

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 22nd September 2020

Time: 10.00a.m. –11.40a.m.

Present: Councillors Bailey, Bates, Bywater, Count (Chairman), Criswell, Dupré, Goldsack, Hickford, Hudson, Jenkins, Kavanagh, McDonald, Meschini, Nethsingha, Sanderson and Schumann

269. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No apologies or declarations of interest were received.

270. MINUTES – 14TH JULY 2020 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman when the Council returned to its offices. In noting the Action Log, the Chairman reported that the Committee received an e-mail on 14 September 2020 with regard to the issue of malnutrition at the top of page 7 of the agenda so that action was now complete. Members would also receive an update on action 258 as part of the item on the Committee's training plan.

One Member queried whether the Committee would be receiving separate Covid-19 reports in the future. Members were informed that this information had now been incorporated within finance reports and was included within the Integrated Finance Monitoring Report for General Purposes Committee.

271. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions or public questions were received.

272. INTEGRATED FINANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST JULY 2020

The Committee received a report detailing the financial information to assess progress in delivering the Council's Business Plan. The overall revenue budget position was showing a forecast year-end pressure of +£0.1m. The Council was also reporting a £0.8m increased use of the Corona Virus grant. It was noted that there was a decrease in the number of older people aged 65+ in nursing and residential homes, which was consistent with the NHS arrangements in place during the pandemic. The Head of Finance drew attention to the potential financial impact this year of the Corona Virus, which would be nearly £57m. After taking account of confirmed and anticipated funding, this would present a deficit of £5.5m. In conclusion, he informed the Committee of the need to revise the capital programme variations budgets to take account of phasing.

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

- welcomed the clarity of the financial information presented in the report.

- queried the relationship between the +£0.1m and the £5.5m deficits. The Chairman confirmed that there was no direct relationship between the two deficits. The Committee was being presented with two different ways of looking at the same picture. He reminded Members of the difficulty of identifying a definitive figure, for example the report was based on financial information up to 31st July 2020 but since then much had changed. He therefore acknowledged that it was an unstable set of predictions but it was the best that could be identified at this stage. The Head of Finance highlighted the difficulty of forecasting and drew attention to the differences in the forecasting methods set out on page 14 of the report relating to Adults and Children's Services and financing. It was expected that these two methods would narrow in the future.
- requested more information on the changes in phasing to the capital programme. The Chairman explained that this related to the transfer of capital funding from one period to another. The Head of Finance drew attention to page 23 of the agenda which provided further detail on the key funding changes. It included where the Council had negotiated different contributions but did not commit it to any additional expenditure.
- queried a breakdown of the elements driving the decrease since the spring in older people aged 65+ receiving social care and what the Council could expect in the future. The Head of Finance confirmed the impact of increased mortality but the financial forecast was not picking up an impact of longer waiting lists. As part of the business planning process, the Council would be modelling the impact of the decline of people's wellbeing during the pandemic which could lead to a demand on Adults Services. He explained the reasons for the different level in NHS funding at the moment and expressed concern about the impact on the Council in the future when that changed.
- noted the additional £541k funding to the People and Communities directorate for the purpose of supporting emergency assistance for food and essential supplies. It was also stated that additionally some funds were allocated on a district-by-district basis to enable responses to further need. It was queried whether the funding allocated to Districts was in addition to the £541k funding, and if not how much of the funding, and how would it be allocated, to District Councils. The Head of Finance confirmed there was no additional funding to the additional £541k. It was noted that £35k would be allocated to each District with some flexibility as to how best to manage the allocation.
- noted that there had been a recent announcement about further infection control funding from Government which was welcomed. The Chairwoman of Adults Committee reported that the Council was seeing an increased demand on its services. She explained that carers who had done so much work during lockdown were now exhausted partly due to the fact that they had not sought help as early as they would have normally done. The effect of this was hard to quantify for the future. The Council was working hard to provide the right emotional support against a backdrop of less emergency respite care. She drew attention to the Service's impaired savings. In year one the Adults Positive Challenge programme had

delivered but it had been inevitably impaired by the pandemic particularly in relation to the technology and reablement work streams. It was noted that there was now a significant focus on these areas which would start to deliver again with savings coming through.

- acknowledged the uncertainty around the financial situation and the difficulty of forecasting. It was therefore queried whether the Chancellor would still publish a four year settlement in the autumn. It was also queried whether the Government would take the Council's falling income into consideration as part of the settlement. The Chairman highlighted the significant amount of work the Government had done to deal with the financial consequences of a very complex situation. This view was supported by the Chairwoman of Adults Committee who set out the support provided by central government to local government. The Chairman reported that, as far as he was aware, it was possible given the rapidly changing situation that there would be a one year settlement which could be flexed by additional grant. The Chief Finance Officer added that all the narrative was pointing towards a one year settlement. Together with the Head of Finance, he would be meeting officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 24 September 2020 to clarify a number of points particularly around the impact on the Council's finances of the local taxation system next year.

The Service Director, Community and Safety drew attention to the Think Communities Transformation Fund Bid set out in Appendix 4. He reminded the Committee that the Council had a strong track record of supporting community work through the establishment of the Communities and Partnership Committee, the Innovate and Cultivate and Capital Funds, and the Neighbourhood Cares pilots. He drew attention to the work the Council and its partners had done during the pandemic to support communities, and the excellent work of communities themselves. He focused on the people who had been shielding, those who were very concerned, and the inequalities across the county.

The Committee received a brief description of the bid which was to establish a Think Communities team, to co-ordinate place-focused people-centred support alongside local councils, voluntary and faith sector, community groups, housing providers, business, health, police and fire. This formal proposal built on the excellent work which had already been taking place over the last three years and during the pandemic. Members were advised of the aims of the delivery model to deliver this targeted preventative work and the initial priority themes. The Committee was being asked to invest up to £1,686,000 in Transformation Funding up to March 2022. Whilst no direct pay back was expected, cost avoidance and additional savings across all service areas would be modelled using the Adults Positive Challenge programme as an exemplar. It was noted that this approach would be embedded within the organisation with the work being part of core budgets.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Council, thanked again officers, volunteers and communities in assisting the Council through this very difficult time. He highlighted the work which had taken place in Cambridgeshire, and the fact that everyone was working together. He added that he personally, on behalf

of the Committee, wanted to thank members of staff who would need again to step up to deal with the second wave of the virus. He acknowledged that the public sector was working better together than ever and it was important that any new ways of working were captured and made permanent.

Speaking as the Chairman of the Communities and Partnership Committee, Councillor Criswell, highlighted the fact that this report was at the heart of what the committee was trying to do. He thanked the Service Director, Community and Safety for his hard work, and expressed his full support for the proposal to ensure a placed based model was grounded in communities. It would enabled the Council to work more effectively with its partners, and improve engagement with its communities and outcomes.

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

- highlighted the fact that Community Connectors were the majority of the expenditure. It was queried how they would work and what were the key measurables and deliverables. The Service Director, Community and Safety reported that the Council had benefitted from redeployed staff undertaking similar roles co-located with partners within each District Council area over the last six months. It was noted that their role had recently changed slightly in order to address specific issues such as the newly unemployment in Fenland and food poverty in Cambridge. The ten Community Connectors would be held to account and would own the responsibility for delivery cost avoidance measures. To enable them to do this, they would have oversight of the whole set of Council/partner data to understand what was driving costs to achieve best value and deliver better outcomes.
- acknowledged the reasons which had been exposed by the pandemic for this bid. It was important to build on the work and community effort identified in the report as it was unsustainable for the Council to continue to provide such support via secondments. It was also important that the Council did not just focus on the health issues related to the pandemic but also the financial and other issues.
- queried the use of the Transformation Fund to support this bid as it was felt that it did not fit into the framework for bids to this fund. Attention was drawn to the lack of payback calculation and analysis of risk, which should have been made available before the bid was recommended for approval. One Member was of the view that not everything the Council did was transformationable. The Chairman acknowledged that when the Transformation Fund had first been established there had been a strong payback element but it had then become clear to all groups on the Council that the Fund should also be about improved outcomes, which might not have a direct payback element initially. He stressed that this bid was transformational as it was a different way of working.
- highlighted the need to listen and support Town and Parish Councils. The Service Director, Community and Safety reported that the bid was a fundamental change in the way the Council and its staff operated. It reimagined the way public servants in Cambridgeshire interacted with

residents. During the pandemic, the Council's relationship with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils and Cambridgeshire ACRE had come to the fore in rethinking how the Council could work with Town and Parishes as equal partners and enablers. He explained that an increase in local intervention was more likely to achieve the biggest difference. The bid had the support of all Directorates, for example HR had recognised the need to retrain the Council's workforce and the role of Highways Officers was being considered by the Place and Economy Directorate.

- queried whether named Co-ordinators would be the prime contact for an individual in any Parish Council, and how they would engage with the Parish Councils' ongoing activity. The Service Director, Community and Safety confirmed that those details would be provided to parish councils. He drew attention to the spokes element of Cambs 2020 where staff would be moved into communities. He therefore expected that these staff would be located in the communities they supported.
- highlighted the significant commitment in communities to continue the good work. The Chairwoman of Adults Committee reported that it was known through Neighbourhood Cares that resources needed to be deployed at a local level. The bid was about standing alongside local communities rather than doing things to them. It would accelerate the strength based work which had taken place over time and would pay dividends in the future. The bid represented a commitment in the power of the Council's communities to support themselves and a belief that prevention worked.
- highlighted the importance of the role of the NHS in this process and the effective work carried out by the North and South Alliances. However, it was essential that the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership moved into delivery. The NHS needed to work alongside the County, District and Parish Councils in local communities.
- queried where the work would be physically located around the county. The Service Director, Community and Safety reported that the whole premise was that this work should be driven by the evidence and demand. Whilst the Council had built up a good picture, it was acknowledged that more work needed to take place. However, there were some obvious areas of need, which required support and intervention. It was noted that officers would be mandated to work in the communities they were working alongside.
- highlighted Priority 6: Tackling Food and Fuel Poverty and Security, which was critical at the moment particularly in relation to rents. There was concern that the priorities listed on page 35 of the agenda could become unbalanced with this priority engulfing other priorities. The Service Director, Community and Safety acknowledged that Priority 6 was the most specific. It was noted that there were many households who were just getting by before who would now struggle. He stressed the importance of it being seen in the context of the other seven priorities particularly Priority 7: Improving Social Mobility. He informed the

Committee of a newly relaunched cross party working group looking at all aspects of social mobility and tackling poverty and multiple deprivation in the long-term. Whilst Priority 6 focussed on the short term impact of the pandemic. It was important to put it in context with the Food Strategy, which identified longer term solutions. He reminded Members of the £541k funding being used to progress this work. The Chairman also highlighted the various schemes in place to support people at risk of being made homeless.

- highlighted the need to consider what constituted a demonstrable saving in order to take account of a more holistic approach. The Chairman explained that the aim was to embed this work within the Council and not just as a stop gap measure for the pandemic.
- acknowledged that Cambridgeshire had a relatively low infection rate compared to the national average and well below the intervention rate. It was important that this was maintained in order to avoid a regional lockdown, which would not be good for the economy and the mental health of residents. It was therefore queried whether any action was being taken to address the impact of the arrival of University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University students. The Chief Executive reported that for some time detailed planning, which reflected Government guidance, had taken place under the Local Outbreak Control Plan led by the Director of Public Health with the two Universities and Cambridge City Council around the return of students. She explained that an action plan was in place and would be monitored by Health Committee. It was agreed to circulate a briefing to the Committee. **Action Required.**
- queried whether plans to deal with students returning to University would be reviewed and tightened up as the Council learnt from experience. The Chief Executive reported that one of the strengths of the public sector was the sharing of experiences to improve learning. She explained that the Director of Public Health and the Universities were in touch with other authorities and universities to create a network of learning across the country. As well as this work, the Council was reviewing the situation on a daily basis via the Surveillance Cell established by the Director of Public Health.

The Chairman welcomed the non-political way this report had been handled. He set out a number actions the Council had taken in the past which had helped it manage during the pandemic such as Neighbourhood Cares, the creation of the Communities and Partnership Committee and Community Champions, Think Communities, the Innovate and Cultivate and Capital Funds, the Transformation Fund and the provision of Superfast Broadband.

(Due to broadband issues, Councillor Nethsingha had left the meeting)

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the -£6.6m revised phasing of the capital programme variations budgets, as set out in section 6.6;

- b) Note the additional funding anticipated for the Lancaster Way scheme as set out in section 6.6;
- c) Note the changes in Section 106 funding in relation to the Fendon Road Roundabout scheme as set out in section 6.6;
- d) Note the correction to the Combined Authority contributions for the Coldham's Lane Roundabout scheme as set out in section 6.6;
- e) Approve the carry forward of £0.3m capital funding from 2019/20 to 2020/21 in relation to the Abington Woods SEN scheme, as set out in section 6.6;
- f) Approve the earmarking of the unringfenced grant (£3.789m) received in August 2020 for the purposes of responding to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020/21, previously recommended in the June 2020 report, as set out in Appendix 3;
- g) Approve the allocation of the £541k unringfenced grant (Local authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies) to the People & Communities directorate, received in July 2020, previously recommended in the June 2020 report, as set out in Appendix 3;
- h) Approve the Think Communities - Creating a Unified Approach application for up to £1,686,000 from the Transformation Fund over the next two years.

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

The Committee considered changes to its agenda plan and Internal Advisory Groups and Panels as follows:

- October – add Business Planning items relating to revenue and capital, and Transformation Fund Bid – Micro-Enterprise Pilot
- Member Development Panel - remove Councillor Whitehead and replace with Councillor Meschini with Councillor Kavanagh as a substitute

The Director Business Improvement and Development drew attention to the last item on the action log relating to training on economic activity, which was now within the remit of the committee. She reminded Members that economic recovery was one of the six topics in the Council's recovery framework. She therefore proposed to bring an item to the next meeting detailing the provision of a workshop in November covering those recovery themes. One Member highlighted the fact that the Committee was not being presented with a Training Plan but instead a list of training events which had taken place.

It was resolved unanimously to review the agenda plan, training plan and appointment to outside bodies and internal advisory groups and panels.

Chairman