

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 SEPTEMBER 2019

Present:

Councillors

Stephen Andrews - Chair

Claire Bloomer
Tony Berry left at 12.46
Patrick Coleman left at 10.51
Nick Maunder

Richard Norris
Andrew McClean
Gary Selwyn

Officers -

Chief Finance Officer
Group Finance Director
Business Manager - Contracts
Group Manager – Commercial
Development

Researcher and Data Analyst
Group Manager – Commissioning
Business Manager – Commissioning
Committee Officer

Substitutes:

Councillors Tony Berry and Nick Maunder

Observers:

Councillors Joe Harris (invited to speak on Minute OS.28) left the meeting at 11.07

Apologies:

Councillors Gina Blomefield and Dilys Neill.

OS.19 SUBSTITUTION ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor Tony Berry substituted for Councillor Gina Blomefield
Councillor Nick Maunder substituted for Councillor Dilys Neill

OS.20 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.21 MINUTES

RESOLVED that subject to an amendment to minute OS.15, record of voting, should read – *Record of voting – for 6, against 0, abstention 0, absent 2 and not absent 0* – the minutes of the Committee held on 23 July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

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

OS.22 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair highlighted that the Leader of the Council was holding a ceremony to raise the Red Ensign to commemorate Merchant Navy Day in remembrance of people who served at sea during conflicts and other incidents.

The report on Section 106 Agreements/Community Infrastructure Levy, due to presented to this Committee meeting had been deferred to the Committee meeting on 3rd December 2019.

OS.23 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from the Public.

OS.24 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.25 CALLED-IN DECISIONS

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

OS.26 UPDATE ON FASTERSHIRE – BROADBAND WITHIN THE COTSWOLDS

The Operations Manager for Fastershire attended to give Members an update on the programme. Fastershire was established in 2011 with a partnership between Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Councils, raising public finance to invest with commercial suppliers to deliver broadband in the counties, meeting the gap between commercial viability and making broadband available to all. The delivery is regulated by the European Union on how the money is invested, and the role is to identify areas to invest in superfast fibre broadband.

There is a phased and staged approach required to building networks. BT largely covers urban areas such as Cheltenham, Gloucester and Cirencester, with Gigaclear providing networks in rural areas. Fastershire have access to funding and work with suppliers to provide networks with an element of funding. 18% of the Cotswolds has at least 30 megabit capability covered by BT commercially and a further 44% supported by Fastershire. They are actively working with Gigaclear in the roll out of an additional 16,500 additional properties in the district. 32% of the district already has full fibre access one of the highest districts in the country. As at the date of the meeting 92% of the district has Superfast coverage with a further 5% currently being built. Plans need to be prepared for the balance of 3%.

In relation to new housing, historically developers will provide the ducting and they should liaise with network providers which has been problematic at times. Fastershire can only get involved when an identified gap in service is established when commercial companies have been unable/unwilling to provide the service. Some

properties are in areas of the Cotswolds that are difficult to access, with some new estates having no network ducting at all.

Members were shown a map of areas which Fastershire still had to reach, they have revised the strategy, which is subject to approval and the national focus is on building on what can be done, as there will be no state aid for 5G and they would not be changing the mission to work on 5G. Work with communities will continue to specify what they need before Fastershire go to the market suppliers. The phase for the final 3% will begin in 2021/22 at the end of the current build phase.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:

- (i) New properties should have a planning condition attached for developers to provide broadband.
- (ii) There are some addresses within Cirencester that do not have fast broadband. Councillor Bloomer highlighted that properties on Love Lane, Cirencester have difficulty connecting to the network, she was asked to provide details to the Officer.
- (iii) Broadband coverage is a frequently asked question to Members and perhaps a presentation to all Members of the Council should be considered.
- (iv) Consideration was given to providing information on properties and areas struggling with broadband, to be able to feed into the next review of the Local Plan.
- (v) There is a need to utilise any mechanisms possible to provide funding for the whole of the Cotswolds to be able to receive fast Broadband.
- (vi) A draft strategy framework is being worked on which would be e-mailed to Members for information.

The presentation was noted and comments made would be fed into the work plan to keep Committee updated.

OS.27 PUBLICA UPDATE

The Group Finance Director introduced the report which set out context and background to establishing Publica. He explained that the people element of the service transformation which was taking place was in part to establish an identity for employees, whilst still providing a service to their original Councils. Terms and Conditions are now comparable across all sites and work to modernise pay and grading structure continues. Digital transformation continues with the Salesforce platform and customer services are now using the system and some useful performance data is being gathered. Work to digitise other service areas is continuing, which would include Waste service and Development Management.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris was invited to speak. He explained that there were concerns and frustrations with the setting up of Publica in relation to branding and corporate identity, although there is now an opportunity to shape the future of the Council and Publica, as the new Cabinet Members are keen to be involved in reshaping the Council and services, working with Publica to ensure this takes place.

The Group Finance Director acknowledged the branding and identity frustrations in the setting up of Publica. He then identified that the overall shared service savings

including Publica was now equivalent to to each Council of an average saving of £70 per year on band D Council Tax. The savings had historically been used to balance the budget and reduce Council Tax but could in the future be reinvested into service provision taking into account the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax regime should the administration choose to do that.

The Group Manager, Commercial Development presented to Committee progress on the Salesforce software system. He explained that there were a lot of legacy systems throughout the partnership Councils and these are not meeting the needs of customers, the aim was to have the infrastructure within the system to do this. Data and information from the system gives the ability for officers to identify any problems and be able to resolve issues efficiently to improve the service. Committee were shown data from the Salesforce system which explained that when the new system went live the time taking to answer telephone calls fell. Officers were able to quickly find out that this was due to staff familiarising themselves with the new system and were able to identify that this would not be a problem as people got used to the system.

As the system grows casework will be able to be tracked in order to support Officers and Members to have knowledge of the case as it progresses through to a resolution. Customers will eventually be able to do this and there will also be a 'live agent' option where customers can talk to Officers and deal with issues immediately.

As well as working on this project, to enable more customer satisfaction, the Council's website is being considered for an upgrade and a slide was shown to Committee of how this might look, as there is now a national standard on how things should be shown to the public. Introducing services like live agent and better online forms will also improve customer interaction with the Council.

The Researcher and Data Analyst, who had been acting as Delivery Manager for the Salesforce Project for the last 9 months gave a presentation to the Committee on how the system worked.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:

- (i) Members will be able to receive updates on statistics for specific Wards and how issues had been resolved. If the issue is not related to a specific service staff will be able to forward it to the relevant agency for resolution.
- (ii) There would be a need for Councillors to understand how to use the system for their work and how it can help them with the information they need. Further discussion should take place on how this would fit in with the IT working group.

RESOLVED that the report received, and comments made, be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.

OS.28 USE OF CONSULTANTS - UPDATE

The Group Manager, Commissioning and Business Manager, Commissioning presented this item together with the draft Commissioning Strategy and explained that the approach to commissioning contracts and consultants was changing, it would be a more planned approach in terms of procurement, monitoring and ensuring that contracts and consultants are delivering what is required for the partnership Councils in a cost effective way and also questioning whether the resources would be available for work to be done in-house. Engagement with Councillors will be crucial

through this process to be able to gain an understanding of what is needed and alleviate concerns of Members.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:

- (i) Suitable targets and standardisation will be important in order to measure progress.
- (ii) There would be a methodology for the use of consultants and officers would consult Members to ascertain whether they have an interest in particular consultants. The Commissioning Strategy will improve this.
- (iii) Training will be provided in relation to procuring contracts and new ways of delivering contract services.

The Officers thanked Members for their feedback and they would keep Members informed of progress and consult with Members on how this Strategy would work and how they would want it delivered.

RESOLVED that the report received, and comments made, be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.

OS.29 REVIEW OF THE LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES CONTRACT BREAK CLAUSE

The Chair explained that this item was on the Agenda for Members to consider whether or not to endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to continue with the contract.

The Business Manager, Contracts highlighted the table relating to the contract outcomes which provided the headlines of the contract outcomes. He explained that the museum income target is always a tough challenge; SLM had secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the project to improve the museum and customer satisfaction targets are good.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:

- (i) Members questioned the length of time it took to repair the lift at Cirencester Leisure Centre. It was explained that a new lift had to be purchased and procurement rules had to be adhered to, which resulted in the delay to the repair. Unfortunately some members of the gym with disabilities were unable to use the facilities. Members commented that prior to the outsourcing of the leisure centre management the centre had been given an award for disability access. The Business Manager Contracts advised this award has been maintained by the contractor and members of the gym who were impacted by the unavailability of the lift were contacted and alternative provision discussed. And went on to say it should be noted that the centre had been able to able to upgrade the facilities for people with disabilities to access the swimming pools by the purchase of a new swimming pool hoist and other equipment due to a donation. Members commented that the report to Cabinet should make reference to the fact the disability access award has been maintained. .
- (ii) The Leisure Centre management are changing ways of delivering services and on occasions the gym has been unsupervised, if Members found that staffing in the gym was an issue let Officers know as real-time information can be used in consultation with the Leisure Centre.

Councillor Andrews proposed a change in the recommendation to Cabinet, which was seconded by Councillor Berry, to endorse the report contents and Cabinet be recommended to take the decision to continue with the contract.

RESOLVED to endorse the report contents and Cabinet be recommended to take the decision to continue with the contract.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.

OS.30 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP – FAIRFORD AND TETBURY LEISURE CENTRE

The Chair had circulated draft terms of reference for this group and had asked Members for comment.

The following comments were received from Members:

- (i) Councillor Neill who was unable to attend this meeting commented that the review plan could include another Member with experience of other leisure centres, such as Chipping Campden or Bourton-on-the-Water and can give a comparison.
- (ii) It could be useful to talk to the Gloucester diocese, as they have worked in Fairford in relation to leisure facilities.
- (iii) Where appropriate other Members of the Committee would be invited to attend the group.
- (iv) It was noted that Councillor Norris expressed an interest in being part of the review panel.
- (v) A detailed analysis of the current facilities and emerging leisure strategy should be taken into account during the review.
- (vi) It was considered that SLM and school representatives should be invited to attend a session and ideas of areas to cover during the session would be sent to the relevant people prior to the meeting.

Members agreed with the framework and comments made would be incorporated into the document.

RESOLVED that framework for the group be agreed and any comments made be incorporated into the document.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.

OS.31 SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2019/20 QUARTER 1

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report and explained items in the report, against performance indicators. The introduction of the new Salesforce system had seen the percentage of telephone calls answered within 20 seconds decrease, although this was now improving; planning application income was lower than anticipated.

In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:

- (i) The planning application process was to be reviewed to ascertain demand and resources needed.
- (ii) The implications of Brexit and the supply of waste receptacles was discussed. The Chief Finance Officer explained that funding was available from Government if needed.
- (iii) A report will be presented to Cabinet in October 2019 in relation climate change which will include issues such as electric charging points.
- (iv) Climate change issues should be discussed at a work planning meeting for this Committee.
- (v) The Chair commented whether any outstanding issues from the joint consultative committee were outstanding.

RESOLVED that the Committee reviews, and challenges as appropriate, service and financial performance for Quarter 1 of 2019/20; forwarding any comments to the Cabinet.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstention 0, absent 2.

OS.32 QUARTERLY DIGEST

The Committee received a Quarterly Digest, which included updates in respect of Gloucestershire County Council's Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel. The Council's Executive Forward Plan July 2019 Update was also provided.

The Chair highlighted that he had attended a joint meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee. A discussion regarding the provision of urgent and acute emergency care and how this is being carried out within the county had taken place.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstention 0, absent 2.

OS.33 WORK PLAN 2019/20

The Committee was requested to consider its forward work programme, including the identification of any other matters for possible consideration.

Comments were made as follows:

- (i) The new corporate plan is now due to be presented to Council in September 2019.
- (ii) Following the publication of the corporate plan a separate planning meeting of this Committee will take place to discuss future items for the work of this Committee.
- (iii) The Chair requested feedback to explore the ideas regarding the presentations which had been presented to Committee, the time these had taken and whether separate briefings should be open to all meetings. Members felt this was a good idea as the majority of Members would be interested.

- (iv) Group Managers could be invited to a planning meeting to discuss issues with Members of what items Committee could discuss and scrutinise.
- (v) A date for an informal planning meeting would be circulated to Committee Members to discuss ways of working and work plan for the future.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above changes, the Work Plan be approved.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstention 0, absent 2.

OS.34 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 13.05 p.m.

Chair

(END)