

## **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday, 26th March 2019

**Time:** 10.00a.m. – 11.00a.m.

**Present:** Councillors Bailey, Bates, Bywater, Criswell, Cuffley (substituting for Councillor Schumann), Dupre, Hickford (Vice-Chairman), Hudson, Jenkins, McGuire (substituting for Councillor Count), Meschini, Sanderson (substituting for Councillor Giles), Shuter, Whitehead and Wilson (substituting for Councillor Nethsingha)

### **149. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies were received from Councillors Count (Chairman), Giles, Nethsingha and Schumann.

No declarations of interest were made.

### **150. MINUTES – 22ND JANUARY 2019 AND ACTION LOG**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman subject to the following amendments to Minute 145:

- page 11 of the agenda, fourth bullet point, add considerable before and towards the target after “savings”.
- page 12 of the agenda, fourth bullet point, add after the end of this paragraph [*Note: the Code of Conduct complaint was submitted to another authority*]

In noting the action log, the Vice-Chairman drew attention to the action on page 20 requesting that case studies receive a wider circulation to District Councils, NHS, Voluntary Sector and communities. The Committee was informed that this action had now been completed.

One Member queried whether the workshop involving the Chairs of the relevant committees to identify appropriate indicators which would provide General Purposes Committee (GPC) with a strategic view of the organisation should be extended to include all members and substitutes of GPC and the Lead Members of all the Policy and Services Committees.

The Director: Business Improvement and Development explained that the Chairs and Vice-Chairs were being asked to recommend indicators to GPC. It was noted that some Committees had discussed which indicators should be recommended. A Member expressed concern regarding the disjointed approach to this work. She highlighted the successful session which had been held by Commercial and Investment (C & I) Committee. In response, it was noted that C & I Committee had been considering new key performance indicators (KPIs). The role of the workshop set out in the action log was to identify indicators to enable GPC to take a holistic view of the organisation.

The Vice-Chairman added that he hoped Policy and Service Committees reviewed their KPIs on a regular basis and that all Members should be able to feed information back to GPC via their relevant Committee Chair.

#### **151. PETITIONS**

No petitions were received.

#### **152. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – JANUARY 2019**

The Committee was presented with the January 2019 Finance and Performance report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office, which was showing a forecast underspend of £1,639k. It was noted that there had been a modest improvement due to staff vacancies in Customer Services. In response to a query regarding the virement from Children's Services to fund additional resources in the contact centre, it was noted that this resource would still be focussed on Children's Services.

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

#### **153. INTEGRATED RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST JANUARY 2019**

The Committee received a report detailing the financial and performance information to assess progress in delivering the Council's Business Plan. The overall revenue budget position was showing a forecast year-end pressure of £3.4m, which was a reduction of £0.084m on the previous month. Members were reminded that there had been an improvement in the Commercial and Investment budget due to an over achievement of the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation dividend. Attention was drawn to the pressures in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Specialist Services budget.

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

- queried in relation to recommendation b) whether it was the Council's policy to pay up front before receiving services. The Head of Finance acknowledged that it was a variation to normal practice. However, it was noted that the company had refused to sustain the placement without payment in advance, which had been successful in 2017/18. Members were advised that all such requests had to be signed off by the Chief Finance Officer.
- thanked the Looked After Children Transport Team on reducing costs to achieve a balanced budget.
- highlighted the need to undertake a review of where street lights had been erected. There was concern that the Council had received a number of requests for additional street lights via the Local Highway Improvement (LHI) Scheme to address dark areas. Members were reminded of the consultation which had taken place as part of the Street Light replacement programme. The Chairman of Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee (H&CIC) acknowledged the need for a review to establish

whether the LHI approved street lights were replacing columns which had previously been in place or addressing dark spots where there had been no lighting in the past. He agreed to liaise with Councillor Whitehead who had raised this concern. **Action Required.**

- queried the need to involve the Police in any review of Street Lighting particularly given the County Lines situation in Cambridge. Members were informed that work had been carried out with the Constabulary which had identified no evidence that poor street lighting contributed to crime. It was also important to note that there was often not an energy source available to light some places.
- expressed concern that it was proposed the funding allocated by Government to help local authorities make preparations for Brexit would be held in the corporate grants accounts to offset pressures across the Council, reducing the transfer from the general fund reserve at year-end. The same Member highlighted the work being undertaken by the Brexit Taskforce, which was being reported to Audit and Accounts Committee, and which was likely to involve the need for funding. She suggested pooling the funding with other local authorities in order to achieve shared objectives. The Head of Finance reported that the Council had received this unringfenced funding at short notice. However, this did not preclude the Committee from allocating the funding in the new financial year once there was greater clarity regarding Brexit. The Vice-Chairman added that any expense due to Brexit would be a pressure on the Council's budget.
- highlighted recommendation c) and the need for this additional funding to not subsidise existing spend. The Head of Finance reported that this funding had been allocated by Government at a very late stage. The Chairman of H&CIC explained that every Highway Authority in the Eastern Region had been allocated this funding with less than six months to spend it. Many of the authorities used the same contractor which meant there was insufficient capacity to spend it within the timeframe. Members commented that they hoped the £2m would be considered as extra funding in the next financial year.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the allocation of the Brexit Funding for Local Government grant (£87,500) to the corporate grants account within Funding Items as set out in section 5.2;
- b) Approve accounting for a write-off of £85k: Thoughts of Others Ltd overpayment invoice following the liquidation of that company as set out in section 6.2;
- c) Approve -£2.0m revised phasing of prudential borrowing from 2018/19 to 2019/20 for the £90m Highways Maintenance schemes as set out in section 7.7;

- d) Note the +£1.348m additional Devolved Formula Capital funding to be received by People and Communities (P&C) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as set out in section 7.7;
- e) Note the reduction in total required prudential borrowing of £3m in relation to the EastNet scheme as set out in section 7.8.1;
- f) Approve prudential borrowing of £620,000 in 2019/20 for the Mosaic IT Infrastructure scheme, as set out in section 7.8.2;
- g) Approve prudential borrowing of £150,000 in 2019/20 and a further £150k for each of the next 2 financial years for the Essential Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) Business Systems Upgrades project, as set out in section 7.8.3;
- h) Approve additional prudential borrowing of £95,700 in 2019/20 for the Swaffham Prior Community Heat Scheme as set out in section 7.9;
- i) Approve additional prudential borrowing of £150,000 in 2019/20 for the Cambourne Village College Scheme as set out in section 7.10; and
- j) Approve a revision in the agreed level of loan permitted to Viva, to up to £450k, for capital expenditure on the Soham Mill project, delegating agreement of final terms to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chairman of GPC (see section 8.10).

#### **154. THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PEOPLE STRATEGY**

The Committee was asked to consider the approach taken to the development of the People Strategy and to review and comment on the proposed strategy that would be presented to Full Council on 14 May 2019. Attention was drawn to the background and main issues relating to the development of the Strategy. There had been considerable engagement involving Staffing and Appeals Committee, every Leadership Team, employees, Trade Unions, and a workshop involving GPC.

Members thanked officers for an excellent GPC workshop session in February. One Member asked about the gender balance between male/female given that 80% of Council employees were female. He also identified an issue raised at the last meeting of Council regarding the need to build on the pay gap work by considering Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) employees. Finally, he queried whether the Council was confident that staff would manage demand by moving away from expensive care packages to preventative work.

The HR Director reported that the Council operated as an employer which treated and valued everyone the same, irrespective of gender or any other characteristic. As part of equality, opportunities were open to all, not that this had been raised an area to consider and pointed out that an 80:20 gender split characteristic was true for most similar Councils. Another Member reported that it was important to bear in mind that although men were numerically in the minority, they were generally paid more as evidenced by

the Gender Pay Gap report. Following this, she highlighted the need to consider salaries earned at a previous employer to see whether this was reinforcing the pay gap.

The HR Director acknowledged the request from Council to consider the BME pay gap. He explained that although this work was not mandatory yet it would be undertaken next financial year. In relation to the need to reflect the change in expectation raised at the GPC workshop regarding moving to preventative work, this would be reflected in the actions that support skills development.

One Member raised the need to track employee engagement surveys on a regular basis in order to monitor issues. Another Member queried what the Strategy would mean in practice. Given the changes in working, he questioned what was being done to address the individual needs of employees. He also highlighted the importance of line management over a dispersed team sometimes with no home base. In relation to the leadership of the organisation, he queried whether senior officers working long hours across councils was setting the right example.

The HR Director explained that the Council faced the same challenges as other employers in relation to changes in working practices. It was therefore important that the Council supported employees from a health, safety and wellbeing perspective, and by providing the necessary technology to support agile working. Such changes had also resulted in changes in how employees were managed and management skills, which meant Line Managers had to be more flexible in how they supported employees and managed by outcomes.

Managing by outcomes also meant more emphasis on regular 1-2-1s, appraisal, engagement and communication, and Members noted a suggestion from the GPC workshop about 30 minute monthly catch ups as a way of doing this well consistently. In response to a question about behaviours the HR Director agreed with a Councillor that objectives/outcomes were critical but also behaviours and how they were achieved was equally important, the latter being a consideration as part of the Council's appraisal process.

It was resolved unanimously to recommend the People Strategy to Full Council for approval.

## **155. TRANSFORMATION FUND MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 3 2018-19**

The Committee received a report detailing progress in delivery of the projects for which transformation funding had been approved at the end of the third quarter of the 2018/19 financial year. Attention was drawn to the financial outcomes, and the thirteen schemes of which two were rated red and one amber. It was noted that these three ratings in the main related to phasing. The Committee was informed that more transformation proposals would be presented to its next meeting. In response to a query, it was noted that one scheme rated blue was over performing.

It was resolved unanimously to note and comment on the report and the impact of transformation fund investment across the Council.

**156. TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT –  
QUARTER THREE UPDATE 2018-19**

The Committee considered the third quarterly update on the Treasury Management Strategy 2018-19, approved by Council in February 2018. Attention was drawn to the loan to Estover Playing Field, which was now in for repayment.

It was resolved unanimously to note the Treasury Management Report.

**157. GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN, TRAINING PLAN  
AND APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES, AND INTERNAL ADVISORY  
GROUPS AND PANELS**

The Committee considered its agenda and training plans. It was noted that the following items had been added to the agenda plan:

- 28 May 2019: Data Centre
- 16 July 2019: Shared Services: IT Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) review its agenda plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- b) review its training plan attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

Chairman