

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 6th January 2015

Time: 10.00a.m. – 12.40p.m.

Present: Councillors Bailey, Bates, Bourke, D Brown, Bullen, Cearns, Count (Chairman), Criswell, Henson (substituting for P Reeve), Hickford, Hipkin, Leeke, McGuire, Orgee, Rylance, Walsh (substituting for P Sales), and Whitehead

Apologies: Councillors Reeve and Sales

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

76. MINUTES – 2ND DECEMBER 2014 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. The Action Log and the following update were noted:

- discussions had taken place with partners and District Councils in relation to Shape Your Place. It was not clear whether some District Councils would be prepared to take over the infrastructure. It was therefore noted that these discussions would continue. **Action Required.**

77. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

78. INTEGRATED RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 30TH NOVEMBER 2014

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 was showing a forecast year end overspend of £0.9m, which was a decrease from the previous forecast for the last month. Children, Families and Adults (CFA) had experienced an increase in the forecast overspend for Home to School Transport. Work was taking to place to consider how the portfolio could be managed in order to achieve better value for money. There was an underspend of £200,000 in the LGSS Managed budget as a result of Section 188 savings identified in the previous year. The Capital Programme was showing a forecast year end underspend of -£52.6m, which was an increase on the previous figure.

During discussion, members made the following comments:

Home to School Transport

- suggested that Home to School Transport should be included as part of the remit of the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Member Steering Group following the decision

of Council on 16 December 2014 to revive the Group for the purpose of actively promoting a coordinated, multi-disciplinary strategic approach to Community Transport.

- reported that the Children and Young People Committee (CYPC) had discussed the possibility of integrating Home to School Transport with other forms of transport but this had raised some security issues.
- queried the impact on the Home to School Transport budget of colleges specialising to provide courses to meet the needs of employers. The Chairwoman of CYPC informed the Committee that there were criteria for the provision of Home to School Transport. Pupils under the age of 16 did not receive free transport if their parents chose to send them to a different school. It was noted that the CYPC was no longer proposing to fund post-16 Home to School Transport. The first bullet point in Section 3.2.2 was therefore only applicable this year.
- queried the reasons why a further independent assessment had not taken place on the route between Babraham and Sawston Village College. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to investigate. **Action Required.**

Councillor McGuire proposed an amendment to invite the Member Led Group reviewing Cambridgeshire Future Transport to include home to school transport in its remit, seconded by Councillor Bates.

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

Park and Ride Sites

- expressed concern about the potential patronage drop at Park and Ride sites. It was noted that Economy and Environment Committee (E&EC) had requested a report at its meeting in February to identify whether any action could be taken.

The proportion of pupils attending Cambridgeshire schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted

- queried what remedial action could be carried out to increase the proportion of pupils attending Cambridgeshire schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted. The Committee was informed that Cambridgeshire only had one secondary school which was not an academy; this meant that whilst the Council was responsible for achievement it had no power of intervention. Members were also advised that the CYPC had agreed to split the indicator to cover primary, secondary and special schools to avoid one large secondary school distorting overall performance. It was proposing to consider what remedial action it could take to address this indicator at its next meeting. It was queried whether the Council should remove this indicator if it had no power of intervention. In response, it was noted that achievement was a statutory duty for the Council.
- highlighted the different ways of taking remedial action by writing to Governors and parents.

- highlighted the impact of the removal of the Small Schools Protection Grant on primary schools in Cambridgeshire. It was suggested that these schools should be asked what they stood to lose and would therefore be unable to do in the future.

The number of people successfully quitting smoking with support from stop smoking services

- queried the need to review this indicator. There was concern that it did not cover proactive measures such as the Kick Ash programme. It was suggested that it should measure the percentage of people in the County who smoked. It was noted that there were figures available relating to smoking prevalence, which showed marked differences in the County, and global figures which masked a lot of underlying information. The Chairman of the Health Committee reported that the Committee was reviewing the usefulness of this indicator particularly given the increase in the use of electronic cigarettes.
- highlighted the need to incentivise GPs to improve performance in GP practices.
- queried whether the drop from 92% to 72% locally in the stop smoking target was above or below national trends. **Action Required.**

Reduced proportion of Delayed Transfers of Care from Hospital, per 100,000 of population (aged 18+): April – December 2014

- highlighted the fact that the Council's performance was improving.

Grants

- queried the possibility of using the underspend in the Education Services Grant (ESG) to fund significant pressures in the Education Budget particularly in relation to young people not in education, employment or training. The Chief Finance Officer informed the Committee that this was an unringfenced grant. It was the Council's policy to transfer any such additional income to corporate reserves at year end. Members queried whether Service Committees could then apply for funding from corporate reserves. The Chief Finance Officer drew attention to the significant office reserves detailed on page 38. He reported that there was a programme of utilisation of reserves, which could involve looking at proposals from Service Committees. One Member asked for a copy of the Council's policy on the use of reserves.
Action Required.

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) Invite the Member Led Group reviewing Cambridgeshire Future Transport to include home to school transport in its remit.

79. PROCUREMENT OF SECURITY SERVICES FOR COUNCIL PREMISES

The Committee received a report detailing a proposed approach to jointly procuring the provision of security services for the Council's premises. The security of Council properties was outsourced to the private sector. It was proposed to bundle all aspects

of security together jointly with Northamptonshire County Council, to create two Single-Supplier Framework Agreements. Attention was drawn to the Multi-Tier Supply-Chain Management in Section 3, which ensured that local Small and Medium Enterprises had equal and fair access to contracts to enable them to grow the local economy.

Members queried how the Council would ensure that payment terms at all tiers of the supply chain would be monitored and not permitted to exceed the standard term of 30 days from receipt of a valid invoice. The Chief Finance Officer reported that the Account Receivable Payment System monitored the information automatically. Members highlighted the need to strengthen the requirement for the main contractor to employ a cohort of apprentices from local schools. The Chief Executive acknowledged that it could be given a higher weighting in the assessment.

One Member queried how the Council would ensure people were paid a decent wage. The Committee was reminded that a motion to Council on the Living Wage had been unsuccessful, and a Member Led Review had concluded that the Council's use of zero hours contracts was appropriate. It was also queried whether Northamptonshire County Council's recent decision to outsource community services would impact on the process. The Chairman advised that this part of the organisation would be unaffected.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) approve the commencement of the re –procurement of the Corporate Security Contract for a term of 3 years from 1st September 2015 to 31st August 2018, with the option to extend for a further year from 1st September 2018 to 31st August 2019; and
- b) delegate authority to the Director of Law Property & Governance and Head of Property Services in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee, to appoint contractors following a competitive process and complete all necessary contractual documents in accordance with Council procedures.

80. BUSINESS PLAN - UPDATE

The Committee received a report on the latest position on the Council's Business Planning Process, which included an update on the Local Government Settlement for 2015-16, details of how Service Committees proposed to use the £2.5m delegated to them at the December meeting of the Committee, and a summary of any other changes to Business Plan proposals since that meeting. The Committee would receive the final version of the Business Plan at its next meeting to enable it to recommend the Plan to Full Council in February.

During discussion, members made the following comments:

- the need to bear in mind that the Government's change in "Spending Power" for Cambridgeshire of an increase of 1.5% did not reflect like for like cuts in government funding of -8.7%. It also did not make allowances for changes in responsibilities, demography and inflation.

- highlighted the need to amend recommendation b) relating to the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS). It was noted that the Department for Work and Pensions had only provided Local Authorities with time limited funding for this area of work. Adults Committee had considered a number of options for the future including what would happen if the Council exited the scheme immediately and the impact of a longer term exit. It was proposing to run a basic scheme until April 2016 as there were possible savings to be made. Adults Committee was considering a Cambridgeshire wide solution, which would involve working with a number of organisations so funding would not just be provided by the Council. It was therefore suggested that GPC should be asked to support the scheme in principle and to ask the Adults Committee to review the amount proposed and submit a revised figure to the next meeting of GPC. Other Members queried how a revised figure would be calculated particularly given the importance of the scheme. There was also a suggestion to look at the potential cost of not providing the scheme.
- highlighted the need to look at using other areas of funding such as underspends. The Chairman commented on the availability of £907,000 for one year only as a result of savings in revenue debt charges.
- highlighted the impact on the capital programme of the increase in cost for the Southern Fringe Secondary due to a 9 month planning delay, caused by land contamination issues. It was queried how the additional £1.5m covering inflation related to the original cost of the scheme and the 9 month period if there was no further delay. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to investigate. **Action Required.** The Chairman commented that slippage in the capital programme did save the Council money in the short-term but could cost more in the long-term. It was therefore important to review the reasons for delay, which had for the Council, in all cases been as result of external issues. One Member commented that delays were sometimes the result of the Local Member trying to make a scheme better for their constituents.
- queried the possibility of re-negotiating contract prices as result of a reduction in fuel.
- acknowledged that the increase allocation in funding from the Department for Transport recognised the good work carried out by the Council in relation to highways asset management. It was important to note that there would be no separate contingency pot for highways maintenance. The Committee highlighted the need to publicise the Council's work in this area and proposed that a press release should be issued. **Action Required.** In considering the options for this funding, it was agreed to allocate the entire additional grant to spend on carriageway and footway maintenance.
- requested an approximate figure for servicing the annual cost of actual borrowing in 2015-16 as detailed in the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS). **Action Required.**
- the need to establish a review working party, as proposed at full Council, to consider the Council's appetite for risk in relation to the TMS.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the update on the Local Government Finance Settlement and the Council's grant allocation for 2015-16 (Section 2 refers).
- b) defer consideration and support for the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme to allow for further consideration by Adults Committee and General Purposes Committee on 27 January 2015 (paragraph 2.16 refers)
- c) note and endorse the use of the £2.5m funding proposed by Service Committees (section 3 refers)
- d) note and endorse the updates provided around revenue and capital proposals (Section 4 paragraphs 4.1 - 4.5 refers)
- e) allocate all the additional grant to spend on carriageway and footway maintenance (proposal B/C.2.001).(paragraph 4.6 refers)
- f) that approval be given to the Treasury Management Strategy 2015-16 (included as an appendix to this report) for inclusion in the final Business Plan for final approval by Council subject to a review by a cross party working group.

81. REWIRING PUBLIC SERVICES

The Committee considered an update on progress in implementing the Council Motion from 14 October 2014, to find new ways of delivering public services, and the most appropriate use of resource to achieve this. Attention was drawn to the considerable amount of activity which had taken place in a relatively short time. However, it was apparent that there was a lack of specific capacity to adequately match the ambition demonstrated by the Council motion, and the pace set by recent developments. It was therefore proposed to draw down £92,000 of the 'rewiring public services' provision to support a fixed term and specialist role and a modest project budget in order to develop detailed proposals for consideration.

In supporting this proposal, members received the following responses to their queries:

- an officer team led by the Chief Executive comprising the Director: Customer Service and Transformation, the Chief Finance Officer, the Service Director for Older People's Services and Mental Health, Service Director: Infrastructure Management & Operations, and the Cambridgeshire Public Service Board Programme Director was progressing this work. It was noted that the Assistant Director Public Health Intelligence was also part of the Group.
- a £1m reserve had been created with the express intent that this should be utilised for upfront funding that would be required to support the 'rewiring of public services' in Cambridgeshire. The Chief Executive explained that this funding had not been used as a senior civil servant had been seconded for 12 months to work with public services in Cambridgeshire to act as a catalyst in relation to the LGA's Rewiring Public Services programme. Additional support had been provided by the Policy

and Projects Manager and the Executive Officer to the Chief Executive and Leader. However, the project now needed a dedicated resource in order to develop proposals for consideration.

- Group Leaders had received regular briefings on the project, and progress reports would be presented to GPC. The Chief Executive acknowledged the need to establish a cross party group of members to support the project. It was proposed that this issue should be considered by Group Leaders. **Action required.**
- 'rewiring of public services' in Cambridgeshire had been considered at monthly meetings of the Cambridgeshire Public Services Board and at meetings of Leaders and Chief Officers. The Chief Executive reported that discussions were most advanced with Peterborough City Council and the Cambridgeshire Commissioning Group with a workshop planned for January. Conversations were less mature with District Councils and the Constabulary. He explained that the urgency differed for each partner, and encouraged Members to engage as appropriate with any partner.
- the Committee would receive a report if further investment was required.

It was resolved unanimously to:

agree the use of £92,000, already allocated for 'rewiring public services', towards increased capacity to respond to the 14 October 2014 Council Motion.

82. SOHAM – NORTHERN GATEWAY

The Committee was asked to declare land at Soham 'Surplus to County Council Requirements' and to authorise disposal at the appropriate time on terms to be agreed by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee. Attention was drawn to the background to this proposal, and the need to fully test the market before entering into negotiations for the disposal.

Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Palmer expressed his concern at the significant delay in disposing of this land for employment purposes. He urged GPC to give a clear steer to encourage job creation and to bring much needed finance to the Council. It was important that the Council was proactive in promoting growth and development on this land. He was so concerned about the time taken to dispose of this land that he urged the Committee to review the way the Council dealt with such holdings. In response to questions, the Local Member commented as follows:

- the Council had first advertised this land last spring and had received applications from 22 businesses including an offer from one business. As far as he was aware the Council had not contacted these businesses.
- there were examples of where the Council had delayed development. The Council had refused to contribute towards the cost of a roundabout on the A142 to encourage development beyond the Eastern Gateway. A garden centre had been encouraged to move to the Northern Gateway but this had fallen through due to access issues.

- a survey conducted in East Cambridgeshire had shown that 1 in 4 people wanted a petrol station.

In response, the Head of Strategic Assets reminded the Committee of the complexity of the sites. He explained that the long term aim was to generate income for the Council and this was not always achieved with the first solution. It was possible that other factors could lead to greater returns to enable the Council to maximise its income. It was noted that agents had already been instructed and marketing would proceed once authority had been received from the Committee. Members were informed that one offer had been received previously but it had been at such a low level as not to be credible.

During discussion, members made the following comments:

- highlighted the fact that development delays were not unfamiliar. It was important to note that there had been action with the building of a new primary school.
- the need for officers to work more closely with the Local Members and the District Council to in order to understand the local ambition for this land.
- queried how value was added by delays and whether these delays were monitored. It was important that the Council was proactive in order to put its assets to the best use. The Head of Strategic Assets reported that the Council could sell the land now with a hope of development. However, the price would be considerably less than if it was sold with planning permission and infrastructure. It was noted that the Council did not have an explicit way of monitoring the value lost by delays.
- queried why the Council did not apply for planning permission for industrial use.
- queried the wording of 'surplus to County Council requirements' as it was felt that it had very negative connotations. It was noted that this was the standard wording used by most authorities.
- highlighted the need to review how this process was managed as local people were frustrated at the lack of action. It was noted that the balance between community value and financial value was an issue for the Committee. Members were reminded that officers were dealing with a large portfolio which had managed to produce a flow of receipts. It was also important to note that the Committee had approved the Council's Disposal Policy early in the year and the process therefore worked in accordance with this policy.
- queried why this land was not part of the Making Assets Count Programme (MAC). It was noted that MAC was set up to be involved where sites or development opportunities comprised more than one public sector partners' property and collaboration was required to achieve an outcome.
- the need to give sufficient weight to the Local Plan, which would be approved in February.

- the need to agree a timescale to progress action in relation to this land. The Head of Strategic Assets reminded the Committee of the need to test the market, which could take at least 4 to 8 weeks.
- queried whether the land could also be used for residential purposes instead. The Local Member clarified that the land owned by the County Council was too close to the sewage works and the land beyond it had no access. There was therefore no opportunity to develop this land for residential use.

Councillor Bullen proposed an amendment to delete the word Chairman in recommendation c), seconded by Councillor Henson. The Chairman informed the Committee that he was content to receive comments from all Group Leaders. On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost. The Chairman added that GPC would receive a report if an issue was particularly controversial.

The Chairman proposed, with the unanimous agreement of the Committee, to amend recommendation c) to include timescales for reporting progress.

It was resolved to:

- a) declare land in the Soham Northern Gateway allocated for employment uses, and shown coloured pink and green on the attached plan, surplus to requirements;
- b) declare the unallocated plots of land shown coloured blue and yellow on the attached plan surplus to requirements; and
- c) authorise the Director of Finance to agree the detailed terms for the disposal of all the above plots, in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee, with a report on progress to Group Leaders in three months' time and the General Purposes Committee in six months' time.

83. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR CORPORATE SERVICES AND LGSS CAMBRIDGE OFFICE – NOVEMBER 2014

The Committee received a report detailing the November 2014 Finance and Performance Information for the Customer Service and Transformation Directorate and LGSS Cambridge Office. In response to a query, it was noted that funding in relation to County Farms viability was sometimes used at the end of a tenancy to make the site more marketable.

It was resolved to review and comment on the report.

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

The Committee was asked to review its agenda plan and to consider appointments to the ESPO Management Committee and ESPO Budget Sub-Committee. It was noted

that the item on Milton Road Library Re-development had been moved from 27 January to 12 March.

It was resolved to:

note the agenda plan including the updates reported orally at the meeting and appoint Councillor Hickford to the ESPO Management Committee and ESPO Finance and Audit Sub-Committee.

Chairman