

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 28th January 2020

Time: 10.00a.m. – 11.30a.m.

Present: Councillors Bailey, Bates, Bywater, Criswell, Dupré, Hickford (Vice-Chairman), Howell (substituting for Councillor Count), Hudson, Jenkins, Kindersley, Meschini, Sanderson, Schumann, Shuter and Whitehead

228. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor Count.

Councillor Hickford reminded the Committee that he had an interest in a County Farm of which he was a tenant. He had taken advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and could confirm that he was not affected by the Business Case set out on pages 300 to 302 of the agenda which formed part of the Business Plan at agenda item 7. He was therefore able to participate and vote on this item.

229. MINUTES – 17TH DECEMBER 2019 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman. Councillor Schumann drew attention to the fact that the agenda had contained references to the Viva! arts and community group of which he was a trustee. He reminded the Committee that this declaration was included on his Register of Members' Disclosable Pecuniary Interests form.

In noting the action log, attention was drawn to one ongoing action.

230. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions or public questions were received.

231. FINANCE MONITORING REPORT – NOVEMBER 2019

The Committee was presented with the November 2019 Finance Monitoring Report for Corporate Services and LGSS Cambridge Office, which was showing a forecast underspend of £1,017k. There had been minimal change since the last month and no new material exceptions to report.

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

232. INTEGRATED FINANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 30TH NOVEMBER 2019

The Committee was informed that a forecast year-end pressure of £1.0m was being predicted. The increase in the revenue pressure since last month's forecast was due to continued pressures in People and Communities as set

out in Section 3 of the report. Attention was drawn to the increase in pressure in the High Needs Block budgets and the increase in the required contribution from the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Capital Programme was forecasting a £22.7m underspend at year-end after the capital programme variations budget had been utilised in full. Attention was drawn to Section 5.7 of the report requesting additional prudential borrowing of £20m in 2019/20 for Commercial Investments (property) and to use £20m of capital receipt investments into the Multi-class credit pooled fund. Members were also advised of the reasons for the proposal to extend the contract with Virgin Media Business.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve additional prudential borrowing of £20m in 2019/20 for Commercial Investments (property) and the use of £20m of capital receipts for investments into the Multi-Class credit pooled fund, as set out in section 5.7;
- b) Approve the extension of the contract with Virgin Media Business for the provision of IT infrastructure services, as set out in Appendix 3.

233. IMPLEMENTATION OF SOFTWARE DEFINED NETWORKING SOLUTION AS PART OF SHIRE HALL DATA CENTRE MOVE

The Committee was reminded that in May and July 2019 it had approved the procurement approach to moving IT Systems from Shire Hall Data Centre to the Peterborough City Council (PCC) data centre in Sand Martin House. As part of the migration it was necessary to reconfigure the core network (Core LAN) that allowed all the servers to connect and be used to deliver services. Members were informed that reconfiguration would require new equipment which might cost more than £500k. Attention was drawn to the background and strategic context, the technology behind the migration, the recommended approach, and the cost and governance. It was noted that costs of the work remained within the overall figure approved by the Committee for the migration so no additional budget was being requested. However, the overall cost might constitute a key decision, which was why it required Committee approval.

One Member drew attention to the reference to Amazon Web Services in section 2.2 of the report. She highlighted concerns regarding using Amazon in relation to its actions as an employer and tax payer. The Strategic IT Lead explained that the Council already worked with Amazon Web Services. The migration would enable the Council to integrate them and other providers.

Another Member drew attention to the risks set out in Section 5.1 and queried what would be the trigger for reporting back to Committee. The Strategic IT Lead explained that the risks, which were set out in the risk register, were managed closely and reported to the Data Centre Project Board and the Shire Hall 2020 Board. The CFO added that the trigger to come back to Committee would be a pressure on the budget or the timing of the project.

Members queried the timing of the project and were informed that there was a plan. It was noted that the migration was expected to be completed by the

end of the calendar year. Members were reminded that this project was independent of the Shire Hall move.

One Member drew attention to the risk relating to the right technology and queried if external advice, as well as expertise from PCC, had been sought. The Strategic IT Lead reported that the Council had contracted an independent company to provide advice and review the Council's overall approach. Members asked the Strategic IT Lead to provide the name of the company. **Action required.** The CFO added that PCC had already implemented Office 365 so the Council was be using that learning. Third party resource from key suppliers was also being used to provide assurance.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree the spending for this approach from the budget allocated to the project by GPC on 28th May 2019.
- b) Delegate approval for procurement of Software Defined Network to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee.

234. BUSINESS PLAN 2020-2021 TO 2024-25

Members received a report detailing an overview of the key issues contained within the Business Plan prior to formal recommendation by the Committee for Council decision in February. The CFO reminded Members that it was Council's responsibility to set a balanced budget. It was noted that the business planning proposals had been challenged by the relevant Policy and Service Committees. Members were reminded that the Business Plan contained the Strategic Framework, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy.

Attention was drawn to the updates set out in Section 3 of the report following the Committee's detailed consideration of the Business Plan in December. Members were informed that the Council would now need to address a budget deficit of just in excess of £4m; options for closing the deficit were set out in Section 4 of the report. The CFO informed the Committee that the Council was in the best position it had been for a while. Taking in to account the pressure on its finances from social care, the budget gap in year two and onwards was now more manageable. This was before the Government spending review planned for 2020.

It was resolved to:

1. Consider the Business Plan, including supporting budget, business cases, consultation responses and other material, in light of all the planning activities undertaken to date.
2. Review the options set out in section 4 of this paper to establish a balanced budget position.
3. Review the following recommendations to Council:

- a. That approval be given to the Service/Directorate budget allocations as set out in each Service/Directorate table in section 3 of the Business Plan.
- b. That consideration be given to a total county budget requirement and precept level
- c. That consideration be given to a Council Tax for each Band of property, based on the number of “Band D” equivalent properties notified to the County Council by the District Councils as set out in section 2, Table 6.4 of the Business Plan.
- d. That approval be given to the Capital Strategy as set out in section 6 of the Business Plan including:
 - Commitments from schemes already approved;
 - Expenditure on new schemes in 2020-21 shown in summary in section 2, Table 6.7 of the Business Plan.
- e. That approval be given to the Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Section 7 of the Business Plan, including:
 - i. The Council’s policy on the making of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for the repayment of debt, as required by the Local Authorities (Capital Finance & Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.
 - ii. The Affordable Borrowing Limit for 2020- 21 (as required by the Local Government Act 2003).
 - iii. The Investment Strategy for 2020-21 as required by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) revised Guidance on Local Government Investments issued in 2018, and the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 3 of Section 7 of the Business Plan.
4. Endorse the priorities and opportunities as set out in the Strategic Framework including the addition of the new priority – “Net Zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050”.
5. Authorise the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make technical revisions to the Business Plan, including the foregoing recommendations to the County Council, so as to take into account any changes deemed appropriate, including updated information on District Council Tax Base and Collection Funds, Business Rates forecasts and Collection Funds and any grant changes.

235. NO CAR ZONES – OUTSIDE SCHOOLS

The Committee considered a report detailing proposals for the implementation of a trial of no car zones outside selected schools in Cambridge. The proposal for a trial followed a motion presented to full Council in July 2018.

Since then work had taken place across Children and Young People, Health, and Highways and Infrastructure Committees to progress a trial of two schools in Cambridge. Members were advised of the main issues which included limited evidence regarding whether such interventions worked, the unintended consequences, and if these interventions worked differently in different contexts. The proposed trial would provide more evidence about the impact of environmental and policy changes. A shortlist of schools to trial this approach had therefore been prepared based on the criteria set out in the bullets in Section 3 of the report. The initial trial would run for 6 – 8 weeks in the Summer Term 2020 with an opportunity to continue the scheme for another full academic year within the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO).

The Vice-Chairman informed Members that the following written submission from Local Member, Councillor Jones, had been circulated to the Committee:

“I sent Matt Staton information last year about school/s in my division that would benefit from being included and I know that there is real enthusiasm from at least one primary school. I assume that it is officers and not GPC that will make the final decision on which schools in Cambridge should be involved? I can’t make this meeting, sadly, and would not like to think that attendance is related to making a ‘pitch’ for a particular school!”

One other comment would be about the timeframe, with 6-8 weeks quite a short period in which to assess outcomes. This is especially the case in the summer term when more parents might take children out of school or be more inclined to walk or cycle rather than drive. I wouldn’t want any delay in the trial but would suggest that a complete picture of traffic movements and drop off/pick up frequency will not be fully gleaned from this relatively short period. I welcome the comment that the ETRO can be extended if the feedback and outcomes are positive.”

Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Scutt, reminded the Committee that the Labour Party was committed to positive action to address climate change and global warming. Both the County Council and the City Council had passed motions declaring a climate emergency. She explained that pollution and congestion were a risk to children’s health particularly in Cambridge where there was a high incidence of asthma.

She welcomed the exemption for children with disabilities to be transported to schools. However, she also highlighted the need to consider the issue of single parents taking children sometimes to different schools. There were also issues in relation to both parents in paid employment, and grandparents looking after children. She therefore suggested that consideration should be given to staggering school starting times by providing early care for children. She raised the problem of parents trying to find a place to park near schools in areas with residents’ parking schemes. She commented that it was not right for the Council to leave it to the individual to find an appropriate place to park if necessary.

In commenting on the timing of the trial, Councillor Scutt reported that it was easier to walk and cycle in the summer term. She suggested that the Council

should consider running the trial in the winter. In conclusion, she acknowledged the importance of this initiative but the need to address some outstanding issues.

In response, the Highways Projects and Road Safety Manager acknowledged the difficulties some people might experience. He therefore highlighted the importance of considering other initiatives to work alongside this trial, which was why prior engagement of schools involved in the trial in sustainable activity was so important. He would also be necessary to consider alternative possible parking places. He informed the Committee that the summer term had been selected as it was easier to make and embed the change.

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

- queried whether the criterion relating to the proximity of air quality monitoring equipment reflected the monitoring of particulates or nitrogen oxides. The Highways Projects and Road Safety Manager reported that it was Cambridge City Council's equipment so he would investigate and provide the Committee with a response. **Action Required.** The same Member explained that particulates were not monitored in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland. She suggested that if the Council wished to obtain evidence it would be useful to include a rural school using equipment in place to monitor nitrogen oxides. Members were informed that the Council was working in partnership with the City Council who carried out air monitoring in order to provide some consistency of data.
- acknowledged the importance of not delaying the trial but queried when the Council would be able to consider areas outside of Cambridge. The Highways Projects and Road Safety Manager reported that it would not be possible to include them in the initial trial. However, when the initial results became available it would be possible to consider extending the trial to other areas.
- acknowledged the important role Head Teachers and Governors would play in the trial. It was queried whether the timeframe was sufficient to change attitudes, and if the trial could then be extended to other schools. The Highways Projects and Road Safety Manager reported that it was felt that eight weeks was long enough to change and maintain behaviour, and identify unintended consequences. The ETRO would be for eighteen months, which would enable the trial to continue for another full academic year to identify whether it had been successful before rolling out it to other schools.
- expressed concern that it had taken so long to reach this stage following the motion in July 2018 and the Clean Air motion in May 2019. The Chairman of Health Committee reported that, together with the Lead Member for the Labour Group, he had been pushing for this trial to begin. The Highways Projects and Road Safety Manager apologised for the delay and reported that capacity had been an issue for his small team. He explained that it had also taken time to identify the right data collection agreements in order to conduct the trial properly.

- reiterated the concerns expressed regarding the timing of the trial and whether it was really the right period to get the necessary data. The Highways Projects and Road Safety Manager explained that this was felt to be the right time to effect and embed behaviour change.
- queried whether the timeframe was sufficient to provide data to assess health outcomes. Members were informed that it was felt that this timeframe would provide an indication of how behaviour had changed. The University of Cambridge would be looking at how behaviour had changed, the effect on the community, air quality and other areas. The extension of the trial for a further 12 months would provide sufficient time to monitor health outcomes.
- requested to see the shortlist of schools to trial this approach. Members were reminded that the mechanism for selecting the schools would be based on the criteria set out in Section 2.3 of the report.

One Member expressed concern that the long summer break would dissipate any good habits achieved in the summer term. She stressed the need to continue the trial in the new school year in order to maintain behaviour change. Councillor Whitehead therefore proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Meschini, to run the trial for 6 – 8 weeks in the summer term and then run it for 6 weeks in the autumn term. As an Educational Psychologist, she explained that it was easier to achieve short term change but much harder for it to lead to long term change.

In response, another Member stressed the need to adhere to what was being proposed by the Council in partnership with the City Council and the University of Cambridge. He felt that the timescale was sufficient to provide initial results before considering whether to extend. This view was supported by a number of Members including the Chairmen of Children and Young People and Highways and Infrastructure Committees. They highlighted a number of issues including the ease of enforcing the trial in Cambridge, the need to learn from the trial before rolling it out to other areas, and the capacity of schools to take part in the trial as well as the Team implementing it.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

It was resolved unanimously to:

approve the trial of no car zones at a minimum of two schools in Cambridge City in the Summer of 2020, as outlined in section 2 of the report.

236. TRANSFORMATION FUND BIDS

(a) DEMAND MANAGEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND)

The Committee considered a request to agree a transformation fund bid of £130k to fund a specialist resource to work with officers in the SEND system to skill them up to change conversations and adopt a strengths based model (similar to the Adult Positive Challenge Programme and Family Safeguarding)

with schools and families. The aim was to reduce demand for specialist high costs services.

One Member queried whether the report had been considered by Children and Young People Committee (C&YPC) as there was no reference to this committee in the source documents. The Chairman of C&YPC reported that it was considered by the Committee on 21 January 2020. The pressures in SEND were well documented and the Committee had welcomed this approach as a good way of addressing the pressures, and had approved it unanimously. Another Member suggested that the lack of reference in source documents might be due to agenda timing issues.

The same Member drew attention to the disproportionate number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the more affluent parts of the county, and the hypothesis that schools/parents/carers in the south advocate more strongly for EHCPs than those in the north. She queried whether there were any other hypotheses. Members were informed that there appeared to be no other reason apparent. The same Member was concerned that there could be other explanations. Another Member pointed out that the purpose of the research was to see if there were any other reasons in order to better inform the Council.

Attention was drawn to the reference to behavioural science tools and techniques at the top of page 468, one Member queried what those techniques were. The Committee was informed that staff would be empowered to deliver a strength based model, which would involve conversations with clients to support more flexible support and independence focussed outcomes to meet the individual needs of children. The Director Business Improvement and Development reminded the Committee that this was a tried and tested model which had been successful for Adults.

The same Member queried how the changes would result in less intensive support but still achieve better outcomes. It was noted that better incomes would ensure supporting more children with SEND in mainstream settings rather than a special environment. The inclusive agenda was very important and would be achieved by empowering schools and professionals working with children with SEND to maintain as many of them in a mainstream environment as possible. However, individual children who required a specialist environment would still achieve that care. The Vice-Chairman added that parents would be included in this process. The same Member queried whether the behavioural science tools and techniques used by staff would apply to all parents or just be targeted at those parents asking for better provision. Members were reminded that the project would involve upskilling staff in the SEND Team as well as teachers and staff within schools.

In considering the report, the Member highlighted the fact that two issues were being considered. One was to test the hypothesis discussed previously and the other was to identify opportunities to do things differently. She suggested that these two actions should be treated separately. She was of the view that proposed options for action should be reported back to Committee. The Chairwoman of Adults Committee highlighted her experience of the Adult Positive Challenge Programme. She explained that there would be

opportunities to deliver quick wins at very minimum cost just by doing things differently. It was important that the Council did not delay this process. The Director Business Improvement and Development explained that the main purpose of the transformation funding was to get specialist support to upskill frontline teams which could then be quickly embedded. However, at the same time this could also result in quick wins in delivery.

In response, the Member suggested that the learning from the project should be considered by Committee before action was taken. She was worried that it could lead to an even further stressful situation for parents. The Vice-Chairman welcomed assurance that only quick wins would be actioned with the learning coming back to Committee. The Chairwoman of Adults Committee reported that her committee had experienced similar anxieties with the Adult Positive Challenge Programme but had been reassured by this approach which was linked to the individual. The Chairman of C&YPC reported that the project would be considered alongside the SEND recovery plan by the Executive Board and the SEND Recovery Board before being fed back to his committee.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the current deficit position within the High Needs Block
- b) Release £130k from the transformation fund to provide additional resources to undertake an analysis of demand and develop a range of demand management opportunities in SEND

(b) TO ADD CAPACITY TO THE FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT TEAM TO CARRY OUT CLIENT FINANCIAL ASSESSMENTS IN LINE WITH AGREED CLIENT CONTRIBUTION PROPOSALS

The Committee considered a Transformation Fund bid to add capacity to the Council's Financial Assessment team which would enable the team to reassess clients in accordance with the Council's amended care charging policy and client contribution assessment criteria. Members were informed that Adults Committee had approved the implementation of four of the five proposed assessment charges. The implementation of these changes would be challenging. It was noted that the Financial Assessment Service currently provided by LGSS would be directly provided by the Council. In order to execute the additional assessment and home visits where appropriate, there was a requirement for additional staff to be deployed to deliver this. The request was for time limited funding with the expectation that five staff would be funded from within the Service by increased revenue and turnover.

One Member highlighted the fact that Adults Committee had agreed to raise charges but more money was now being spent to secure extra revenue. He suggested that there should really be no need for transformation funding. The Chairwoman of Adults Committee explained that the time lag from when the charges would come in was the reason for the bid. In response to a query, it was noted that there was a link to the Business Case in the report to Adults Committee. Another Member reported that the bid was not about the money but more about supporting people in their own home.

One Member requested assurances that the reduction in people's income would not lead them in to poverty. The Chairwoman of Adults Committee explained that there were a number of safeguards in place to prevent this. It was noted that the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) would ensure that income (after charges had been paid) met or exceeded statutory protected income levels, below which no person's income was permitted to fall after payment of care charges. Members also noted that in relation to Disability Related Expenditure an appropriate allowance would be made within the financial assessment for the reasonable cost of any additional items or expenses incurred by a service user as a result of their disability, which was in addition to the MIG. The Committee was informed that Adults Committee had asked the Chairwoman to write to central government as there had not been an increase in the MIG since 2015. It was important to note that the new assessment process (guidance was available for staff) would be a more sensitive approach with face to face meetings.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve the Transformation Bid proposal of £230,000 (for a period up to 18 months) to fund additional resource for the Financial Assessment team to deliver an enhanced client financial assessments service to apply the revised charging policy and secure the additional income due in 20/21 and future years.

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

The Committee considered its agenda plan which included the addition of the following two items for the March meeting:

- LGSS Review of Future Options
- Transformation Bids – Domiciliary Care

It was resolved unanimously to review the agenda plan.

Chairman