

## STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 29 March 2022

Time: 10.00a.m. to 2.25p.m.

Venue: Multi-Function Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors Boden, Costello (substituting for Councillor Criswell), Count, Dupré, Goldsack, McDonald, McGuire, Meschini (Vice-Chair), Nethsingha (Chair), Murphy, Rae (substituting for Councillor Howitt), J Schumann, Taylor (substituting for Councillor Sanderson) and Wilson

### 55. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Criswell, Howitt, Hoy and Sanderson. No declarations of interest were made.

### 56. Minutes – 27th January 2022 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair; a completed action log was also noted.

### 57. Petitions and Public Questions

No petitions were received. Four public questions had been received which were taken at Minute 61.

### 58. Joint Agreement and Peer Review Action Tracking

The Committee considered a report reviewing the monitoring against actions identified in the Joint Agreement and Peer Review action plans. It had been agreed at Council in February that future performance and monitoring would be reported within the new Performance Framework so this would be the last Joint Agreement action plan tracker report to committee. The Committee would continue to monitor the Peer Review Action Plan. It was noted that the letter from the Peer Review Team had been circulated through Group Leaders and would be published on the Council's website. The Chief Executive (CE) had also agreed with Group Leaders that there would be a formal review of the Council's governance process conducted by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny supported by the Local Government Association. The terms of reference would be developed by the CE and shared with Group Leaders.

The Chair of the Audit and Accounts Committee reported that Action G.2 was progressing and not yet complete as his committee was seeking further legal advice before potentially releasing more information.

In response to a query from a member, it was noted that the relevant committee for action T.6 was Highways and Transport and not Environment and Green Investment.

Councillor Count moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Boden to remove the following words from recommendation a) “joint agreement and”. He reiterated his concerns that the Joint Agreement action plan tracker did not reflect fully the original agreement. Another Member highlighted the lack of transparency as to what was being delivered in practice against what had been promised originally. In response, Members were reminded that the Joint Agreement was an important statement about the direction of the Council with regular reports presented on what was being achieved. The Chair and other members expressed their pride in the achievements of the Joint Administration and the progress made in the relatively short time since it had taken control. On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

One Member drew attention to action 1.8 in the Peer Review action plan and queried what progress had been made in relation to the role of the Transformation Team. It was noted that the Council still had its Directorate Transformation Team but the Peer Review had recommended that a dedicated Transformation Team should oversee the shared services work. The CE added that a report on shared services would be presented to the next meeting, which would clarify the issue around transformation resource required. **Action Required.**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) review the monitoring against actions identified in the joint agreement and peer review action plans.
- b) agree to transfer any remaining open actions to the Council’s new Performance Management Framework with monitoring and reporting through appropriate committee governance.

## 59. Integrated Finance Monitoring Report for the period ending 31 January 2022

The Committee received a report detailing the financial performance of the Council for the 2021/22 financial year. The overall revenue budget position was showing a forecast underspend of -£14.2m at year-end whilst the Capital Programme was showing a forecast -£23m underspend. Members were reminded that the level of demand for social care services, and the level of general risk that needed to be funded, had not been as high as anticipated. Much of the underspend had been rebaselined as part of setting the 2022/23 budget. The rest of the underspend was primarily due to the short-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it was important to note the uncertain financial position with inflation higher than anticipated and an expected deficit in the Dedicated Schools Grant. Attention was drawn to the background to the recommendations as set out in the report.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- expressed concerns about transparency as Section 2.2 set out the actual forecast year-end underspend of -£15.715m whilst the table on page 37 showed -£14.225m, which reflected the approval of one of the recommendations in the report. Concern was also expressed regarding the lack of transparency in allocating underspends in one financial year to earmarked reserves in another financial year. Attention was

drawn to a previous report where £2m and £3m had been allocated to Adults and Public Health respectively for next year. The revenue budget forecast outturn had been given a green RAG rating but in essence it reflected the lack of delivery of services. The Assistant Director for Finance reminded the Committee that the report was a forecast projecting to the end of the financial year.

- queried whether recommendations b) and c) had been considered by the Highways Improvement Board and Adults and Health Committee (A&HC) first. It was noted recommendation b) had not been considered by Highways and Transport Committee (H&TC) as it was a relatively late proposal whilst recommendation c) had been considered by A&HC. The Chair of H&TC reported that the Highways Improvement Board had considered £1.1m for extensive road repairs, funding for road markings and £390k for a new asset management system. He acknowledged that not all the individual amounts had been quantified but would be in the future. Another Member commented that whilst these issues had been discussed and were welcomed, it was misleading to imply that H&TC had been aware of these specific allocations of funding before presentation to Strategy and Resources Committee.
- highlighted on page 87 that the fourth bullet point should be changed to 12 months from "12 year".
- queried the amount to be transferred into an earmarked reserve for continuing discharge to assess support for Cambridgeshire residents in 2022/23 set out in recommendation d). It was noted that the final amount was currently not known but likely to be around £6m. Unfortunately, it had not been possible due to timing to reflect this information in the report. The same Member expressed concern about approving an unlimited officer delegation and suggested the recommendation should have provided a financial bandwidth for expenditure. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) acknowledged that this recommendation represented an unusual level of delegation but safeguards were provided in the recommendation. He explained that there had been consultation with the A&HC. However, the situation was complex reflecting a very short notice negotiation with four NHS organisations. It was also important that this recommendation was considered in March to provide continuity of service from 1 April. The Chair asked for a briefing note to be circulated to the Committee to explain this. **Action Required.**
- queried whether there were any implications associated with underspending, and in relation to the table at 3.1 when did a large variance move the overall status from green to another colour. The Assistant Director for Finance reported that the underspend would be rolled into general reserves. It was noted that the RAG rating did not change to amber because of an underspend. However, it was proposed to review how the table was presented for the next financial year as an underspend should not always attract a green status.
- expressed concern that there were over £20m of underdelivered services this financial year. Attention was drawn to the fact a press release had been issued for the £1,490k for highways indicating extra investment when there was nearly exactly the same amount not delivered from the Highways budget. There was concern that this proposal had not been considered fully by the Highways Improvement Board or the H&TC. It was suggested that there would have been time to do so if the Strategy

and Resources Committee's reserve meeting in May had been utilised. It was also suggested that there had been no formal recommendation from A&HC in relation recommendation c).

- commented that an underspend was just as bad as an overspend so it was not correct to classify it as good because it demonstrated a failure to deliver services. The CFO reminded Members that the predominant factor for the revenue underspend was that the levels of activity for demand led services had not been as high as planned. It was important to bear in mind that this was an extraordinary period for anticipating demand. The Council therefore needed to be appropriately prudent in considering the estimates for the first year of the business plan as well as having a multi-year focus. The Council was also facing the risk of significant inflation and an over £40m deficit in the High Needs Block, which would rise in future years. The Department for Education was currently working with authorities with similar deficits and had asked them to contribute some of their own funding to meet the shortfall.
- highlighted the cost overruns at recommendations i) and m) and stressed the need for more financial management of these solar projects. The Chair of Environment and Green Investment Committee acknowledged that prices were increasing significantly but that this was not unique to the Council. She outlined the pressures being faced nationally and internationally. It was noted that the outturn for these projects looked better given the cost of oil and gas but the working group would continue to keep a close eye on all these projects.
- expressed concern about the implication of the level of underspends in adults and children's social care particularly in relation to the very high vacancy rates. The Highways Directorate was also short of 60 staff. There was concern about the Council's ability to cope with this significant shortfall in officers. The Chair of H&TC reported that his committee had agreed unanimously action to tackle this staff shortfall. The Chair reminded the Committee that the Council was struggling to recruit staff, which was a problem faced by many other authorities and institutions. The Council was therefore working on a number of areas including how to improve retention.
- highlighted the need to consider transformation and preventative work whilst the activity for demand led services was not as high as anticipated.
- expressed concern about the Capital Programme underspends set out in Section 8.2.2 of the report, which showed a -£23.5m underspend rather than -£36,662m of budgeted slippage. It was suggested that some underspends were more concerning than others. There was a £9.711m underspend in Condition, Suitability & Maintenance for People and Communities, which was significant. The Chair reported that given the volatility of the current situation that underspends were not unsurprising and capital underspends had been an issue for the Council for some time.
- highlighted the need to include the original start date for the Cromwell Road, Wisbech scheme. The Chair of H&TC reported that the delay was due primarily to the high standard set for the specification of materials which were hard to source.

- reiterated that the Joint Administration had not needed to raise Council Tax to the maximum level as with a £42m general county fund reserve balance it could still have met its guidance figure of 4%. The Chair reminded the Committee of the difficulty of trying to predict the future coming out of the pandemic together with an extremely volatile international situation. It was therefore important and responsible to be prudent and not rely on short term underspends.

Councillor Count moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Schumann to add a new recommendation n) as follows:

- n) Ask the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee to write to and publish an explanation to all members of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee (COSMIC), and members of the Strategy and Resources Committee, why Strategy and Resources Committee failed to formally consider or debate in open forum, COSMIC's legitimate and formal request, with a unanimous committee vote from July 2021, which was c) Following the success of the Communities Capital Fund, recommend that the Strategy and Resources Committee allocates at least a further £5m in the 2022-23 Business Plan.

The Director Business Improvement and Development reported that following an investigation officers had apologised that COSMIC had not received a formal report explaining why the decision had been taken to consider the proposal as part of the business planning process instead. It was noted that the Committee had received a detailed briefing note, which had enabled a public debate at COSMIC. In response to a question as to why a proposal had not been included in the opposition business plan amendment, it was noted that the situation had been very confusing with a lack of clarity as to whether it was already included. The mover of the amendment felt that in the interests of transparency there should have been a public response from the Strategy and Resources Committee. The Chair reported that it had been considered as part of the whole budget debate, which had been held in public. On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the proposal for the use of £407k from Public Health reserves to support additional work on Health Checks in 2022/23, as set out in section 6.1;
- b) Approve earmarking £1,490k of the underspend on Funding items to invest in the Highways Maintenance Service as set out in section 6.2 and Appendix 6;
- c) Approve the transfer of £830k to earmarked reserves to enable expenditure to take place in 2022/23 for workforce development for the Adult Social Care and Health workforce across the Integrated Care System, as set out in section 6.3;
- e) Approve the allocation of the additional unringfenced grant £1.14m Domestic Abuse Act Statutory Duty funding to People & Communities in 2021/22 and £1.14m in 2022/23, as set out in section 6.5;
- f) Note the changes in government grant income of £332k additional Local tax losses 2020-21 grant income, £375k reduction in anticipated sales, fees and

charges loss of income compensation 2020-21 and £1.4m of Contain Outbreak Management Fund grant income applied centrally as set out in section 6.6;

- g) Note the changes in forecast income in relation to business rates of an estimated £1.43m Business Rates Retention 2021-22 pool dividend and forecast £202k Alconbury Enterprise Zone Business Rates payment in respect of rates collected for 2021-22 as set out in section 6.7;
- h) Approve the debt write-offs of £29,108 and £27,784 relating to the estates of service users where there is now no prospect of debts being recovered, as set out in section 7.2;
- i) Approve additional prudential borrowing of £389k for 2022/23 for the Swaffham Prior Community Heat Project and £1,099k for 2022/23 for the North Angle Solar Farm scheme, as set out in section 8.6;
- j) Note the update provided on the Council's treasury management activity set out in section 9.10;
- k) Note and comment on the Finance Monitoring Report for Corporate Services (Appendix 4);
- l) Approve the criteria for accessing the Just Transition Fund (Appendix 5); and
- m) Note the updated pricing and business case for the Babraham Road Smart Energy Grid, including the increase in capital cost of £630k, and authorise the Chief Finance Officer to make resulting budget changes in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and in accordance with the Addendum.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- d) Approve the transfer of funding into an earmarked reserve for continuing discharge to assess support for Cambridgeshire residents in 2022/23, delegate confirmation of the amount at year end to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of this committee, and delegate to the Executive Director of P&C authority to agree expenditure from this reserve, as set out in section 6.4.

## 60. This Land Monitoring Update

The Committee was appraised of progress made with implementing actions from the shareholder review presented at the last meeting. Appendix one included the summary commentary received from This Land detailing its formal response to the action plan and the approach to risk management. A number of members of Strategy and Resources Committee had attended a recent shareholder monitoring meeting. Section 2.2 of the report set out the strategic priorities which had been presented by the directors as deliverable. As a result of the remodelling and consultation being undertaken by the company, Members noted proposals for the pending update of the business plan set out in Section 2.4. Attention was drawn to the background to the recommendations as set out in the report.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- reported that the parish council was generally supportive of disposals in Foxton as they were in line with the local neighbourhood plan.
- requested more information on the Soham Eastern Gateway, which had not progressed for some time. The Chair suggested that the Local Member contact the company direct.

Councillor Count moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Boden to add a new recommendation e) as follows:

- (e) Agree that any changes accepted by this Land, to reduce returns in exchange for increased affordable housing, to be quantified and reported to the next available meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Count reminded the Committee that This Land had been set up to raise income in order to fund Council services. Whilst the provision of affordable housing was an admirable goal, it was important that the Council knew what it was giving up in terms of income to deliver it. In seconding the amendment, Councillor Boden reported that the Combined Authority had regular reports on the cost of additionality of affordable housing.

Another Member reminded the Committee that This Land was an arms-length company. It was noted that reduced returns would not change the loan agreement. It was important not to define returns purely in terms of finance. In response, it was suggested that it had been made clear at the shareholder meeting that whilst the annual return would remain unchanged there would be eventually reduction in funding back to the Council in exchange for affordable housing.

The Chair acknowledged that the Board was in transition with the appointment of a new Chair and the publication of a new business plan. She suggested that it was therefore not appropriate to discuss such issues now but instead the Committee should hold a workshop to discuss the new business plan. **Action Required.** On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Note and comment on the report and progress with the action plan;
- (b) Note the areas highlighted for consultation with the Council: potential for collaboration on future developments and risk appetite relative to meeting housing needs;
- (c) Permit and enable sale of properties, owned by This Land, at the sites listed at section 3.5 of this report, and at Horningsea, varying the Council's associated rights and mortgages as set out at section 3.5; and

- (d) Authorise the Section 151 officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to exercise the shareholder rights in relation to appointment of the next Chair of This Land, in accordance with section 2.8 of this report.

## 61. Asset Management – Property Specific Updates

The Committee received an update on a number of property matters. Attention was drawn to the operating agreement for Brunswick House, which included the proposed appointment of a specialist and single operator to optimise the income and value the Council received from the property. In relation to Shire Hall, Cambridge, it was proposed to make a voluntary Town or Village Green (TVG) declaration when the applicants withdrew their application. Section 3 of the report detailed a scheme for biodiversity net gain at Lower Valley Farm, on the Council's estate, which could attract an improved commercial return and enhancements to local biodiversity. The re-development of East Barnwell had been considered by the Children and Young People Committee in relation to including early years provision in the specification. It was acknowledged that plans for redevelopment of Council assets at this location, and nearby, had been under consideration and formulation for many years. The revised specification would provide an opportunity to build momentum behind a preferred approach and implement the redevelopment.

The Chair invited two members of the public and two Cambridge City Councillors to address the Committee.

Nicky Shepard, CEO of Abbey People, including East Barnwell Community Association expressed support for the recommendation in the report as it was in line with the community's wishes for a new community hub on the site of the East Barnwell Community Centre and Seesaw Youth building. She highlighted the actions which had taken place over the last nine years, but frustratingly had not resulted in work beginning on site. She stressed the importance of the original community vision to regenerate the community site. There was a wide range of needs within Abbey so it was important that a range of early years provision was supported particularly given the transformative effect on children. Abbey ward was the only ward in the city to have become more deprived since 2015 so the community therefore needed continuity of provision and some certainty about the future.

City Councillor Haf Davies expressed support for the updated specification for East Barnwell Community Centre including the nursery. Whilst this promise had been made years ago, it remained the expectation of local residents and was what the community needed. As the most deprived ward in Cambridge, residents had a range of complex needs which had been exacerbated by the pandemic. Some of the most deprived street clusters in the ward particularly those north of Newmarket Road would directly benefit from the inclusion of the nursery in the Centre. It would place the nursery in a central location right at the heart of the local community. She welcomed all efforts to deliver the community centre as quickly as possible.

The Committee noted a written statement from the Local Member for Abbey, Councillor Bulat, who highlighted the need to deliver the East Barnwell Community Centre without further delay given that the community had been promised such a centre for a decade. Abbey was the most deprived area in Cambridge with a life expectancy about a decade

lower than some nearby divisions and with very little community space. Co-location of services and adequate community space had been needed for a long time. She welcomed the recommendation from the Children and Young People Committee to put early years provision back on the East Barnwell site, which finally delivered on what the community clearly wanted. Not delivering promptly on this risked damaging the trust in the Council and council services more broadly in Abbey. From a community perspective, it was unacceptable that a project could take so long. Co-located services with affordable housing was very important for the community this site would serve.

City Councillor Jocelyne Scutt reminded the Committee that, together with former County Councillor Claire Richards and City Councillor Katie Thornburrow, she had applied to declare the Castle Mound and Shire Hall lawn as a TVG. She thanked all the residents who had put in submissions about this application to ensure access in perpetuity for the public to this historic area. The proposal was for a voluntarily registration for a TVG and as such, she would therefore be content to withdraw the application contingent on the TVG area being the one set out by the surveyor including the hedge. In relation to the Mound, the Heritage Act and the Scheduled Monuments Act had never affirmed access in perpetuity to that area. The Ramblers were therefore to be commended for making submissions about access as this had resulted in public access in perpetuity up the Mound. The same could not be said for the Shire Hall lawn hence the application to declare it a TVG.

Claire Richards paid tribute to the Ramblers for their work, which had led to Suffolk County Council recommending a modification order to make a public footpath from the east side of Castle Street to the top of the Mound. She urged the Committee to vote for recommendation (b) as it would protect access by law and would restrict development. Therefore with the right of access up the Mound and the lawn as a TVG, she was satisfied that this would protect access in perpetuity for the public. She explained that it was a key space for so many residents in Castle particularly for those without gardens.

Speaking as the Local Member for Castle, Councillor Rae expressed her support for recommendation b) and paid tribute to her predecessor Claire Richards and Councillor Scutt.

In response to a number of questions on the Shire Hall, Cambridge site, Members noted officer responses as follows:

- officers were on the Shire Hall, Cambridge site with surveyors to mark out the boundaries where consideration would be given to the hedge, manholes and other utilities.
- the Council's objection had been lodged on two primary grounds. It was considered no longer to be sustainable for the Council to make the case, as stated in Section 2.5, to define users of the lawn as inhabitants of a defined "locality". The other ground was that the land was already a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), this was no longer an issue as the area of land not covered by the SAM did not overlap with the SAM. Although, this could be an arguable point, the recommendation would avoid an expensive public inquiry.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- highlighted the fact that Lower Valley Farm, Fulbourn had been discussed at the County Farms Working Group but not at Environment and Green Investment Committee (E&GIC), which was surprising given the biodiversity element. Whilst this proposal was to be welcomed, it was requested that the Governance Review should give consideration as to whether the Farms Estate should report into E&GIC except perhaps for areas of strategic finance. The Chair of E&GIC reported that County Farms had always been regarded as an asset matter but that did not preclude change in the future. There were currently two cross cutting working groups with a third scheduled for approval. It was therefore possible another such group could be formed for County Farms.
- welcomed the recommendation to voluntarily register certain land at Shire Hall, Cambridge as a TVG as it had always been the Council's aim to secure public access.
- expressed surprise and dismay that the community in Abbey had waited so long for a Community Centre at East Barnwell.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Agree to commence procurement of student accommodation operator at Brunswick House delegating authority to award a contract to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair;
- (b) Agree to voluntarily register certain land at Shire Hall, Cambridge as a town or village green;
- (c) Agree to progress the scheme for biodiversity net gain at Lower Valley Farm, delegating authority to enter into agreements for that purpose to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair; and
- (d) Agree, in principle, to inclusion of early years provision at the East Barnwell Community Hub, and to bring forward a revised capital budget in due course, following further development of plans for this asset.

## 62. Procurement of Council Insurance Programme

The Committee received a report detailing arrangements to tender the corporate insurance programme for the period 2022-2027, as the current insurance programme was scheduled to expire on 30 September 2022. The Council had for many years held large self insured retentions (excesses) on material damage and liability insurance policies in order to contain the cost of insurance spend and balance internal and externally insured risks. After reviewing the Council's tolerance to risk, it was proposed to design a revised insurance programme, which would serve, based on actuarial assessments of the Council's historic claims performance, to best manage the overall total cost of insurable risk. Attention was drawn to the insurance market, risk financing and insurance programme design, which reflected the fact that with effect of 1 April

2022 schools would be insured on a standalone insurance framework. The premium costs for 2021/22 were £1,086k, at present the best estimate of the level of premium spend, excluding schools, for 22/23 was £810k but it was important to note the current insurance market volatility around that figure.

One Member commented that local authorities were now far more commercially aware when seeking local government insurance. Greater disaggregation of insurances as demonstrated by schools seeking a standalone insurance framework was welcomed. It was suggested considering as part of this process further disaggregation for highways and social care. It was acknowledged that it was very difficult to strike a balance between internally and externally insured risks. It was therefore requested that the balance be monitored annually over the three year period to enable the Council to request any changes for the remaining two years. The Chair acknowledged the comments made, which would be borne in mind as the process moved forward.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Insurance reported that the Council's appointed insurance broker had a contractual requirement to hold professional levels of indemnity insurance. He also explained that schools had been consulted on the decision to remove them from the Council's insurance framework through the Schools Forum. This insurance related to schools offsite travel insurance both in the UK and abroad.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and approve the issue of a tender for the Council's insurance arrangements for the period 2022-2027; and
- b) Approve the delegation of the decision on the level of insurance to be purchased and the award of contracts to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

### 63. Replacement of Storage Area Network (SAN)

The Committee was asked to consider a request to procure a replacement for the existing computing and storage (SAN) and associated services for the Council. It was noted that the IT Service had undertaken a considerable amount of work since 2019 as part of the IT Strategy. The Council was now well placed to take advantage of new cloud based solutions. The recommended approach was to review the options for extended support on the existing infrastructure whilst commencing a procurement process for a longer-term replacement.

In response to a query from a Member, the Assistant Director of IT & Digital Services reported that resilience particularly in relation to cyber resilience was key. From a security perspective cloud-based service providers were able to identify and mitigate security threats immediately. From a technical perspective they were also able to configure services to maximise the resilience of the systems. It was noted that this ensured that systems were available and ready to use at all times with less downtime and less chance of a cyber security breach. The same Member urged the Chair and Vice-Chair to ensure that cyber resilience was covered as much as possible.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree to the procurement of replacement infrastructure via an approved framework agreement; and
- b) Agree to delegate the award of this contract to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

## 64. Water and Wastewater Services Procurement

The Committee received an update on the procurement of water and wastewater services and potential options for the Council's sites. It was noted that in this market wholesale charges made up around 95% of the total price paid and these charges would remain the same regardless of who was the supplier and depending of the volumes of water used. Retailers were also limited by price caps resulting in the total cost difference between retailers being very small. Whilst the Council was not a large user of water, it was good practice to monitor water consumption to enable detection of any increases, which could indicate a leak.

Attention was drawn to three potential routes to procure a supplier. Option B was recommended, which would involve entering a new contract under the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) framework. The main reasons were the Council already had ESPO membership, ESPO and its partners had already run a complete procurement process that was fully compliant with UK procurement law, there would be likely improvements in customer service, and the package offered by Wave as part of the framework included an Active Water Management service to help monitor and reduce water consumption.

In response to questions from Members, the Energy Manager reported that the ESPO option had not been available in 2020 as that framework had not existed then. It was acknowledged that the Water Industry as whole faced the challenge of selling less of its product so the only real incentives to reduce water consumption was to retain customers and to avoid larger wholesale costs to increase production.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) enter into a contract with Wave under the ESPO framework to supply water and sewerage retail services to all sites where Cambridgeshire County Council was liable for the bills, from August 2022. (Option B as detailed in the paper)
- b) increase efforts to understand and reduce water consumption across the Council's properties.

## 65. No car zones

The Committee was asked to consider the results of the trial of no car zones outside two schools alongside evidence from the installation of schools streets under the Emergency Active Travel Fund and determine if further schools should be explored. Attention was drawn to the background to the trial which had focused on seven school

streets schemes in Cambridgeshire. The University of Cambridge Research Study Report summarised the encouraging results of the study and in the main positive feedback from the schemes. It was therefore proposed that further no care zones/school streets were supported across the county. New schemes would either be dependent on third-party funding, through grant applications or community funds, or submitted as bids to the Local Highways Improvement Scheme. It was noted that enforcement of the restrictions could be come easier in future with the introduction of additional Civil Parking Enforcement areas for those Districts outside Cambridge City that were pursuing such powers.

Members welcomed the initial results and the opportunity to improve the safety of the entrance and exits to schools. However, it was important to bear in mind that a no car zone was not appropriate for every school. Another Member was disappointed that the Council was not being more generous in providing funding to deliver these schemes particularly given the scale of underspend and general reserve. The Chair reported that the Council would consider this issue in future as it was considering the funding of all highway schemes. Another Member highlighted the need for the air quality impact assessment to consider pregnancy and maternity.

The Chair thanked the MRC for its report. It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the research outcomes from the study undertaken by the Medical Research Council (MRC) Epidemiology Unit at the University of Cambridge;
- b) Support the implementation of additional no car zone / school streets schemes, subject to available funding (outlined in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7); and
- c) Note the implication of future decision-making by the Council, and its District Council partners, in relation to Civil Parking Enforcement and Traffic Management Act 2004 Part 6 to the potential enforcement of these schemes (outlined in paragraph 2.11).

## 66. New Shire Hall – Multi-Function Room

The Committee noted the rationale behind the design process of the Multi-Function Room (MFR) and its implementation. Members were reminded that it had not been possible to use the MFR for Full Council during the pandemic as there was insufficient space to meet the requirements of social distancing and the Council's Covid policies. It was noted that the MFR would remain unsuitable for use for Full Council for so long as social distancing was a consideration arising from Public Health guidance. The Council would therefore continue to use alternative venues that provided sufficient space for social distancing until it was deemed safe to reduce or remove such a requirement.

Attention was drawn to the limitations due to operational issues, which related to the following key challenges: security and safety of Members and officers; limited space for Members; limited space for public attendees; and accessibility (Part M of the Building Regulations) and Fire Safety (Evacuation). It was noted that space limitations meant that the MFR in the Full Council configuration could only accommodate a very small number of mobility impaired Members and public.

In response to questions from Members, the Assistant Director Property confirmed that there were currently no national requirements or regulations for social distancing. The Council was therefore following Public Health guidance and local safety risk assessments. Given that the New Shire Hall Projects Managers had left the Council, it was not possible to categorically state that all the above challenges had been considered. However, the MFR was legally compliant in respect of Building Regulations and other matters, however obtaining a legal requirement might not achieve the targets or goals of the Joint Administration for accessibility and public engagement with its meetings.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- the importance of not making long-term decisions in relation to the MFR on the basis of Covid. However, it was acknowledged that Public Health guidance should be followed whilst infection rates were so high.
- the need to make greater utilisation of the MFR space.
- the importance of being open and visible to the public so there was some wariness regarding alternative arrangements to deliberately keep the public away from Members. It was acknowledged that there was an element of risk to being a councillor.
- reported that every Member had been invited to visit the MFR to see it set up for Full Council. As far as one Member was concerned it was spacious and comfortable, and it was noted that no complaints had been received regarding safety and disability access. It was suggested that the constitutional requirement for two hour breaks would avoid the need for Members to leave the room during the meeting.
- highlighted the fact that there was video conferencing in other rooms to manage significant public interest in Full Council meetings.
- the need to bear in mind that the MFR had never been designed to replicate the Council Chamber at the old Shire Hall where it had been left vacant for 86% of the time. The MFR was designed to be environmentally efficient and fit for purpose and had involved Members of all groups in its design.
- the need to receive a report back to the next available meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee. It was noted that there was very little capacity available to achieve this as officers were working on delivering increased ventilated capacity across the Council's estate in relation to Covid in order to keep frontline services operating.
- acknowledged that issues relating to Covid, security, and comfort/size/useability needed to be considered separately. It was important to note that the MFR was not suitable to be used for Full Council whilst Covid infection rates were so high. It was acknowledged that there were risks and it was wrong and dangerous for Members to protect themselves from the public at all times. However, concern was expressed regarding the accommodation of 61 Members (two Members in wheelchairs), officers, press and public (possibly in wheelchairs) for hours in the MFR. It was

therefore important to take time to prepare a detailed report looking at the issues relating to safety, security and the working environment for Members and public accessibility.

- highlighted the significant costs of holding meetings of Full Council at external venues, which needed to be added to the six month period required for the review.
- queried how it was proposed to increase the size of the MFR. It was noted that if a potential problem was identified then it was likely that options to extend over the reception area would be considered.
- expressed concern that councillors in wheelchairs would have to be located near a door, which was not considered inclusive.

The Chair acknowledged the different issues, which needed to be considered separately. She confirmed that she had concerns about safety and disability access, which had necessitated the need for a report. Whilst it was possible to use other rooms to accommodate public access, she was concerned that public access was less than at the old Shire Hall.

Councillor Count proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Schumann which he later withdrew.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and public health impacts of Full Council meetings without social distancing required the continued use of external venues.
- b) instruct the Assistant Director Property to prepare a detailed report for the committee in September 2022 on issues relating to safety, security and working environment for Members and challenges to the Council's aspirations for public accessibility to its meetings from the current size and configuration of the MFR with detailed options to address the issues.

## 67. Corporate Risk Register

Members were reminded that the Strategy and Resources Committee was responsible for the development and oversight of the Council's risk management and strategy. The Audit and Accounts Committee also had important functions in relation to risk, and would be considering the Corporate Risk Register at its meeting in May. Members were informed of how the Risk Register had been actioned and monitored during the Covid pandemic, and the subsequent changes now that the Council was moving back to some form of normality. Attention was drawn to the eight current corporate risks, which had been reviewed by the risk owner, and the five which had been removed. It was noted that two risks had been created to replace the existing risk relating to safeguarding, and two new risks had been added to cover cybercrime and failure to comply with Information Governance legislation and industry standards. Over the course of the next year, the risk management team would undertake a programme of work which challenged and assessed of each of the Council's Corporate Risks.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that the Council had moved away from Joint Management Team arrangements to having its own Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) towards the end of January 2022. Since taking up post in late February, the Chief Executive was keen to look rigorously at the Council's Risk Register with CLT, and would also be looking at officer and operational governance across the authority.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- expressed concern, particularly given the lack of reference to inflation, about decreasing the risk score from 20 to 12 for the risk relating to sufficient budget to deliver agreed short and medium-term objectives. It was noted that Risk 2 covered inflation, which was controlled by rigorous tracking of national and international factors and government policy. However, it was agreed that this point needed further review. **Action Required.**
- queried what had happened to increase the risk score from 12 to 15 for the failure of the Council's arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children and adults. It would therefore be useful to have the addition of the previous scores in these reports. It was noted that although calculating risk was not an exact science, it was felt that an impact assessment of less than 5 was not appropriate.
- queried the calculation for the risk relating to the Council's human resources not able to meet business need which had decreased from 16 to 15 with a likelihood assessed as 3. Again it would be useful to have the previous score to see what had changed. It was noted that the appendices would detail the previous and current scores in future. Members were also informed of the basis of the calculation for this risk.
- reiterated all the reasons why some Members felt that it was the insufficient funding of services which had led to the decrease in score for the risk relating to sufficient budget to deliver agreed short and medium-term objectives.
- expressed concern about the significant quantum of staff missing in adults and children's services and the impact of this on delivering services. It was also noted that the Council's risk of not delivering its statutory or legislative obligations and failure to deliver key council services had also increased. The Council's potential for disastrous failure had therefore increased since May 2021.

Councillor Count proposed an amendment to add an additional recommendation b), seconded by Councillor Schumann, as follows:

- b) raise serious questions of the assessment of Risk 01 and ask that the likelihood score be reviewed by officers as a matter of urgency. Furthermore to report back to Strategy and Resources Committee at its May reserve meeting a full action plan with timetable on mitigations being implemented and an update on the re-assessment of scoring.

Councillor Count explained that this risk related to the failure of the Council's arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable children and adults. It was the most significant responsibility faced by all Councillors, and officers. It was acknowledged that

the impact for this risk should probably have always been 5. There was an urgent need to review this risk as adults had a 16% senior social worker vacancy rate and children services a 26% one. The availability of agency workers was finite, and an overstretched workforce could and might lead to costly and tragic mistakes. There was a significant drop in children's placements, which might indicate a lack of detection, reporting or caseload management. It was noted that 56% of the budget for children's strategic management was unspent. There had also been a loss of key personnel including the Executive Director and Service Director. In his view, the breakdown of good governance in adults and health was another risk factor to be considered.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Schumann suggested the need to use the reserve date for this one issue given the scale of business on the other committee dates.

The Director Business Improvement and Development reminded the Committee that some of the risk scores had changed because CLT had revised its risk process over the last year particularly as it was felt that some risks had not been consistently and correctly rated. There had been officer and Member workshops during the autumn of 2021 where these risks had been discussed and re-scored. The Director acknowledged that more work was needed.

One Member commented that it was therefore how the Council measured risk rather than the situation getting worse. In relation to the risk referred to in the amendment, the only issue which could be debated was the likelihood as the rating was now at the highest level. The proposal to separate the risk relating to safeguarding was therefore welcomed and it was felt that Adults and Health and Children and Young People Committees were the appropriate bodies to consider safeguarding.

The Chair acknowledged the seriousness of the risk relating to safeguarding. It was important to look at this risk together with risk 5 regarding workforce. It was noted that whilst there were vacancies in those roles that work was still being carried out. In the Children's Services area, there was a large number of agency staff which was expensive for the Council. The Chief Executive would be looking at the risk register and the whole structure of the organisation. There needed to be a serious review of how the Council could improve long term workforce planning and enhance its approach to the recruitment and retention of employees.

On being put the vote the amendment was lost.

It was resolved by a majority to note and comment on the corporate risk register.

## 68. Corporate Services Performance Report – Quarter 3 2021-22

The Committee received a report detailing a revised Key Performance Indicator Suite and associated performance information to Quarter 3 2021-22 for Corporate Services.

One Member highlighted the number of full time equivalent days lost to anxiety and mental related absence (short and long term), which needed to be factored into vacancy rates. It was suggested that this was probably due to staff being overworked, and the uncertainty about a person's future employment given the changes to joint

working with Peterborough City Council. The Chair explained that a report on joint service arrangements would be presented to a future meeting.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Review the proposed new Corporate Services KPI list and agree the proposed addition to and removal of KPIs from the Corporate Services KPI list.
- b) Monitor progress of Corporate Services, consider whether performance is at an acceptable level and identify remedial action as required.

## 69. Treasury Management Report – Quarter Three Update 2021-22

The Committed received the Treasury Management Quarter Three Report for 2021/22. In response to a question on the notice period for the multi class funds, the Assistant Director Finance reported that it would be fairly short notice. There was £48m of General Reserves predicted at year end, which was sometimes used to reduce the Council's borrowing, in cash terms, it was therefore suggested whether it would be sensible to allocate some of the General Fund money to multi-class funds. Members were informed that it was important to bear in mind that the Council was a large net borrower and that there were changes to the prudential code which precluded net borrowing authorities from making such investments.

It was resolved unanimously to note the Treasury Management Quarter Three Report for 2021/22.

## 70. Strategy and Resources Committee Agenda Plan & Training Plan & Appointments to Outside Bodies & Internal Advisory Groups & Panels

The Committee noted its agenda plan, and a proposal to extend the remit of the Green Investment Advisory Group to include the procurement of utilities, which was within the remit of the Strategy & Resources Committee. It was therefore proposed to have a cross Committee advisory group with four Members from both Committees.

Councillor Count proposed an amendment to add the following wording, seconded by Councillor Goldsack, as follows:

request officers undertake the necessary constitutional amendments through Constitution and Ethics Committee and Full Council, so that utilities is transferred from Strategy and Resources Committee to Environment and Green Investment Committee.

He added that he was concerned that establishing so many joint advisory groups was actually moving issues away from the committee system and public view. The Democratic Services Manager explained the constitutional process which could be adopted if the Committee was minded to accept the amendment. The Chair reported that she was comfortable with the current working group process and highlighted the benefit of them being cross cutting. On being put the vote the amendment was lost.

It was resolved unanimously to note the Committee Agenda Plan and approve the new remit of the Green Investments and Utilities Advisory Group.

Chair