



Minutes of a meeting held remotely of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 2 February 2021.

Councillors present:

Stephen Andrews - Chair
Ray Theodoulou
Andrew Maclean
Claire Bloomer

Gary Selwyn – Vice Chair
Gina Blomefield
Richard Norris
Dilys Neill

Patrick Coleman

Officers present:

Deputy Chief Executive
Executive Director - Commissioning
Chief Executive

Ubico Officers
Democratic Services

Observers:

Councillor Mike Every

OS.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Roly Hughes

OS.2 Minutes

Subject to an amendment on page 3, minute number OS.32, starting 'Question asked and answered at Council on 18 November 2020'; this should be put in quotes and the text formatted to ensure that, it was quite clear, that the paragraphs following this line, related to a question which was asked at Full Council and completed the answer to a question, at this Committee, from Mr. Fowles; the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020 be approved as a true record.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 2, absent 1

OS.3 Substitute Members

There were no substitute arrangements.

OS.4 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received from Members or Officers.

OS.5 Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chair.

OS.6 Public Questions

No public questions had been received.

OS.7 Called-in Decisions

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

OS.8 Ubico and Waste Collection - Presentation

Officers from Ubico, attended the meeting to present to Members an update on the activities of the services to the Council. 2020 was a challenging year, on 16 March 2020 a new waste and recycling service started and the country entered lockdown on 24 March 2020. The first few weeks of lockdown Officers and crews were working hard to deliver a service and keep everyone safe during the pandemic.

Recycling and green food waste volumes had increased, because of the pandemic it was difficult to shift crews to collect everything, because they were working in 'bubbles'. Fly-tipping had increased, the closure of household recycling centres, may have contributed to this, but it was becoming a worrying trend.

Tacker Graphs had been introduced to monitor driving hours and the In-cab computer system provided the operation team, data in real time, savings through this were expected to be around £40,000.

A Board effectiveness review had taken place. A number of actions had been identified with a new Board structure being put in place; two new board sub-committees and a new five year vision. Issues for future consideration were, looking at sharing depots and fleets for all shareholders to benefit from efficiencies.

A training academy was now in place, which meant everyone could benefit from appropriate training to keep all staff safe.

Vehicle replacement and management of the fleet was a major consideration, the next significant scheduled replacement of the fleet was due in 2026/27, the fleet at the moment was powered by Diesel, at some point in the future different fuel sources would need to be considered.

Thanks was given by the Committee to the Ubico teams out on the ground, collecting waste and recycling during the pandemic and helping with the floods at Christmas 2020.

OS.9 Member Questions

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.10 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2021/22

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced this report, explaining that the draft budget had been available for public consultation, before being presented to Committee, Cabinet and Council for approval.

The Local Government Settlement had been produced in December, which gave the Council financial certainty for the year 2021/22.

The Secretary of State had allowed Councils to increase the Council Tax by £5 for Band D properties and pro-rotas for other properties.

The Chancellor had announced a freeze on public sector pay, this would be a saving for the Council. The budget assumes that there would be a pay award of 1%, however, the pay award remained subject to consultation.

Other less significant issues for the budget included; the contract coming to an end for collecting sharps, the responsibility for collecting these items fell on the Council; increased provision for additional audit fees in the budget; changes to governance arrangements in Publica, the Council's share of cost of this was £5,000 per annum.

Comments and queries from Members included:

- (a) A risk the budget faced was from Covid-19, the budget included funding announced by Government for the impact of Covid-19 in 2021/22, but it was not certain if this funding would be sufficient to mitigate risks, such as car parking income and income from leisure provision.
- (b) The collection of business rates could impact the budget, if support from the Government was reduced.
- (c) Consideration of future leisure provision, would need to be reviewed on the basis of more information from the leisure review.
- (d) The Deputy Chief Executive had included her opinion on the robustness of the estimates used in the budget and the adequacy of reserves, which was contained in the Cabinet papers for Cabinet on 8 February 2021.
- (e) There was a one off payment into the pension fund, effectively paying the deficit payments due for the period 2020/21 to 2022/23 up-front. This had saved £184,000 each year.
- (f) The Capital Programme Investment Board had been set up to look at and process capital projects, to put forward to Cabinet and Council.
- (g) Consideration should be given to greater accessibility throughout the District for access to broadband, for work and study.
- (h) A review would take place of how to approach the budget consultation next year, as the understanding of some respondents was that Council Tax was only rising in Band D. It was disappointing that the Green agenda was not high on resident's priorities. It was an ongoing process of communication.

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- (i) Commercial properties in the centre of Cirencester should be considered under the housing strategy for affordable housing.
- (j) Was there a case to dispose of assets which the Council owned outside the District, re-investing the sale proceeds into the District for affordable housing? The properties had been owned by the Council for a long time and were generating an income to the Council, if disposed of other sources of income would need to be considered.
- (k) Future projects need to generate income and be linked to corporate objectives and strategies such as the Corporate Plan, Green Economic Growth Strategy, Recovery Investment Strategy, Climate Emergency Strategy, local plan, with rigorous structure for budget proposals and funding to be able to carry out projects.
- (l) Following the peer review, the MTFS had been produced in a narrative form, which had, hopefully, been valuable to Members.

Councillor Bloomer had to leave the meeting due to poor internet connection and apologised (6.09pm).

The Deputy Chief Executive and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance were thanked for putting the budget together this year, in a way that the Committee had been able to see more detail, and looked forward to working with them to improve for the future.

A comment to the Cabinet from the Committee was to continue to improve on planning for the budget and consultation for the future.

RESOLVED that the comments of the Committee on the budget proposals 2021/22 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy be provided to Cabinet and Council.

OS.II Work Programme

A planning enforcement update and a Publica update, needed to be programmed into the work for the next civic year.

Concern was expressed about progress on The Steadings and Community Grants Schemes. A short report to be produced to update the Committee on progress.

A review of the work programme would take place for the next civic year, incorporating the Executive Forward Plan, with input from Officers in order to identify a realistic timetable and milestones.

Committee was keen to receive an update from South West Ambulance Service.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 6.58 pm

Chair

(END)