

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 23rd October 2018

Time: 10.00a.m. – 11.10a.m.

Present: Councillors Bailey, Count (Chairman), Criswell, Cuffley (substituting for Councillor Bates), Dupre, Giles, Hudson, Hunt (substituting for Councillor Hickford), Jenkins, Meschini, Schumann, Shuter, Whitehead and Williams (substituting for Councillor Nethsingha)

Apologies: Councillors Bates, Bywater, Hickford and Nethsingha

111. MINUTES – 20TH SEPTEMBER 2018 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

At the request of the Chairman, the Committee received an updated tabled Action Log showing all actions completed available at the following link:
[General Purposes Committee meeting 23/10/2018](#)

112. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

113. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – AUGUST 2018

The Committee was presented with the August 2018 Finance and Performance report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office, which was showing a forecast underspend of £951k. It was noted that the forecast underspend on Financing Costs had increased by £200k.

One Member queried whether the cost of the Transformation Team was included in the report. It was noted that some revenue costs associated with the Team were included under the Deputy Chief Executive's budget. Members were informed that the full cost of the Team was just under £2m with the majority funded through a Government initiative on flexible use of capital receipts. It was noted that the Team had supported the organisation to deliver £140m of savings.

The same Member expressed surprise regarding the size of the establishment of the Team with 38.5 full time equivalent roles, and requested greater transparency. He queried which part of the Team had helped to deliver the savings, and suggested that the funding could have been used to support other capital projects. Another Member reminded the Committee that Transformation Team staff had already been employed by the Council. The Chief Finance Officer acknowledged that this had originally been the case. When established as part of the Corporate Capacity Review, resources in Services had transferred to the centre saving £1m to be re-directed at front line services.

In conclusion, the Chairman highlighted the need to give further consideration to the clarity and visibility of the Team. **Action Required.**

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

114. INTEGRATED RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST AUGUST 2018

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 change of indicators on page 36, which had been reformatted to provide an explanation next to each pie chart. The overall revenue budget position was showing a forecast year-end pressure of £5.2m, which had reduced to £4.9m by the end of August. Members were informed that the table on page 42 reflected the approval of the additional £3.413m from the smoothing fund reserve towards pressures in children's services budgets in 2018-19 recommended by the Children and Young People Committee. Attention was drawn to pressures relating to the increase in unaccompanied asylum seekers, and This Land loans, which in due course would deliver to target.

The Chairwoman of Adults Committee highlighted the outcome – People with disabilities live well independently. She drew attention to one of the indicators which made up this outcome rated red. The 'Proportion of adults with primary support reason of learning disability support in paid employment (year to date)' had fallen from 0.7% in June to 0.5% in July which was significantly below the target of 6%. She reported that Adults Committee had raised concerns about this indicator and had recently considered proposals to improve performance. She explained that the statutory reporting mechanism was subject to people being assessed or reviewed in year. The definition of employment used, was adults with primary support needs of learning disability who were "known to the council" and were recorded as being in paid employment. At the end of the financial and reporting year 2017/18 this figure stood at 2.6%, all were within mainstream employment. There were an additional 41 people who were recorded on the system as employed but not reviewed in the 2017/18 financial year. If they had been and they were still in employment that met the required definition, then Cambridgeshire's performance would have been closer to the national, regional and comparator averages, at 5.4%.

She informed the Committee that it was therefore a priority to assess and review people. Links were being improved with the Adult Learning and Skills team working with colleagues working on the Skills Agenda to ensure that people with learning disabilities were able to maximise opportunities for education, training and employment. It was important that the Council looked at itself as an employer and, as such, a position had been identified in the Estates Team at Stanton House. She reported that 60% of people not in employment were shown to be seeking work. She therefore urged Councillors to promote this work in their communities. One Member commented that he would go back to his District Council with this message.

A Member queried whether the £3.413m from the smoothing fund reserve would be included in the People and Communities base budget. The Chairman reminded the Committee that the smoothing fund had been established to use this year's council tax to smooth out in year budget pressures. He explained that the underlying trend would be recognised in budgets moving forward and reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). He added that increases needed to be funded from somewhere so it would be a political decision as to whether the smoothing fund would continue in the future.

The same Member expressed concern that the Council had been forced to change its budget in year. The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Council predicted its revenue budget at the start of the year and, like private sector companies, had to make adjustments in year. It should be noted that it was currently only 1.4% outside its budget. The same Member commented that the Council might balance its books but miss its budgets. The Chairman congratulated the Administration, Chairs of Committees and officers on maintaining sound financial management.

The Committee was reminded that People and Communities had carried out a significant piece of work to change the way the Council supported young people. Attention was drawn to the recruitment drive for Foster Carers. It was noted that these transformation proposals had been reflected in the MTFS but could take time to yield significant results.

The Labour Group Leader commented that she had identified £2.5m additional funding for Children's Services in her alternative budget. The Liberal Democrat Deputy Leader reported that her Group had not voted for a smoothing fund but had voted continually to put more funding into Council services. She drew attention to the sudden decline in visits to libraries resulting from the decision to charge for computer use. The Chairman of Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee reported that this issue was being reviewed and would be presented to his committee in March. Another Member commented that it was important not to jump to conclusions given the other variables such as one of the hottest and driest summers recorded.

In conclusion, the Chairman drew attention to the success of the Smart Energy Grid and other work to save energy such as Solar Parks, and in schools.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the additional capital contributions available as set out in section 5.7;
- b) Approve the -£41.1m revised phasing in the funding profile of Housing Schemes, as set out in section 5.7;
- c) Approve the -£17.2m revised phasing of funding relating to changes in the Commercial and Investment (C&I) capital programme variations budget, as section out in section 5.7;

- d) Approve an additional £54k of prudential borrowing in 2018/19 for the Babraham Park & Ride Smart Energy Grid scheme, as set out in section 5.8;
- e) Approve an additional £30k of prudential borrowing in 2018/19 for the Trumpington Park & Ride Smart Energy Grid scheme, as set out in section 5.9;
- f) Approve the allocation of £3.413m from the smoothing fund reserve towards pressures in children's services budgets in 2018-19, as set out in section 6.2.

115. MOBILE PHONE PROCUREMENT

The Committee considered the background to the procurement of a new mobile phone contract for LGSS partners through Cambridgeshire County Council. The current contract was due to come to an end in February 2019. It was proposed to go back to the market using the same tiered band of usage model. The current contract was let across other authorities resulting in a reduction in cost per unit. It had delivered savings of £303,000 and increased flexibility by deploying Subscriber Identity Modules (SIMs) in laptops. It was proposed to ask potential suppliers to provide details on how changes in technology would deliver further benefits to the Council and its partners. It was expected that the cost of the contract would be up to £450,000 per annum across all partners. Attention was drawn to the mitigation of risks detailed at Section 4.1 of the report.

One Member queried why the report did not explain the reason why the contract was needed. Members noted that the Council had rolled out 3,800 laptops which each had a data SIM to connect to 3 or 4G to enable users to work remotely; other SIMs were used in mobile phones. It was noted that there were currently 9,000 SIMs in Cambridgeshire.

Another Member congratulated officers on saving the Council money but expressed concern that the contract could effectively limit growth, as going to the higher band would cost more money. It was noted that the contract let four years ago covered an average data usage of 250 gigabytes. The new contract covered three terabytes per month. If the limit was exceeded for two consecutive months then it would move to the next tier. The cost of this next banding would be shared with each of the authorities based on the number of connections.

One Member expressed concern that new employees were not being given mobile phones because they were too expensive. The Director Corporate and Customer Services reported that the SIM cards in a range of devices such as laptops enabled officers to access data even when there was no wireless connection. Smart and Dumb phones were also available. It was noted that it was important to provide the right device to officers by understanding their usage. It was agreed that the Member would supply the Director with specific names after the meeting to determine if they had the right equipment to perform their council duties. **Action Required.**

The Chairman welcomed the fact that considering the amount of data being used the average cost of connection was £20 per annum. He also commented that the use of Skype had reduced the need for more expensive phone calls.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) consent to the procurement of a new mobile phone contract; and
- b) delegate the decision to award the contract to the LGSS Director of IT in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes committee.

116. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2019-20 TO 2023-24

The Committee received a report detailing an overview of the draft Business Plan Revenue Proposals for services that were within its remit. All committees would receive an update to the revenue business planning proposals in December at which point they would be asked to endorse the proposal to GPC as part of the consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan.

One Member requested further detail on the project to identify residents who were incorrectly paying less Council tax than they should be. The Chief Finance Officer reminded the Committee that the Council was not the billing and collection authority. He explained that Council tax comprised a property and a people element based on two people. Residents could therefore claim a Single Person Discount. The aim of the project was to identify those residents who were no longer entitled to this discount but were still claiming.

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that the County Council was proposing a significant investment which would benefit the District Councils. He queried the need for a risk share based on a 30:70 split. The Chief Finance Officer reported that there had been discussions with the District Councils regarding risk share. The District Councils were of the view that their contribution was in the administration of the process. However, the counter challenge was that it was their responsibility to ensure the process was managed correctly. The Chairman also queried whether this investment would be re-current. The Chief Finance Officer reported that this was a one-off project at this stage. Depending on its success, it might need to be repeated in the future. The Chairman proposed that if the project delivered in excess of its investment then there should be discussions with the billing authorities regarding their failure to collect.

Another Member queried whether an organisation could be procured to do this work on a no win no fee basis. She also drew attention to the delivery options and the requirement for Districts Councils to provide information. She therefore suggested a more conciliatory approach by offering resources to help them carry out this work might be more appropriate. The Chief Finance Officer reported that there would be a balance. The Council would not give away resources unless essential to the project. One Member commented that Huntingdonshire District Council took robust action to tackle fraud.

A Member highlighted the inflation rates for pay detailed in the table at the top of page 69. He questioned whether setting 1% for pay inflation was realistic. The Chief Finance Officer reminded the Committee that a 1% increase in the salary bill amounted to £1m. The Chairman reported that this was part of the process to deliver the budget in February and it would therefore be for the political groups to balance increased budgets should they wish to increase this.

Another Member queried whether the additional ask from LGSS was achievable. The Chief Finance Officer reported that the definitive savings proposals following the fundamental review of LGSS were not yet available. However, the Committee would receive more detail in a future report. The Chairman added that it was therefore appropriate to identify it in current plans.

The same Member questioned whether there would be any proposal in future to appoint to the higher level of lower pay bands given that the Council was losing areas of responsibility to the Combined Authority and schools. The Chief Finance Officer reported that the Council struggled to recruit across areas of the organisation but it would try and reduce salary levels. The Chief Executive reminded Members that the Council had a proper evaluation process which was kept under review by Staffing and Appeals Committee. The Chairman of Staffing and Appeals Committee reported that there had been a recent pay banding review and invited the Member concerned to attend a future meeting of the Committee when it was considered again.

In conclusion, the Chairman drew attention to the need to develop proposals which exceeded the total savings/income requirements so that where some schemes fell short they could be mitigated by others. He reminded the Committee that the Council needed to be fleet of foot and adjust in year as it could not wait until February.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2019-20 to 2023-24 Business Plan revenue proposals for the Service.
- b) comment on the draft revenue proposals that are within the remit of the General Purposes Committee for 2019-20 to 2023-24.

117. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE DRAFT 2019-20 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report detailing an overview of the draft Business Plan Capital Programme for Corporate and LGSS Managed Services. All the Committees would consider their own schemes which would then be included in the Capital Programme as part of the Council's overall Business Plan.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2019-20 Capital Programme for Corporate and LGSS Managed Services; and

- b) comment on the draft proposals for Corporate and LGSS Managed Services' 2019-20 Capital Programme and endorse their development.

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

The Committee considered its agenda plan and training plan. It also noted the following changes to appointments to outside bodies agreed by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman:

- Councillor Tierney to replace Councillor Cuffley on the Police and Crime Panel; and
- Councillor Boden to be appointed to the LGSS Law Limited Board, as the Council's representative at the Shareholders meeting.

One Member highlighted the fact that no training had taken place since last November. The Chairman asked the Committee and officers to identify any areas for future training. **Action Required.**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (i) review its agenda plan attached at Appendix 1; and
- (ii) review its training plan attached at Appendix 2:

Chairman