

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 DECEMBER 2019

Present:

Councillors -

Stephen Andrews	-	Chair
Gina Blomefield		Richard Norris
Patrick Coleman		Gary Selwyn
Dilys Neill (until 12.15 p.m.)		

Officers -

Chief Finance Officer	Managing Director - Publica
Business Manager - Development Management	Committee Officer

Observers:

Councillor Mike Every (invited to speak on Minute OS.42) left the meeting at 11.45 am.

Councillor Clive Webster (invited to speak on Minute OS.45) present from 10.45 am until 1.30 pm.

Apologies:

Councillors Claire Bloomer and Andrew Maclean.

OS.35 SUBSTITUTION ARRANGEMENTS

No substitution arrangements had been put in place for this Meeting.

OS.36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Member Declarations

Councillor Coleman declared an 'other' interest in respect of Agenda Item (10), as he was a Member of the Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

(2) Officer Declarations

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

OS.37 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Committee held on 3 September 2019 be approved as a correct record.

Record of Voting - for 3, against 0, abstention 3, absent 2.**OS.38 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair highlighted that as two Cabinet Members were present at the Meeting to listen to the debate of specific items on the Meeting's Agenda, he would invite the Cabinet Members to speak briefly to the Committee after the Officer presentation of these items.

OS.39 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from the Public.

OS.40 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.41 CALLED-IN DECISIONS

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

OS.42 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET 2020/21

The Committee received a report detailing an update to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2020/21 to 2029/30 following a Motion passed by the Council at its Meeting on 25 September 2019.

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report and responded to various questions from Members. In response to questions from Members the following information was provided:

- (i) The reference to a £2 million budget gap related to the Council Motion proposed by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and a previous savings target of £1 million plus a further £900,000 budget gap which equated to just under £2 million.
- (ii) The £85,000 proposed for a new community grant scheme budget was embedding one-off budget in 2019/20 in to the Council's base budget from 2020/21. The budget would fund a new scheme enabling community organisations to submit bids for grants. Reference to 'activity' within the scheme's title could also be amended in the future.
- (iii) The capital cost for the installation of webcasting within the Council Chamber was £80,000. It was considered that more detail could be included within the report in future as the majority of this information was currently contained within the Annex associated with the report.
- (iv) Sufficient detail, in the view of the Cabinet Member, had been provided within the report in relation to the £850,000 spend on reviewing the Local Plan, despite the Plan having been agreed in 2018. The Cabinet Member did also consider more detail could be included within the report in future, as he appreciated that the Plan was based upon previous methodology which had since been changed by the Government.

- (v) The £50,000 of funding for the development of a Health, Wellbeing and Leisure Strategy was to ensure Officer resource was available for the project prior to its launch.
- (vi) Costs associated with the Corinium Museum would be subject to procurement and the intention was for a professional fundraising consultant to be engaged.
- (vii) Following clarification from Ubico, the cost of delivering the new waste service had resulted in an additional £677,000 cost of which £67,000 had already been included with the Budget. The Chief Finance Officer explained that this information had been provided after the 2019 Budget had been presented to the Council in February 2019 and that a separate audit review of this significant matter had been undertaken and which would be presented to the Audit Committee. The Cabinet Member explained that he had been keen to ensure the report presented to the Committee highlighted that the cost of delivering the new service would be £677,000 more than the delivery of the existing service. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the service had not been changed from what had been agreed by the Council and that she would include reference that stated these costs were following updated costs being provided by the Contractor. The Chief Finance Officer also confirmed to the Committee that there could be an expected increase in maintenance costs due to the vehicle's increase in age over time.
- (viii) The associated £47,005 cost of increasing Member's allowances from May 2019 reflected the increase cost to the base budget and this would be reflected within the budget from 2020/21. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed she would include wording to explain this within future reports.
- (ix) The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that there was a desire to obtain Officer support for economic development, and to secure funding, currently held by the County Council, within the District. He also confirmed that there was no intention to change any 'free after 3 p.m.' current parking arrangements within the District.
- (x) The £600,000 potential saving from the review of waste and recycling service was currently a financial saving option and would require the Council to work with Ubico to review its methods of working, and to work with other Ubico partner councils to consider the possibility of implementing the same (or similar) service models across each of the partner councils.
- (xi) The figure quoted for funding Minimum Revenue Provision in 2020/21 was not affected by the development of a commercialisation strategy. The MTFS included the Minimum Revenue Provision associated with the potential development of the Waterloo Car Park in Cirencester.
- (xii) The Cabinet had expressed its desire at its December 2019 Meeting to increase the number of public responses to the Budget Consultation and the Leader had expressed his desire for around 1% of the District's adult population to respond which equated to around 800 responses. The Cabinet was also intending to engage further with business rate payers within the District.
- (xiii) Reference to a Member Smoothing Fund within the report was in relation to the existing Member IT allowance and the fact that a lump-sum payment could be made at the start of the Council year, as opposed to monthly instalments, if a formal request was made.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Committee for its consideration of the item and explained that his intention as Cabinet Member for Finance was to report the Committee's comments relating to the Budget Consultation back to the Cabinet and he hoped that a good level of response was achieved.

RESOLVED that the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy and how the 2020/21 budget fits within this longer term financial planning horizon be noted.

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

Note:

Following a question by a Member, it was confirmed later in the Meeting by the Chief Finance Officer, that, the Negative Revenue Support Grant figure for 2019/20 was £218,000.

OS.43 PUBLICA UPDATE - INTRODUCTION FROM THE NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR

The Chair informed the Committee of a circulated document produced by the Head of Paid Service regarding a commissioning update and then welcomed Mr. Jan Britton, Publica Managing Director, who had formally started in position on 1 December 2019.

Mr. Britton informed the Committee that since he had started his handover period in October 2019, he had reviewed the decisions taken by the Council relating to the implementation of Publica and that, having done this, he considered Publica had successfully achieved a great deal. Mr. Britton continued that he recognised a large amount of work still needed to be undertaken and that his role as Managing Director and the Executive Director - Commissioning were to liaise with the Head of Paid Service to ensure that Publica was delivering services effectively on the Council's behalf. Mr. Britton concluded that his aim was to ensure quality and quantitative information of Publica's performance was presented to each of the partner councils and that he was confident the model of Publica was one that was sound and of good principles.

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

- (i) The next Business Plan for Publica would be more business focused as, in the view of some, the existing Plan was considered more of a marketing document.
- (ii) Concerns of Members relating to the recruitment of Building Control Officers would require further investigation by Officers and the matter would be reported back to the Cabinet by the Executive Director - Commissioning, and additional reporting back to the Committee was possible.

The Committee thanked Mr. Britton for his attendance and for presenting to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the oral update be noted.

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

OS.44 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING - UPDATE

The Chair welcomed the Community Partnerships Officer to the Meeting.

The Community Partnerships Officer explained that once the Local Plan review report had been presented to Cabinet and the anticipated Issues and Options consultation undertaken, there would be greater certainty of the strategic planning context in

which local neighbourhood plans have to work, and therefore Officers would be able to provide clearer direction to local communities.

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

- (i) Officers were currently undertaking a review researching the options for reviewing the Local Plan based on the work by the Planning Advisory Services and this would state if there was a case for a need to review the Local Plan, shortly after its initial adoption. A report was expected to be presented to Cabinet in March 2020, which may be referred to full Council.
- (ii) Local authorities could make minor changes to neighbourhood plans, but the process for review by the local community was broadly similar to the process for developing the plan. The final costs of review were therefore dependent upon the size of settlement and the complexity of the policies to be changed.

The Chair thanked the Officer for responding to the Committee's questions and explained that the Committee look forward to receiving details of the Local Plan review and an expected report in summer 2020.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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

OS.45 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SECTION 106 PLANNING AGREEMENT AND PROCESS

The Council received a report detailing the outcome of a recent S106 Audit and of the proposed new working arrangements that sought to address the audit recommendations and improve the process generally.

The Chair welcomed the Business Manager Development Management to the Meeting and invited him to address the Committee. The Business Manager explained that previous monitoring of S106 at all three partner council sites had been poor but that government was now requiring local authorities to collect monitoring information. Each council was therefore aiming to establish a virtual team to respond to this new requirement, utilising the new Publica interns. With specific reference to Cotswold District Council, the Business Manager added that previous requests for S.106 monies from developers had been smaller in comparison to the two other Districts and this was considered to be due to the onus on town and parish councils to 'chase' money from developers as opposed to this being undertaken by Council Planning Officers. The Business Manager concluded that a consultee list (listing those further to statutory consultees) had been produced and confirmed that each council was allowed to levy a monitoring fee from the total S106 monies collected.

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

- (i) The role of a District Council Member was considered more constrained than in previous as the Council's Planning and Licensing Committee was the decision-maker of often controversial applications and it was therefore considered important that the Head of Terms for the Planning and Licensing Committee were therefore sufficiently robust.
- (ii) Officers were attempting to encourage Gloucestershire County Council to provide a more general list of possible gains from collected monies given that West Oxfordshire District Council had been able to source defibrillators and sluice gates as a result of certain developments within their District.

- (iii) A list of consultees, (in addition to the statutory consultees), a standard memorandum and Officer involvement had been agreed for the future managing of monies collected. Government ruling would now also require quarterly reporting with effect from March 2020. Officers also considered that these reports would require publishing on the Council's website with possible additional reporting to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, should the Committee wish to see this information.

The Cabinet Member for Development Management, Landscape and Heritage was present at the Meeting for this item and explained that the Committee had questioned certain aspects in which he also had concerns. He added that he considered the report prepared by Officers was a good starting point and had identified key issues which required addressing and stated that the future quarterly reporting should, in his view, be planning and not finance based. The Business Manager added that this information could also be included within Key Performance Indicator information in the future.

The Chair thanked all those present for their input into the discussion and explained that the Business Manager and the Cabinet Member would draft a proposal for reporting the monies received and the Committee would expect to receive a report detailing an update in relation to this matter in mid-summer to enable the Committee to determine if the process introduced was appropriate.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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

OS.46 SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2019/20 QUARTER TWO

The Committee received a report summarising the overall service performance of the Council and detailing information on the Council's financial position including revenue outturn and budget variances; and capital expenditure, capital receipts and use of reserves.

The Chair informed the Committee that the report was very similar to the one presented to the Cabinet at its Meeting on 2 December 2019 at which various points had been discussed at length by the Cabinet.

The Executive Director Commissioning informed the Committee that issues regarding the recruitment of Officers within Building Control service had been commented upon by the Managing Director and issues relating to the Corinium Museum were as a direct result of building works currently taking place at the Museum. She added that a new set of performance indicators would be created following discussions with Members and would be established for the new financial year and the current expectation was that the number of phone calls to customer services would decrease following the launch of the new Council website.

A Member expressed that the three indicators which had not met their expected performance level were, in his view, entirely predictable and therefore preventable.

Another Member commented that given the upcoming launch of the new Council waste service, the current high number of phone calls to customer services regarding the service should decrease following this launch in March 2020.

The Chair informed the Committee that a slight difference in number to emergency accommodation levels did affect the total percentage greatly. He also explained that the Cabinet had commented at its Meeting that better understanding of the Council's Corporate Risks was required and the Leader had confirmed that Cabinet Members and he as Chair of the Committee would receive a detailed Risk Register. He concluded that he wished to extend his thanks to Officers for improvements in relation to Revenue Support and Customer Services.

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

- (i) A review was intended to be undertaken as to how Members were presented with the Risk Register going forward.
- (ii) The Chief Finance Officer stated that narrative explanations of financial variances were provided within the narrative report and, following a reference by the Chair to inclusion of financial trend data to highlight any anomalies, the Chief Finance Officer agreed to discuss this further outside of the Meeting.
- (iii) With reference to the Cirencester Leisure Centre capital budget, this was in relation to the internal structural changes with the intention of increasing revenue. The Chief Finance Officer explained that a business case for this would need to be presented to Members for approval and this was currently being prepared by Officers. The Executive Director Commissioning confirmed she would seek an update on this from Officers and circulate the information to the Committee. The Chair added that he considered the Committee's next Work Planning Meeting would be a suitable venue at which to discuss matters relating to staffing, building and equipment of the Leisure Centre further.

RESOLVED that the service and financial performance for Quarter 2 of 2019/20, and the comments made, be noted.

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

Note:

The following information was circulated in a formal response to the Committee's question regarding the Cirencester Leisure Centre capital budget by the Business Manager - Contracts, following the Meeting:

'Proposals and options have been discussed with the Council's Leisure Management Contractor, SLM, to increase capacity and revenue generation and/or make provision for activities that are not currently being provided at Cirencester Leisure Centre. Initially the concept focused on increasing the capacity of the gym and providing additional studio space. These works would involve remodelling internal activity spaces within the centre with an estimated capital cost of circa £1.2m. Alternative options have also been presented by SLM which include making provision for more commercial type activities such as ten pin bowling. Committee Members will be aware that there is an aspiration to commission consultants to complete a Leisure Facilities Strategy for Cotswold District. Options to achieve this outcome are currently being investigated and a recommendation to Cabinet will be made in the New Year. This piece of work needs to conclude before an informed decision can be made regarding any future investment in the leisure facilities. The Strategy will establish current and future demand based on population growth and assess competition locally along with any gaps in provision. With regard to the leisure management contract and its current term which expires in 2023, the Council does have the option to extend the contract if it decides to do so. There are a number of scenarios to be considered when the future facility requirements and income potential is fully

understood. For example, there may be the potential to secure capital investment from the Contractor on the back of an extension, or the Council could invest capital based on a business case and return of investment basis having been to the market place for a new contract in 2023. It should be emphasised that the Council has not made any decisions regarding these options; officers will be reviewing the feasibility and implications regarding the existing/future leisure management contract and making formal recommendations in the future. There are a number of work strands to follow up, the first of which is to seek Cabinet approval for the production of a Leisure Facilities Strategy for the District.'

OS.47 TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE - FAIRFORD AND TETBURY LEISURE CENTRE

The Chair provided an oral update in relation to the Group and explained that he had been in discussions with the Head of Paid Service regarding resources for the Group. He informed the Committee that it had been agreed that the Group would use Financial and Legal Officers from the other partner councils as required, as this would encourage independent review and that the Group needed to ensure that Members who were originally involved in the relevant decisions were also not part of the Group.

The Chair added that a Member previously proposed for membership of the Group was now unable to take part due to the above issue and therefore stated that a vacancy for one Member to join the Group had now arisen. He confirmed that he would send a message out to all Members asking for a volunteer and that he would also circulate the updated Terms of Reference of the Group.

RESOLVED that the oral update be noted.

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

OS.48 QUARTERLY DIGEST (INCLUDING COUNTY MATTERS)

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 October 2019 Update was also provided.

The Chair highlighted that he had attended a meeting of the Economic Growth and Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2019 and both this Committee and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had both received transport and emergency health care plans respectively, but no communication had taken place between the Committees. He therefore urged Members to ensure, through their attendance at these meetings, that correspondence was being undertaken.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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

OS.49 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) A training session for all Council Members would take place on 22 January 2020 prior to the Council Meeting on Crime and Disorder led by Inspector

Simon Ellson.

- (ii) The Meeting of the Crime and Disorder Panel would occur before the next Committee Meeting on 4 February 2020.
- (iii) A further Work Planning Meeting would take place in March or April 2020 to discuss the Committee's work plan for the 2020/21 Council Year.

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

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

OS.50 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m., adjourned between 12.15 p.m. and 12.20 p.m., and closed at 14.05 p.m.

Chair

(END)