Adult Social Care precept. The CFO reminded the Committee that it was being asked to consider its part of the Business Plan rather than an overview of the Council as a whole. The opportunity for the Committee to consider the full Business Plan would take place at its next meeting.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2017/18 to 2021/22 Business Plan revenue proposals for the Service, updated since the last report to the Committee in October.
- b) comment on the revenue savings proposals that were within the remit of the General Purposes Committee for 2017/18 to 2021/22.
- c) comment on the changes to the capital programme that were within the remit of the General Purposes Committee.

296. LEVEL OF OUTSTANDING DEBT

The Committee received an update on the current level of debt and actions being taken to manage it presently, to review the targets set and proposed actions to control it further. Attention was drawn to the background which included the fact that the Council had not been achieving its Integrated Resources and Performance Report debt targets set for some time and the total operational debt outstanding. Members focussed on Adult Social Care debt and noted benchmarking figures against neighbouring authorities. During a detailed discussion, the following points were raised by some Members:

- welcomed proposed suggestions particularly in relation to working with Addenbrooke's and Hinchingbrooke Hospitals.
- the need to prevent people from getting in to debt. One Member queried whether any Transformation Fund bids were focussing on this area particularly regarding making sure that people were charged the right amount in a timely fashion. The Director of Customer Service and Transformation reported that digital systems were being made as effective as possible to enable people to make electronic payments. Staff were working closely with colleagues in Adult Welfare Benefits and Financial Assessments in order to provide users with the right advice and support. The Head of Finance Operations added that his staff worked closely with social care colleagues to help people know exactly what they needed to pay at the start.

- expressed concern about the use of external debt collection agents. Whilst some people saw being in debt to the Council as a low priority, there were others who were vulnerable and in poverty. It was therefore important that they were not bullied or harassed. It was suggested that the work of these agents should be monitored. The Head of Finance Operations reported that he was very mindful of that and as such quarterly reviews were carried out. Cases were vetted and clients visited by Council staff before external agents were sent. External agents were instructed to contact the Council if they identified potential issues.
- highlighted the need to bear in mind the reputational risk to the Council particularly in relation to using an external debt collection agent to collect debt of less than £250. The Chairman raised the need to circulate the filter process to Members. Another Member also required a briefing on the external debt collection agencies being used.
Action Required.
- queried why there were no benchmarking figures for Leicestershire County Council. It was noted that the information had not been provided. The LGSS Finance Director reported that together with the Head of Finance Operations he would be visiting some neighbouring authorities to discuss how they managed outstanding debt.
- queried the proposal to rebase the target to current level otherwise the position of continually reporting under performance would persist. The Chairman was of the view that the target should be based on the best performing authority. Unfortunately it was not possible to set this target without the necessary information. With the agreement of the Committee, he proposed deleting recommendation (viii) and replacing it with the following “the Chairman work in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer in order to define debt targets and to issue further briefings on questions raised at General Purposes Committee, with the agreement of final targets to be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chairman.”
- highlighted the need, given its controversial and sensitive nature, of reviewing debt collection after six months. It was suggested that the review should include some anonymised case studies. The Chairman proposed that the review process should take place after one year. The LGSS Finance Director informed the Committee that it was proposed to join the East Midlands Social Care Finance Group Benchmarking Club. He reported that a year would enable him to provide the Committee with information for a review. The Committee supported a proposal to receive a review in September 2017. **Action required.**

It was resolved unanimously to agree:

- (i) that the Debt Service continues to engage with Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) to convert services to pay on application using online processes wherever possible with particular focus on eradicating all low value invoices being issued for less than £250.

- (ii) that the Debt and Financial Assessment Services continue to engage with Adult Social Care (ASC) on process changes designed to improve the speed information was provided/shared, the collection and sharing of data on care packages and increase direct debit penetration with the aim of securing one for all new cases with immediate effect.
- (iii) that the Collections Strategy had been reviewed and updated to reduce the timescales before intervention took place and implement a clear direction for how low value invoices would be managed to enable resources to be deployed in the most effective way.
- (iv) that the Debt Service continues to assess the effectiveness of the current debt collection agencies, whether they should continue to be used (or replaced) and how best this type of service could be used to support collecting debt.
- (v) that once access to DWP CIS was available, introduce telephone financial assessments to speed up the invoicing process and reduce the potential for bad debt to occur.
- (vi) that once access to DWP CIS was available, in collaboration with ASC introduce a provisional charge matrix to replace the current full cost approach where a financial assessment cannot be completed to minimise the likelihood of debt accruing that was not actually due.
- (vii) to continue with the implementation of the ICON system and seek with CCC to exploit its full potential in due course.
- (viii) the Chairman work in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer in order to define debt targets and to issue further briefings on questions raised at General Purposes Committee, with the agreement of final targets to be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chairman.
- (ix) that General Purposes Committee review the arrangements in September 2017.

297. A CORPORATE ENERGY STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Committee considered the draft Corporate Energy Strategy Cambridgeshire County Council. Members were reminded that they had indicated a desire to grow the Council's energy ambitions, and bring forward larger energy projects with the aim of making better use of the Council's assets, generating income and reducing energy consumption. Any scheme would be subject to planning rules and community engagement. It was noted that the strategy would be subject to a consultation for four weeks starting 3rd January 2017 – 31st January 2017. In welcoming the strategy, some Members raised the following:

- the need to make clearer that it was a draft strategy.
- expressed opposition to growing maize on land which then needed to be transported 30 to 40 miles to anaerobic digestion facilities. It was suggested that this should be reflected in the strategy.

- the need separate biomethane between those with facilities on site which were supported and off site facilities which were generally not.
- the need to include Assets and Investments Committee as a consultee, as this Committee was responsible for the Council's assets.
- the need to identify where one solution such as electric vehicles created another problem because coal was the primary source of generating electricity.
- highlighted the possibility of building a centralised heating system on land that was being used for housing. Members were informed that the Energy Investment Unit was engaging with the development of the Council's own housing stock.
- welcomed the comprehensive engagement process with the community and requested a copy the engagement plan when it was available. The Local Member for Soham, Councillor Schumann, highlighted the poor consultation process for the Soham Solar Project which had not engaged with the local community. He suggested the need for a consultation protocol. Another Member highlighted the impact of large scale projects on local communities such as windfarms and incinerators and raised the need to include referenda.
- requested that consideration be given as to how local communities could benefit from a specific project in their area. The Committee was reminded that a collective switching scheme had been in operation to enable communities to get better tariffs.
- highlighted the need to compile an Energy Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which should include action to reduce energy use around the county. The Chairman acknowledged that this was a role for public health or devolution.
- queried the current 16/17 strike price for onshore wind projects against the cost of producing the turbines, and the costs involved in the production of solar PV. One Member also raised the fact that geothermal energy took time to re-circulate. He suggested that any future paper should include costs. Officers offered to provide a link to a website detailing costings. **Action Required.**
- the need to review the Council's policy to not build wind turbines on its assets to allow for smaller turbines to power pumping stations.
- the need to highlight projects the County Council was already working on such as Smartlife, new construction techniques for buildings and work involving the local environment.
- the need to make clear that the Council was trying to make money out of the strategy. There was concern that the Council was not well equipped to pursue cutting edge energy production. One Member was keen for the Council to work alongside green companies and the University of Cambridge. Members were informed that officers sat on several boards looking at innovative projects and was trail blazing with the solar energy project at St Ives Park and Ride which would

enable energy to be sold to local businesses. Officers offered to send an e-mail to Members detailing trail blazing schemes. **Action Required.**

It was resolved unanimously to agree:

- a) The draft principles and priorities of the draft Corporate Energy Strategy as set out in section 2.3 and 2.4 of the report;
- b) External key stakeholder consultation of the Corporate Energy Strategy (appendix A); and
- c) The timetable for finalising and approving the Corporate Energy Strategy as set out in section 2.9.

**298. 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, and noted the following deletions to the agenda plan:

- County Council Elections 2017 (20/12/16) – The Director Customer Service and Transformation would provide details of election costs in the new year. **Action Required.**
- Housing Development Agency – Approval to Set Up As A Company (24/01/17)

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.

290. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved unanimously:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information under paragraph 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as it referred to information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

Chairman