

## GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 26 January 2021

Time: 10.00a.m. to 1.07p.m.

Venue: Virtual Meeting

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

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

No apologies or declarations of interest were received.

### 302. Minutes – 22nd December 2020 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd December 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman when the Council returned to its offices. The action log was noted.

### 303. Petitions and Public Questions

No petitions or public questions were received.

### 304. Performance report – Quarter 2 2020-21 financial year

The Committee received a summary of performance information relating to the second quarter of the 2020-21 financial year (up to the end of September 2020). Attention was drawn to the background detailing the information contained in the appendices, and the RAG statuses being used. There were currently 93 corporate performance indicators reported to service committees, which were mapped to the Priority Outcomes as identified in the Council's Strategic Framework. There were also another 17 indicators used to measure the performance of the Council's Corporate Services. Some indicators were calculated on an annual basis and were currently unaffected by Covid. However, the performance of a number of indicators had been impacted significantly by the pandemic due to services being suspended or staff administering the indicators being redeployed. The Business Intelligence Manager reported on the performance of the indicators for each Priority Outcome and Corporate Services. It was noted that the indicators to support Priority Outcome 4 were still being developed.

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

- suggested that the report gave a disproportionate amount of attention to blue indicators, which demonstrated that current performance was better than target by more than 5%. It was felt that equal attention should be given to amber indicators, which reflected current performance was off target by less than 10%. The other option would be to only focus on blue indicators, which demonstrated that current

performance was better than target by more than 10%. The Business Intelligence Manager reminded the Committee that it received an overview of all the indicators, which were presented in full and discussed at service committees. The Chairman confirmed that the current system should remain unchanged to reflect the strategic role of the Committee.

- suggested that some of the blue indicators and a few of the red indicators appeared to be a one period judgement when the trend could be the other way. It was felt that the Committee should be focusing on indicators which were consistently better or worse. It was suggested that more analysis could be included to identify sustained or temporary performance. The Chairman drew attention to this information, which was contained in the graphics.

Indicator 1: Percentage children whose referral to social care occurred within 12 months of a previous referral

- queried how and who was involved in the review being undertaken relating to children re-referred to ensure that it was not an area of concern, and whether the outcome would be reported back to the Committee and the relevant service committee. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding reported that this indicator was kept under continuous review. However, it was a complex indicator as the Service had moved to the Liquidlogic software system fifteen months ago and this reporting system was taking time to settle in. He acknowledged that the indicator was red but it was not much higher than the England and statistical neighbours averages. The complexity of the indicator related to how an initial contact was treated, and if too many were being treated as referrals in the first place then it was more likely to have a higher re-referral rate.

Indicator 32: Growth in cycling from a 2004/05 average baseline

- highlighted the fact that the 40,246 cycle journeys had been measured in 2004/05 and not 2019 so the target was a 70% growth over a baseline set fifteen years ago, which would be approximately 4% per year. Attention was drawn to the graph on page 29 of the agenda which demonstrated that the Council had achieved 70% in 2014. The blue indicator was therefore reflecting performance achieved over five years ago. It was therefore important to set ambitious targets based on recent performance. The Chairman asked the Highways and Transport Committee to review this indicator taking into account the impact of Covid. **Action Required.**

Indicator 39: Principal roads where maintenance should be considered and Indicator 41: Non-principal roads where maintenance should be considered

- queried whether the performance of these indicators marked as blue reflected the actuality on the ground. The Business Intelligence Manager reported that a briefing would be provided to Members on this national indicator. It was acknowledged that this report only went up to the end of September. **Action Required.**

Indicators 40a, b and c – Classified A, B and C road condition – narrowing the gap between Fenland and other areas of the County

- welcomed the fact that targets were being met. However, it was queried what would happen to those targets in the future to narrow the gap further. The Chairman asked the Highways and Transport Committee to consider this issue. **Action Required.**

Indicator 43: Killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties – 12 month rolling total

- queried given the reduction in traffic during the pandemic why the current performance was 324 against a ceiling target of 251. It was noted that the Committee would receive a briefing. **Action Required.**

Indicator 117: Proportion of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time

- highlighted the fact that the linear forecast was an upward trend and was higher than the Council's statistical neighbours mean and the England average. The Service Director: Children's Services and Safeguarding reported that this indicator reflected very small numbers so the big swings were due to large percentage changes. Although the linear trajectory projected an upward trend, it was noted that the most recent performance was showing a reduction. The overall performance relating to child protection in Cambridgeshire was improving with fewer children on child protection plans for long periods of time than in the past.

Indicator 180: Percentage of Freedom of Information requests answered within 20 days and Indicator 181: Percentage of complaints responded to within 10 days

- queried whether Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were prioritised. It was noted that FOIs were managed in the order received and many received a quick response. However, there were some questions where officers were not able to respond as they had been redeployed during the pandemic. The Business Intelligence Manager acknowledged that the pandemic had impacted on performance and suggested that Members be provided with a briefing. **Action Required.** With reference to persistent complainants, it was noted that there was a specific policy with a high bar.

Indicator 184: Statutory returns completed on time

- welcomed the new presentation of this indicator.

Indicator 186: Proportion of citizens who feel well informed by the Council

- noted that the appropriateness of this indicator was under review. It was queried who would decide the new indicator and target. This point also applied to Indicator 187: Overall staff engagement from Cambridgeshire County Council staff survey. The Chairman acknowledged the need for indicators which could be reviewed on a regular basis and noted that Joint Management Team would identify suggestions, which would then be reported back to the Committee. Members were reminded that the Committee's approval was needed to remove and replace indicators.

Indicator 188: Better Connected Survey (professional membership body for digital and IT leaders)

- highlighted the fact that there had been no actual performance data for the last three years. There was concern about the lack of current information relating to the Council's web presence given the amount of interactions with residents being delivered online. Information was therefore requested on how often the data was collected, why there had been no information since 2018 and what else was being done to measure the Council's website interactions. The Business Intelligence Manager reported that he would follow up this issue with the Communications Team. **Action Required.**

Indicator 201: Percentage of clients who successfully complete treatment – Adults (All Substances)

- requested more information on the work being undertaken to fully understand the variations, and an explanation of the commentary. It was noted that Members would receive a briefing on this Public Health indicator. **Action Required.**

The Chairwoman of Adults Committee thanked the frontline staff in Adult Social Care for the spectacular work they had carried out during the pandemic. She drew attention to the continued focus on the Adult Social Care indicators which were blue and generally above statistical neighbours and the England average. She highlighted the importance of outcomes for people and explained how this was reflected in the indicators. It was noted that the Council was one of fifteen top performing councils out of 149 for Adult Social Care in the country.

The Chairman urged Councillors who had detailed questions on this report in the future to notify the Business Intelligence Manager before the meeting to enable him to contact the relevant Services to get a response. The Director of Business Improvement and Development proposed that future reports include links to the minutes of the various service committees where individual indicators were discussed in detail. **Action Required.**

It was resolved unanimously to note and comment on performance information and take remedial action as necessary.

### 305. Integrated Finance Monitoring Report for the period ending 30 November 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 underspend of -£0.7m and the Capital Programme was forecasting a year-end underspend of -£16.8m. Attention was drawn to the table on page 82 of the agenda detailing the Council's estimate of the full potential financial consequences of the pandemic through an additional and enhanced process, which showed that funding was keeping pace with costs with some of the funding likely to be earmarked for the next financial year. The Head of Finance then took the Committee through the individual recommendations in the report.

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

- welcomed the proposal to reinvest £130k of the £485k Skanska rebate in enhanced gully cleansing. However, there was concern regarding the way this contract was functioning. There had been reports from the St Neots The Eatons and the Melbourn and Bassingbourn Divisions where gullies had been marked as cleansed when this work had not taken place. Unfortunately, it had together with the lack of gully cleansing then resulted in some flooding during the winter. It was therefore queried whether much of the rebate would be used to redo work which should have been carried out previously. The Head of Finance acknowledged that there were likely to be monitoring issues with such a large contract. However, the rebate reflected the end of year reconciliation process between the actual costs of all the works provided as billed individually and what that amounted to across the whole contract.
- expressed concern, as the Local Member for St Neots The Eatons, regarding the lack of gully cleansing in the Division, which had been reported to the Chairman of Highways and Transport Committee. The Committee was advised that two areas causing concern had been marked as completed when the work had not taken place. Attention was drawn to a FOI request which showed that the gullies in St Neots had not been cleansed for five years. In response, the Chairman reported that cleansing was dependent on a prioritisation process. He added that he would ask officers to provide a response on both issues. **Action Required.**
- queried what was meant by enhanced gully cleansing. The Chairman reported that a significant amount of detritus had been transported by the recent flooding which needed additional action to be taken, and officers were also waiting for funding to deal with some more serious issues. The additional funding would be prioritised by officers and spent by the end of March.
- queried whether the Council would take the remaining two tranches of 25% of the Covid Winter Grant scheduled for February and April/May 2021. The Head of Finance reported that the Council would utilise fully all the grant to provide general support to families in the form of voucher schemes, for example, during the school holidays.
- queried whether the impact of Covid on the Shire Hall relocation would affect all the timelines for Alconbury Weald. The Chairman of Commercial and Investment Committee reported that the Alconbury Weald scheme was twelve weeks behind schedule due to supply chain issues. The scheme was scheduled to come in under budget and it was expected that the delay would be reduced. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) added that there was a revised programme date for residence of the end of August/beginning September. This process would need to be aligned with the decanting of Shire Hall.
- queried why the £2.5m awarded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme had been used to reduce the borrowing requirement rather than to increase the overall budget for the Council's Decarbonisation Fund Scheme. The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Council had identified the full amount needed for the Scheme in the Business Plan. It had then sought to identify grants in order to reduce the impact on the Council Tax payer. It was unlikely that the Council had the profile

to accelerate the scheme given the limiting factors such as government legislation, changes in the cost of solar panels and the Cambs 2020 programme.

- queried where the Council would be seeking unallocated funds for the Abbey Chesterton Bridge. The Head of Finance reported that this was subject to the decision-making process of the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the allocation of the £1.459m Covid Winter Grant for ringfenced purposes to the People & Communities directorate, to be received in instalments over the coming months, as set out in section 5.1;
- b) Approve the allocation of the currently estimated £760k unringfenced Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) grant to the People & Communities directorate as set out in section 5.2;
- c) Approve the reinvestment of the £458k contractor rebate as set out in section 5.3;
- d) Note the new ring-fenced capital grant funding for the Decarbonisation Fund scheme as set out in section 6.6;
- e) Note the £2.063m new capital funding for the Abbey Chesterton Bridge scheme as set out in section 6.6.

### 306. Covid-19 Update Report

Given the rapidly changing situation and the need to provide the Committee and the public with the most up to date information possible, the Chairman reported that he had accepted this 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.

The Chief Executive introduced the report updating the Committee on the Council's ongoing response to the current Coronavirus pandemic. She drew attention to the strong emphasis being placed on the health and wellbeing of staff as set out in Section 6 of the report. She informed Members that Section 7 – Governance and reporting included all the links to the service committees where actions relating to the pandemic had been reported.

The Director of Public Health provided an update on the epidemiology for Cambridgeshire focusing on the rapid rate of change. She drew attention to the incidence rate per 100,000 cases up to 20 January compared to 13 January as follows:

Area	Cases up to 20 January	Rate of Change (up to 13 January)
England	421	20% reduction
East of England	438	22% reduction
Cambridgeshire	308	11% reduction

Members were informed that although rates were falling nationally and locally, they still remained high overall. Some individual Districts was plateauing or rising slightly depending on local factors; she offered to circulate the District rates to Members. **Action Required.** Hospital admissions remained high and Cambridgeshire was recording approximately nine deaths per day. The Director of Public Health stressed the importance of continuing to follow the lockdown rules.

Attention was drawn to the vaccination programme, which was progressing quickly in Cambridgeshire. It was noted that there had been some publicity regarding less vaccinations taking place in the East of England but action had been taken, such as Primary Care Networks opening up their vaccination programmes, to address this. Members were informed of the importance of the Director of Public Health role and Councils in targeting vulnerable and hard to reach communities. Data would be provided to the Directors of Public Health to analyse who was or was not being vaccinated in the eligible groups, and to enable the Directors to have an assurance role. The data would then be shared with District Councils, the Communications Team and Community Safety Team to encourage locally those who were less likely to come forward. The system of daily review of epidemiology and then necessary action would also be taken in relation to the vaccination programme.

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

- acknowledged the significant amount of work taking place to deliver the vaccination programme and welcomed the action taken to improve Cambridgeshire's low vaccine delivery rate. Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor McDonald, reported that the Granta Medical Practices had received no vaccine delivery last week or this week. The Director of Public Health agreed to investigate with the Clinical Commissioning Group. **Action Required.**
- requested the possibility of receiving a general overview of the state of the vaccination programme including all the vaccination sites. The Chairman of Health Committee reminded Members that the Communications Team had only recently issued a complete list of vaccination centres. It was noted that this information was published on a regular basis. He encouraged Members to pass on this information to their residents by sharing the County Council's Facebook page and the Clinical Commissioning Group Facebook page. The Chairman asked officers to contact Councillor Meschini to make sure she had access to all the relevant information. **Action Required.** The Chairman added that he was working with the Director of Business Improvement and Intelligence to develop a dashboard to provide a strategic overview reflecting external and internal information.
- acknowledged the frustrations locally regarding the delay in rolling out the vaccination programme in some areas but welcomed the proactive roll out recently, which had received many positive comments from local residents.

- queried the prioritisation of the vaccination programme in relation to teachers/other school staff, and the expectations regarding life returning to normal following vaccination. The Director of Public Health reminded the Committee that the prioritisation of the vaccination programme was directed nationally by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. The first phase of the prioritisation process was aimed at preventing death and serious illness, which was why the focus was on certain groups, for example vaccinating twenty people in a care home would save one life, and vaccinating health and social care workers could prevent transmission to vulnerable groups. Phase 2 was likely to involve key workers and occupational groups so teachers were likely to be considered at this point. Although opening up was a political issue, it was important to recognise the high infection rates across the country. It was possible that the vaccine could have an impact on transmission but more evidence on this was needed in the next few weeks before this could be confirmed.

In conclusion, Members thanked the Council's staff for the part they had played in the roll out of the vaccine. The Chairman added that the Council had tried to assist the local roll out where at all possible.

It was resolved unanimously to note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.

### 307. Business Plan 2021-22 to 2025-26

The Committee considered an overview of the key issues contained within the Business Plan prior to formal recommendation by GPC for Council decision in February. The CFO drew attention to the challenge of developing a Business Plan within the context of a global pandemic. As this was his last Business Plan before retirement, he thanked the organisation as a whole and personally thanked the Head of Finance and his Team for their assistance. Attention was drawn to the background and context for business planning, the Strategic Framework and approach, and the updates to the position from the last meeting. The CFO reminded the Committee of the need to consider the medium-term position as well as the position for next year. Members were advised of the options available to close the remaining deficit of £9.6m in 2021-22, which included increasing the rate at which base Council Tax was set, increasing the rate at which the Adult Social Care precept was set, the use of the flexibility around Minimum Revenue Provision, the use of the Transformation Fund, and a reduction in service levels.

Members thanked the CFO for his work for the authority. Individual Members highlighted the following issues in relation to the report:

- requested clarification on the table on "Remaining Level of Unidentified Savings" at Section 4.3. The CFO explained that the reasons for the minor changes between the various Council Tax increases in future years was the compounding impact of the changes in 2021/22; the deficit still needed to be addressed. The table therefore assumed that whatever Council Tax was set the deficit would need to be met by savings or service reductions.
- requested clarification on the Council Tax limits before the need for a referendum. It was noted that the Council Tax Regulations for next year set above 1.99% as the

base trigger for a referendum. However, the Council could set a maximum Adult Social Care precept rate of 3%, which could be taken at any point over the 21/22 and 22/23 financial years.

- highlighted the need to note the impact of not increasing Council Tax at the same rate as neighbouring Councils over the last five or six years, which could have provided the Council with an additional £15m every year to fund services. It would have made a significant difference to the level of service, which could have been provided to the Council's most vulnerable residents. Attention was drawn to the lack of support to ordinary families in the pandemic such as parents looking after disabled children at home. It was suggested that once the pandemic was over, the Council needed to rebuild its universal services in the community. It was felt that the difference in Council Tax increases would not impact majorly on local residents but would make a significant difference to services. The Chairman questioned whether there would be any flexibility from the suggested additional £15m given that all the Council Tax proposals in the past had been based on full spending plans.
- highlighted the likely dependence on government grants next year given the impact of the Covid grants this financial year. The Chairman acknowledged that this was the nature of one-off funding, as the Council would need to find the ongoing revenue funding. He reminded the Committee that the Council submitted data returns to government every three months detailing spend on Covid. The Council could only work on the funding it received and not the funding it expected. Whilst thanking Government, it had made representations to have information on Covid grant funding in advance to assist planning.
- welcomed the reference to public transport in the Strategic Framework on page 149. Attention was drawn to the lack of reference to Brexit on page 159, which was a factor in relation to the impact on medium term GDP growth. Acknowledged the reference to Brexit in the "Local Economic Outlook" on page 163 relating to the availability of the workforce from EU countries and trade tariffs. There was concern that the risk of Brexit to the County's economy had been significantly underplayed in the Strategic Framework.

In conclusion, the Chairman reported that although the Council would be setting the budget on 9 February 2021, there were likely to be variances resulting from the pandemic in 2021-22, which was why there was a proposal for a reserve in the report.

It was also resolved unanimously to:

1. Consider the Business Plan, including supporting budget, business cases, Transformation Fund Bids, consultation responses and other material, in light of all the planning activities undertaken to date.
2. Consider the options set out in Section 4 of this paper to establish a balanced budget position.
3. Agree the Transformation Fund bid set out in Appendix 1 which supports the Adult Social Care Transport Business case.

4. Agree to amend the draft business plan, subject to a recommendation from the Communities and Partnerships Committee, allocating £300k to an extension of the Cultivate fund, in accordance with section 3.4 of this report.
5. Review the following recommendations to Council:
  - a) That approval is 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 is given to a total county budget requirement and precept level
  - c) That consideration is given to a Council Tax increase 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 is given to the Capital Strategy as set out in Section 6 of the Business Plan including:
    - o Commitments from schemes already approved;
    - o Expenditure on new schemes in 2021-22 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 2021- 22 (as required by the Local Government Act 2003).
    - iii. The Investment Strategy for 2021-22 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.
6. 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. This includes updated information on District Council Tax Base and Collection Funds, Business Rates forecasts and Collection Funds and any grant changes, as well as appending the agreed budget submitted by the

Greater Cambridge Partnership, in the County Council's role as the host authority.

### 308. Development of Asset-Based Area (ABA) Approach to Commissioning and Delivery

Members received a report on the proposed implementation of the Asset-Based Area (ABA) approach. This approach required significant system transformation of existing commissioning and delivery models. The Committee was being asked to approve the relevant resource to enable an early adopter site to be set up in East Cambridgeshire, and to pump prime the development and refinement of the new approach. Following evaluation, the intention was to roll out the ABA approach across the county.

Given the rapid growth in the older population in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough over the next 15 years, there would be a significant increase in the number of elderly residents potentially requiring care and support. It was vital to have models of care, commissioning and delivery that provided sustainable care options affordable to both residents and the local authority. The proposed ABA approach built upon the success of the community such as hubs developed in response to Covid-19 and the Neighbourhood Cares pilot. This would ensure people could remain living at home happily and independent for longer. The approach sought to empower communities by developing grass roots informal support and mutual aid, delivering services that were more efficient and more localised, and making best use of existing resources by working closely with partners and communities.

Speaking as a Local Member, Councillor Hunt, expressed his full support for this approach. From a personal perspective, he highlighted how important it was for older people to remain in their home for as long as possible. He drew attention to the success of the Neighbourhood Cares programme in Soham. He highlighted the support received locally from volunteers during the pandemic and the need for the Council to expand on this. In conclusion, he acknowledged the importance of the outcome in the report for more people to fulfil their wish to remain living at home for longer, enjoying a good quality of life and wellbeing.

The Chairwoman of Adults Committee reported that the early adopter site in East Cambridgeshire would start a roll out of ABA; it should not be seen as a pilot. East Cambridgeshire had been selected because of its size and mix of urban and rural areas. It had also had the very successful Soham pilot of Neighbourhood Cares. She explained that the public just wanted to know that they could easily get access to reliable and good quality services rather than who delivered them. It was noted that the proposal had received unanimous support at Adults Committee.

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

- welcomed the ABA approach as long as people who needed care could obtain good quality care.
- highlighted the need for a diagram detailing how all the adult social care programmes such as Buurtzorg, Neighbourhood Cares, Adults Positive Challenge, Asset Based Area Concept, Place Based Commissioning, Think Communities and

Cambridgeshire Local related to each other. The Chairman asked officers to provide a briefing with the relevant pictorial information. **Action Required.** The Chairwoman of Adults Committee explained the different programmes, which were primarily labels to describe internal schemes.

- acknowledged the importance of utilising the local support groups which had arisen as a result of the Covid pandemic. It was important to provide them with direction and to encourage local people to contact them.
- highlighted the need for the Council to inform older people that Government help was available in the form of Attendance Allowance. The Chairwoman of Adults Committee acknowledged the importance of promoting this message to local communities.
- expressed reservations that there had been so many projects to deliver this kind of support to older people. It was suggested that there needed to be a more strategic approach with the necessarily investment in communities to deliver such projects. It was important that it was consistently and carefully rolled out rather than changed to another programme. Another Member reported that it was not all about Council investment. He explained that the local GP surgery in Soham had appointed a social prescriber at their expense who had links with all the community organisations.
- expressed concern about the Adults Positive Challenge programme which had been positive for some adults but others had felt under real pressure to change their care, which had caused distress to families. It was therefore important that the ABA approach did not remove choice for service users or that services were removed. It was important to provide the best service the service users actually wanted.

It was resolved unanimously to approve the proposed Asset-Based Area concept and investment.

### 309. General Purposes Committee Agenda Plan, Training Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups and Panels

The Committee resolved unanimously to note its Agenda Plan.

Chairman