

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 14th July 2020

Time: 10.00a.m. –12.00noon

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

261. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor Bates.

No declarations of interest were made.

262. MINUTES – 2ND JUNE 2020 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman when the Council returned to its offices.

Attention was drawn to the action relating to the Treasury Management Report – Quarter Four Update 2019-20. One Member commented that CCLA's policy relating to investment in fossil fuels allowed for investment of up to 10% in companies whose activities involved fossil fuels. She was of the opinion that the comment in the action log, that these investments accorded with seeking net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050, was somewhat general in scope. She therefore suggested that Environment and Sustainability Committee be asked to review CCLA's policies relating to fossil fuel investment. The Chairman acknowledged the complexities around this issue and requested a briefing note on the 10% policy before any further action was considered. **Action Required.**

263. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions or public questions were received.

264. FINANCE MONITORING REPORT – MAY 2020

The Committee was presented with the May 2020 Finance Monitoring Report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office, which was showing a forecast underspend of £200k. Attention was drawn to the two new significant forecast outturn variance by value (over £100,000) relating to the temporary mortuary provision, and the LGSS Cambridge Office budget. It was noted that the carry forward of capital funding from 2019/20 to 2020/21 would be reflected in the reconciliation in the Integrated Finance Monitoring Report.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) review, note and comment upon the report.

- b) approve the carry forward of funding from 2019/20 to 2020/21, as set out in section 2 of Appendix A.

265. INTEGRATED FINANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST MAY 2020

The Committee received a report detailing the financial performance information for the financial year 2020/21. The Head of Finance reported that this would be an exceptional year for the Council in terms of financial management. Two different approaches were set out in the report as to where the Council was likely to be at year end. The first approach, on page 24 of the report, provided a firmer forecast with a pressure of £1.3m at year end. At this stage, the unringfenced grant was currently held centrally and would be allocated to address Covid related service pressures in due course. Attention was drawn to the pressures set out in Section 3.2. The table on page 25 provided a longer term analysis, which identified a potential financial impact of the pandemic on the Council of £53.6m with a deficit for the Council of £12.7m. Members were advised of the main differences in the two forecast approaches relating to Adults Services, Children's Services and Financing.

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

- acknowledged the current complexity around the Council's finances which made budgetary reporting challenging. It was also acknowledged that keeping the unringfenced grant in the General Fund was the right approach until clarity around main pressures as a result of Covid-19 could be established. The Chairman welcomed that acknowledgement including the support to hold the unringfenced grant centrally.
- queried the financial pressure on People and Communities set out in Section 3.2.2 against the reduction in demand for Adults and Children's Services in Section 3.1.3. The Head of Finance reported that Section 3.2.2 set out the forecast pressures at this point and the impact of the additional NHS funding and fewer people in service. Section 3.1.3 set out what the Council expected to happen in the recovery phase and where it expected demand to increase in future. It was noted that the impact of fewer people being in service had also not been deducted. It was hoped that as the Council achieved greater certainty the difference between the two forecasts would narrow.
- requested a breakdown of the reasons behind the reduction in costs for Adults Services between an increase in the number of deaths in care homes and an increase in NHS funding. The Head of Finance reported that he did not have the detail but he could confirm that there were 70 fewer people in service, which could be for a number of reasons. He explained that he would compile the information, which would come to Adults Committee.
- highlighted the fact that the amount of work going on in Children's Services had been lower than normal because of the lockdown. There

was concern that there could be issues the Council should be aware of but were not picking up and which could prove to be more costly in the end.

- expressed concern about the impact of Covid-19 on young people particularly in relation to existing and future job opportunities. It was suggested that there needed to be more granularity in relation to the ways in which the Council could support young people. The Chairman reminded the Committee that there was a Recovery Programme and each Policy and Service Committee should be taken through the relevant section of that programme. It was important to work to a place where Cambridgeshire could be put in the best possible position to come out of the pandemic.
- requested a clearer breakdown of the table on page 34 of the report. The Chairman reported that he was not aware of any issues relating to this table but asked Councillor Nethsingha to identify her concerns to the Head of Finance so that they could be investigated. **Action Required.**
- expressed concern about Recommendation L, as it was felt that the relocation of the Library Service to a site with no public transport was not appropriate. Another Member drew attention to the fact that Commercial and Investment Committee (C&IC) had agreed the proposal to purchase a new freehold industrial unit in St Ives subject to assurances from the Chairman of Communities and Partnership Committee (C&PC); he hoped that assurances would not just be sought from the Chairman. He highlighted the need to fully address the public health and library issues raised at C&IC, and felt that buying the unit without the appropriate assurances was inappropriate at this stage. The Chairman of C&PC reported that his Committee had considered the proposal and was convinced it was a suitable site. He confirmed that the mobile vehicle and staff would stay in Cambridge City whilst Health, Partnerships and Projects, and Library Presents staff would be based at the new building because they operated across the whole county. The primary aim of the building was to be the centre for book stock across the whole county and the site provided better connectivity for this process. In response, it was noted that some Members were not objecting to it remaining in Cambridge but were concerned that there was no public transport.
- requested information on the other Combined Authority schemes totalling £1.553k. The Head of Finance reported that these schemes tended to be in early stages, where the Council's professional teams were providing advice. He agreed to provide the Committee with a breakdown. **Action Required.**
- requested that information on the "Confidential Schemes" listed on pages 47 and 48 of the report be circulated to the Committee with the appropriate reference number. The Head of Finance reported that he could provide the Committee with a breakdown of the confidential schemes, which tended to be in Place and Economy. **Action Required.**

- queried why all housing schemes were not reported under and within This Land. It was noted that the Council made provision in the capital programme for loans to This Land.
- expressed concern regarding the way disrepair issues relating to the Mill Road Former Library Building (a Grade II listed building) set out in Section 6.7 had been reported. The Committee was reminded that the C&IC had discussed this issue at its meeting in June 2018. At this meeting, the need to carry out regular inspections of County Council properties had been raised, and the Committee had been informed that the Team which carried out inspections did not have sufficient resource to do this on a regular basis. As a result, officers had been asked to review arrangements for inspection to ensure such buildings were inspected regularly. The Committee had also been informed that these issues had first come to the attention of the Council in 2016. The Chairman reported that he was aware regular visits had taken place and many conversations had been had with the holders of the lease subsequent to the 2018 report. He acknowledged the comments made about inspections before 2018 and reported that adjustments had been made so inspections were followed up robustly.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the earmarking of the unringfenced grant (£11.512m) received in May 2020 for the purposes of responding to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020/21, as set out in section 5.1;
- b) Approve the carry forward of £61.2m capital funding from 2019/20 to 2020/21 and beyond as set out in section 6.6 and Appendix 3;
- c) Approve -£46.3m revised phasing of capital funding for schemes as set out in section 6.6;
- d) Note the changes in capital grants and Section 106 funding of £2.2m as set out in section 6.6;
- e) Approve the £750k virement from the People and Communities (P&C) Temporary Accommodation budget to the P&C School Condition Maintenance & Suitability budget, as set out in section 6.6;
- f) Note the additional Combined Authority contributions funding of £2.9m as set out in section 6.6;
- g) Note the £5.1m reduction in capital receipts funding in 2020/21 in relation to the schemes as set out in section 6.6;
- h) Note the reduction in Schools Condition Funding and to approve additional prudential borrowing of £418k to offset the reduction as set out in section 6.6;
- i) Note the £4.4m reduction in prudential borrowing in 2020/21 in relation to the schemes as set out in section 6.6;

- j) Approve additional prudential borrowing of £330k in 2020/21 for the Mill Road Former Library scheme, as set out in section 6.7;
- k) Approve additional prudential borrowing of £352k in 2020/201 for the Building Maintenance scheme, as set out in section 6.8;
- m) Approve additional prudential borrowing of up to £400k in 2020/21 for a Covid-19 risk budget for the Civic Hub construction project, as set out in section 6.10. (This was subject to approval of the recommendation by Commercial and Investment (C&I) Committee at the 10th July).

It was resolved to:

- l) Approve additional prudential borrowing in 2020/21 for the Cambs 2020 Spokes capital programme budget to cover the full costs of a property acquisition in St Ives, as set out in section 6.9.

266. CONNECTING CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUPERFAST BROADBAND CONTRACT EXTENSION

The Committee considered a report on the extension of the existing Superfast Broadband contract with an additional phase of full fibre rollout. It was noted that this fourth phase of the rollout would target mainly hard to reach premises, which were not covered by commercial activity. Attention was drawn to the “Clawback” investment pot, Members were informed that the proposal for an extension to Phase 4 would commit a further £1.87m of the investment pot; Government would need to agree the proposal as it had a share of this pot. It was also proposed that the extension and a business support programme be funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding with the latter receiving a matched contribution from the Combined Authority. The Committee was reminded that the Council was the accountable body for the BT/Openreach contract and the investment pot, acting on behalf of Peterborough City Council in the management and execution of aspects of Superfast Broadband delivery.

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

- highlighted the fact that there was very little in the report to say why the funding should be spent. It was felt that the reasons for the investment and the return should have been addressed in a public document. Another Member commented that the additionality should have been explained. The Programme Director drew attention to Section 2.1.3 of the report, which set out the background to the additional investment, which focused on the hardest and most expensive to reach premises. Members were reminded that the report was the continuation of previous investments agreed elsewhere so did not go into detail. The Chairman expressed disappointment that Councillors who had been aware of the benefits of this programme for some time were now challenging the report.
- queried what would happen if the application for ERDF funding was not successful, and the timescale for submitting the application. The Programme Director reported that the deadline for the application was the

end of July. If the Council was unsuccessful then the extension would be scaled back.

- queried how the Council was able to bid for EU funding via the ERDF. It was noted that this funding was overseen by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the final phase was time limited.
- queried the value for money of the programme and whether it could be benchmarked against other areas. The Programme Director explained that the funding would come from the investment pot but there would be a short gap before it became available, which would mean that the Council would need to provide the prudential borrowing for that short period. It was noted that the statistics the Government used for the value of the return was £20 for every £1 invested. There were straight forward economic benefits but also significant health and wellbeing benefits which were difficult to apply a monetary value to.
- welcomed this excellent programme which had achieved so much across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It was noted that the programme was set up exactly as proposed in the report with it now targeting the harder to reach areas. It was very good news with Cambridgeshire residents taking up access in high numbers. This programme was essential now more than ever, and had moved the Council from being lower than average in relation to connectivity access to somewhere around the average but the Council still needed to do better.
- queried whether the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was above the national average. It was noted that the area was now tracking slightly above the national average.
- requested clarification regarding whether the additional funding was putting the programme into Phase 5 or extending the existing Phase 4. It was noted that the contract was broken down into phases. This extension would be called Phase 5 but it was part of the same contract.
- queried how many properties would be covered in Phase 4 and what would be achieved for business. The Programme Director drew attention to Section 2.1.3 of the report which set out that 350-500 hardest to reach properties would be covered. It was not possible to be more specific without the relevant modelling.
- queried how the programme would link into 5G and the current gap in provision to meet the Government's target of 100% of properties with gigabit capability by 2025. The Programme Director explained that there were no direct implications for 5G other than it required full fibre. It was noted that gigabit capable meant schemes up to a gigabit. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough currently had 20% full fibre coverage with a target of 30% by 2022. Government was currently looking to change the 2025 target, which would require the Council to look again at its target.

The Chairman drew attention to the success of this programme, which had commenced following a decision by the previous Leader of the Council to invest £20m in council funding. It had been a challenging process to address the below national average coverage with the Council fighting off Government plans to force it to be part of a bidding system, which would have delayed the programme by 18 months. The Council administration at the time had promoted the £20m investment including the clawback mechanism against much resistance, which as a result of the high take up had resulted in various tranches of money coming back to the Council and being reinvested.

The Council had within the last seven years moved from below the national average to just above attracting £600m in funding benefit for the people of Cambridgeshire. He highlighted the impact of the programme on the harder to reach communities and businesses which were not in the centre of large conurbations, and its importance in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. He was therefore very proud of the Council's direction of travel during this time, and thanked the Programme Director and her Team for their hard work.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the proposed extension to the Superfast Broadband (SFBB) contract with further expenditure of up to £2.6m subject to the funding mechanisms described.
- b) Approve the proposal to submit a full application to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for which the County Council was the accountable body. This included provision for £725k funding to support the SFBB contract extension and £500k towards the delivery of a business support project on behalf of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- c) Approve the use of £1.875m from the Superfast Broadband "clawback" investment fund to support the proposed contract extension, subject to confirmation of approval to proceed from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).
- d) In the event of a successful ERDF bid and confirmation of approval for the use of clawback funding from DCMS, approve the use of prudential borrowing, if required, to provide interim funding for the SFBB contract extension in advance of the clawback investment fund maturing in 2023.
- e) Delegate to the Executive Director for Place and Economy, in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee, contract negotiations and final sign-off for a change control agreement to the existing SFBB contract to incorporate a further phase of rollout.

267. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Chairman reported that he had accepted Cambridgeshire County Council's response to Covid-19 as a late report on the following grounds:

1. Reason for lateness: To allow the report to contain the most up to date information possible.
2. Reason for urgency: To enable the committee to be briefed on the current situation in relation to the Council's response to Covid-19 for those services for which it was responsible.

The Chief Executive reported that although the Council's Health Committee monitored the public health Covid-19 intelligence and response in detail, she felt that it was important that General Purposes Committee also received the latest information. She explained that the number of new cases in Cambridgeshire remained low with no Districts causing concern. The Council now had Pillar 2 testing data compiled from drive-in test centres and home testing, which showed that Huntingdonshire's cumulative number of recorded cases was above the national average and Fenland was similar to the national average with the other Districts below. This data covered the whole of the pandemic from the start of testing and not the current situation. Public Health was reviewing the data and would provide a further briefing to see if additional action was required, as well as a detailed report to Health Committee on 6 August 2020.

The Chief Executive also drew attention to the Local Outbreak Control Plan published on 30 June 2020. The Regional Public Health Team had confirmed that it was a good plan and that the operational arrangements put in place were secure and good. These arrangements included a Surveillance Cell, which met daily to review data, and then pass information on to a multi-disciplinary Outbreak Management Team who would determine what action needed to be taken. It was noted that this Team worked very closely with Public Health England and if immediate action needed to be taken, in a workplace, school or community, it was considered by an Incident Management Team. This might involve Teams within Districts to take any action in communities.

It was noted that all the operational arrangements were supported by a clear communications strategy. The Council was mindful of the need to keep its communication messages fresh which was why it had launched the Keep Caring for Cambridgeshire campaign. It was important to remember that Corona Virus had not gone away, and it was therefore essential to maintain social distancing, hygiene measures and self isolation if testing positive for Covid-19. She added that the Member Led Outbreak Engagement Board had met on 10 July 2020 and agreed the need for a workshop to understand the community and local engagement around Covid-19.

The Head of Finance reported that an additional grant of £540k had been received from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for food and essential supplies. Additional funding of £500m nationally was available to fund some support for lost sales, fees and charges. The Government had also announced flexibility for Council Tax collection losses to be spread out over three years. It was noted that the fourth financial return to Government was expected at the end of the month.

The Director, Business Improvement and Development drew attention to the recovery work across Cambridgeshire. The work was progressing well with the second meeting of the Recovery Board scheduled to meet on 14 July 2020, which would look across all recovery plans to ensure a cohesive approach. Attention was drawn to the six steps set out in the Council's recovery framework. As part of the evidence base, the Council had recently completed a vulnerable people's needs assessment, and together with the Mayoral Forum and Combined Authority, the Council had also modelled the economic impacts. All this work would inform the Council's response and interventions, and any proposals would be taken through the relevant Policy and Service Committees.

Members were advised of issues relating to the Council's workforce, which included the outcome of a staff survey around the experience of working during the pandemic. It was noted that the Council was keen to capture any new behaviours. The Council was also risk assessing the return to Council offices and a new learning module would be launched covering all aspects of health and safety.

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

- expressed concern about the timeliness of the Pillar 2 data. There were concerns about the way the track and trace system was working and the speed at which lockdown was easing in relation to how quickly information was being disseminated by Government to local authorities. It was important that this information was published as soon as possible to enable the public to assess their own personal risk locally. The same Member therefore asked the Director of Public Health and the Head of Communications to get that information out to the public. The Chairman explained that the information had been shared with Group Leaders before the meeting and could be circulated to Members and communities. However, he acknowledged that it would be useful to get a further breakdown but it was difficult because the numbers were very low. He reported that he would appreciate the information from Government coming out earlier in order to provide the Council with greater detail.
- queried the numerical definition of an outbreak. The Chief Executive confirmed that an outbreak could be just one case. It was then important to relate this to how the Council looked at data and information and how this was translated on the ground. The Team in the Surveillance Cell applied a forensic review before taking the appropriate action. The Chairman added that one case was particularly important in relation to a Care Home.
- queried the progress in getting sign up with the District Councils regarding data sharing at postcode level. It was noted that data sharing was taking place. The Chief Executive highlighted an example in Peterborough where there was an issue with a specific area and data was being considered at a very local level. The Chairman reported that he had picked up locally some downgrading of protection against Covid in retail shops and had asked Environmental Health Officers to address this.

- queried why Huntingdonshire was recording cases above the national average. The Chief Executive explained that the data would be interrogated to understand what it meant for the District and whether further action was necessary. She agreed to provide Members with a briefing following the completion of this work. **Action Required.**
- highlighted confusion locally about what a local intervention would look like on the ground and how it would be managed. It was noted that the only local lockdown had been in Leicester as a result of national powers. Members were informed that there were no local lockdown powers instead councils had to rely on close engagement with the community. The Chief Executive explained that she was talking to the Chief Operating Officer at Leicester City Council to understand the issues but local lockdown at the moment had to be conducted in a consensual way.
- noted that the Outbreak Incident Response Centre was being manned by a Duty Manager and Public Health Consultant from 8.00a.m. to 8.00p.m. seven days a week. There were three times daily Covid Gold meetings, and daily surveillance meetings and outbreak management team meetings. The Chairman of Health Committee stated that the Council could not be successful unless the public maintained the current behaviour patterns so it was important to issue regular reminders.
- highlighted the recently published figures relating to children admitted to hospital with malnutrition with the largest number of cases reported at the Cambridgeshire University Hospitals NHS Trust. This was double the number corresponding for the previous year. The news struck at most of the Council's corporate priorities, and gave the Council significant pause for thought with the need to galvanise into action. The Food Foundation had found that one fifth of households in the UK did not have access to sufficient food in the weeks during the lockdown. The Committee was urged to keep this issue at the forefront by taking urgent and cross organisational action. The Chairman acknowledged that malnutrition could be viewed as just a health issue but it was in fact a wider societal issue. He reported that he would be working with the Chief Executive to look at the Council's role in relation to this issue. **Action Required.**
- welcomed the recovery work and the need to work with the Council's workforce. Another Member welcomed the focus on the Council learning from this experience and asked for this learning to be shared with Councillors. The Chairman of Health Committee confirmed that lessons were being learnt from the Council's successful response to the pandemic. The Director, Business Improvement and Development acknowledged the importance of learning and confirmed that it would be shared widely in particular via Service Committees and workshops. She reported that she was chair for the system wide Information and Learning Group. The Group was working with District Councils and partners to establish a COVID knowledge bank, and that she was linking with the Local Government Association Innovation Group. She informed the Committee that work was also underway with the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange in relation to social evidence.

- highlighted the fact that homeworking was easier for some employees than others. It was queried whether staff had had any choice regarding working at home. It was noted that the Council's risk assessments took into account the wellbeing of staff, as it was acknowledged that homeworking for some was challenging. The Council was also looking at the IT set up for staff working at home, and reinforcing the need for regular team meetings.
- queried what the mental health training for Members in the autumn would involve. One Member commented that he had never before experienced such aggressive e-mailing as during the pandemic. He highlighted some responses to the highways projects designed to maintain social distancing and keep people safe. He queried whether other Members were also experiencing similar abuse via e-mail. He hoped that the training would provide some useful strategies for Councillors.
- acknowledged the successful way Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Section 151 officers had put forward their collective financial case in a report which had been presented to a recent meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Sustainability and Transformation Partnership Board. It was noted that the report had helped make the Councils' case to Government. Both the County Councils' Network and the District Councils' Network had done good job collecting information. It was reported that Government had listened and responded quickly and comprehensively.

The Chairman reported that the Council had been successful in some of its efforts to get data. It was currently part of the Public Health England East of England pilot in sharing pseudonymised Covid-19 case data via a Power BI dashboard. There were other areas the Council was lobbying Government for relating to workplace address data, access to the CITAS data, and data in the Education cohort. He added that the Council understood concerns about anonymity.

He acknowledged the positive financial role the Government had played in the pandemic and reported that the Council would continue to lobby for more funding. He also reported that he had direct access to the Treasury via his own MP who had been very responsive.

The Chairman commented that the Council would not recover to get back to where it had been pre-Covid. Society was transitioning to a new normal and all authorities needed to operate in a different way. He highlighted the comments raised about the Council's road network. At this point in time it was not realistic to expect people to use public transport as they returned to their workplaces. However, Cambridge could not have an increase in cars if there was a reduction in public transport. The Council therefore had to facilitate for more cycling and walking at speed for the benefit of the whole society. It was important to note that schemes had been suggested by the local districts. He acknowledged that there would always be people who would object. However, he explained that these experimental projects would be monitored and finessed accordingly.

The Chairman asked the Chief Executive to convey his and the Committee's thanks to the Council's staff. He was particularly encouraged by the positive response to the Staff Survey, and the actions would be taken forward. The Council was doing an extremely good job in partnership with Districts, Police, Fire, NHS and other organisations which was not always the case nationally. He acknowledged the important role the C&PC had played before and during the pandemic. He drew attention to the role of the voluntary sector and confirmed that the Council would be asking them to do even more.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.

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

The Committee considered its agenda plan.

It was resolved unanimously to review the agenda plan.

Chairman