

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 MARCH 2020

Present:

Councillor Stephen Andrews	-	Chair
Councillors -		
Patrick Coleman (left at 5.30pm)		Richard Norris
Dilys Neill		Gary Selwyn
Officers -		
Chief Finance Officer		Head of Paid Service
Executive Director Commissioning		Team Leader, Development Management

Observers:

Councillor Hirst

Apologies:

Councillors Bloomfield and Bloomer

OS.62 SUBSTITUTION ARRANGEMENTS

There were no substitutions.

OS.63 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Member Declarations

There were no other declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Members or Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(2) Officer Declarations

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

OS.64 MINUTES

RESOLVED that subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 be approved as a correct record;

- (i) Minute No. OS.59, Paragraph (v) – which read – ‘The Managing Director explained that he wanted Publica to be an employer people wanted to work for, beyond a simple process of jobs and applications. The plan was not particularly precise on how to achieve this, although it was considered that a programme such as Investors in People focused on what it means to be an employee of an organisation such as Publica, **with appraisals taking place.**’

Should now read: *'The Managing Director explained that he wanted Publica to be an employer people wanted to work for, beyond a simple process of jobs and applications. The plan was not particularly precise on how to achieve this, although it was considered that a programme such as Investors in People focused on what it means to be an employee of an organisation such as Publica, with appraisals **being a key part of that process.**'*

- (ii) Minute No. OS.59, Paragraph (vi) – which read - The current situation on recruitment was queried as Committees had received reports for a number of years that it was difficult to recruit to posts and when doing so, **should potential employees be given a choice of pension.**

Should now read: *'The current situation on recruitment was queried, as Committees had received reports for a number of years that it was difficult to recruit to posts and when doing so, **potential employees might be given a choice of pension.***

- (iii) Minute No. OS.59,
- Paragraph (viii) – which read – A comprehensive piece of work was currently being undertaken on the identity of the Council and staff inductions should include political awareness. The Leader offered Members of the Committee the opportunity to spend a day on the front line, answering the phones, which would be a useful exercise
 - Paragraph (xiii) – which read – It was considered there was a need for staff to receive political awareness training, having an understanding of how to work with and talk to Members. Officers were talking to the LGIU to do some internal training for existing staff.

These paragraphs were combined to read – *'A comprehensive piece of work was currently being undertaken on the identity of the Council and staff inductions should include political awareness, in order for staff to have an understanding of how to work with and talk to Members. Officers were talking to the LGIU to do some internal training for existing staff.'*

A new paragraph (ix) To read - The Leader offered Members of the Committee the opportunity to spend a day on the front line, answering the phones, which would be a useful exercise.

- (iv) Minute No. OS.59, Paragraph (xiv) – which read - The Chair queried the timeline and when this work would be delivered. The Managing Director explained that the Business plan was due to go to Council in March, by end of April there would be an action plan, April/May would see delivery plans.

Should now read; *'The Chair queried the timeline and when this work would be delivered. An indicative timeframe was given and clarification in the delivery of this work was being carried sought outside the meeting.*

Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstention 0, absent 3.

OS.65 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair highlighted to Committee that a briefing paper on Crime and Disorder was due to be part of the agenda, although this was still in the process of being completed, in order for it to be legally sound and follow statutory guidance.

South West Ambulance Service report was due to be presented to Committee, although, it was explained, that the Officer who had written the report in the past, had been seconded to a different role and a report was awaited.

A new work programme for Committee was to be considered for the new Council year, if Members wanted an issue to be raised, they should forward this to the Chair.

OS.66 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from the Public.

OS.67 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.68 CALLED-IN DECISIONS

No executive decisions had been the subject of Call-In since the Committee's previous Meeting.

OS.69 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

The Team Leader, Development Management introduced the report explaining that the redesign of the service was part of the wider programme of redesign across the three sites. The service was trialling different processes which would be rolled out to West Oxfordshire and Forest of Dean District Councils in due course. A new triage system meant that cases were looked at within the first week of receiving a complaint and were discussed at team meetings in order for a response to be prepared.

Members' questions were responded to as follows:

- (i) It was considered that the list of enforcement cases should be in a severity order, high or low profile, in order for Members, particularly Planning and Licensing Committee, to see how many decisions resulted in enforcement action. The Officer explained that she would look into how this information could be related to Members and suggested a quarterly newsletter. Before this work commenced it was suggested that an informal meeting with the Chair of Planning and Licensing and Cabinet Member should take place to discuss how this information could be presented.
- (ii) Press releases were occasionally published when successful action was completed.
- (iii) Members questioned why the Assistant Enforcement Officer post was amended from a permanent post to fixed term post. The Officer explained that this was a decision made by Publica, which made it possible to make an appointment in order to develop employees as the service required.
- (iv) The Officer explained that the website was being updated to make it more user friendly, ensuring that the public can get information, for them to assess themselves, whether to contact the enforcement service.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the report be noted;**
- (b) the development of an appropriate suite of performance reports for Planning Enforcement, be implemented;**
- (c) improvements are made to the website to encourage customer engagement.**

- (d) an informal meeting be organised with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Chair of Planning and Licensing Committee and Cabinet Member, to resolve how information on enforcement action should be reported to Members.**

Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstention 0, absent 3.

OS.70 SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2019/20 QUARTER THREE

The report summarised the overall service performance for the Council and the financial position of the Council for quarter three.

Members' questions were responded to as follows:

- (i) The planning application fee income was questioned as £317,000 was below the profiled income budget at the end of the quarter. The risk needed to be highlighted in preparing the budget for the next year.
- (ii) The resource in the budget for a temporary solicitor was not spent. Officers would circulate a response to Members following the meeting as the Council's Solicitor was not present at the meeting.
- (iii) The Council's Animal and Pest Control Service was provided in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council and delivered by Ubico. The refund which the Council had benefited from in the current year would be dealt with directly with Ubico.
- (iv) Members questioned the overspend of £120,000 in the revenue account for additional expenditure on recycling receptacles. There was £55,000 in the capital account. Officers explained that grant money could be applied for to mitigate revenue costs. On the advice of WRAP receptacles were stockpiled as the effect of Brexit was not known. These were gradually being given out to the public. The new design of receptacles for food was trialled at the Forest of Dean District Council and was boar proof. It was considered that when the public ask for new receptacles, staff could ask for details of how the previous ones had been damaged and the person's address, in order to assess where receptacles were being most damaged within the District.
- (v) The funding for leisure facilities was questioned, whether these facilities provide an income to the Council. SLM manage the leisure centres and pay a fee to the Council for managing the facilities, the surplus and deficit was retained by them although the Council still own the buildings. It was highlighted that there was increased competition in Cirencester with private gyms. £1.2m had been put in the budget for Cirencester Leisure Centre – Gym and Studio Expansion, and Members considered that nothing should be done without the Leisure Strategy being in place for the whole district.
- (vi) The tender process for electric vehicle charging points was questioned, this had not progressed as expected and officers were working on the Espro framework to obtain tenders obtain the best value for money.
- (vii) A process for complaints was working well, although there were two complaints not responded to within the 10 day target. Members queried whether officers communicate the reason for the delay to the complainant.
- (viii) There was a misprint relating to domestic rates, in (RHS 6) – '*The service is proactive in recovering domestic rates*', this should read non-domestic rates.

- (ix) It was interesting to see that the visitor numbers to the Corinium Museum had risen.
- (x) PSH3 – Quality of decisions based on proportion of major decisions that were overturned at appeal. The target had reduced as the Council now had a Local Plan, the Government had set the target and any council runs the risk of going into special measures. The review of the Local Plan would have a positive impact on these figures, although it was considered that this should be monitored.
- (xi) Members considered that it would be useful to have a training session on performance reports and how measures were set. Officers explained that a new performance framework was being worked on which would cover a new range of issues reporting on strategic performance of the Council. The new corporate strategy would produce new and different priorities and the performance regime would change, showing what was management information and truly important performance indicators. A training session would be organised for Members in early June.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the comments on the financial and service performance for Quarter 3 of 2019/20 be noted;**
- (b) Officers record the address and details of damage to waste and recycling receptacles;**
- (c) A workshop for Members is organised, on the new performance framework.**

Record of Voting - for 4, against 0, abstention 0, absent 4.

OS.71 DRAFT WORK PLAN 2020/21

The work plan would be considered at the meeting in May 2020.

OS.72 QUARTERLY DIGEST (INCLUDING COUNTY MATTERS)

The Police and Crime Panel had announced the precept, which had increased significantly and Members hoped that this money would be well spent.

OS.73 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The Chair thanked Members for their work during the civic year.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00pm and closed at 5.50pm.

Chair

(END)