



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
29/June2021

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 29 June 2021.

Councillors present:

Stephen Andrews	Gary Selwyn	
Gina Blomefield	Ray Theodoulou	Ray Brassington
Claire Bloomer	Nigel Robbins	
Patrick Coleman	Nikki Ind	

Officers present:

Deputy Chief Executive
Business Manager, Corporate Responsibility
Group Manager, Strategic Support
Democratic Services
Chief Accountant
Monitoring Officer

Observers:

None

OS.76 Apologies for Absence and Substitute Members

Apologies were received from Councillors Richard Norris and Roly Hughes.

Councillor Brassington substituting for Councillor Hughes.

OS.77 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

OS.78 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2021, be approved as a true record:

Record of Voting – for 6, against 0, abstention 3, absent 1.

OS.79 Chair's Announcements

The Committee noted that due to the ongoing management review, an update report from Publica would be submitted for consideration at the August 2021 meeting.

OS.80 Public Questions

No questions had been received from the public.

OS.81 Member Questions

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.82 Annual Report of The Safer Community Partnership to The Crime and Disorder Committee

Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing introduced the report and praised the work of CDC (Cotswold District Council) staff and partners throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted by the Committee that weekly meetings of the Safer Community Partnership had contributed to successful partnership working.

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The Committee noted that crime levels had dropped to an all-time low and that the Cotswolds had been recognised as one of the safest places to live in the UK, although further work around crime perception would be undertaken.

Members noted the work and initiatives being undertaken by CDC including 'Clean and Green' and 'Spacehive' which contributed towards making communities feel safer.

The Council remained vigilant in relation to specific areas of concern, namely the increase in domestic abuse following the ending of the national lockdown.

The Committee noted that the Champions Network continued to be rolled out across the County. This was a scheme whereby people such as teachers, GPs and other individuals who had regular face-to-face contact with the public, were trained to recognise signs of domestic abuse and how to signpost victims to the relevant support networks.

In relation to young people, the Committee noted that funding had been secured to commission 'Young Gloucestershire' who were a street-based organisation who had been liaising with young people to understand their fears and concerns throughout the Pandemic. Further work would be undertaken with partnership agencies to support young people going forwards.

The Committee noted that the terms of reference for the Committee's Crime and Disorder Committee were approved at full Council on the 20 January 2021 and not at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 01 December 2020 as stated at 1.3 of the report.

In relation to priority 4 of the Plan – anti-social behaviours (ASB) and the target of reducing it by 50%, the Committee noted the importance of establishing an accurate baseline so that future measures of success or otherwise could be made.

The Committee noted that the Cotswold Water Park Partnership covered both the east and west areas of the site. The Partnership had met virtually during the Pandemic to discuss ASB perpetrated by some visitors. Other issues discussed

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included parking and potential drug use across the site. Work was being undertaken across partnership agencies to discuss potential solutions to these issues. The Committee acknowledged the complexities associated with

solving the issues at the Water Park, which were in many cases historic and were continuing to occur.

From a CDC perspective, the Committee noted that Philippa Lowe, Business Manager Localities, would be the Strategic Lead Officer for this area of work.

The Committee noted that work would be undertaken to determine how fear of crime could be accurately measured.

The Safe and Social Roads scheme sought to remove the focus from cars and instead focus on how roads could be safe for pedestrians and road users for business and leisure purposes, placing the emphasis on individual road users to adhere to the rules of the road and minimising the risks of them injuring other members of the public.

The Committee noted the importance of ensuring that Parish and Town Councils were provided with all relevant toolkits and resources in relation to any County-wide crime prevention schemes and initiatives. It would be important to ensure that all communications sent to Parish and Town Councils were sent to the correct contact at each authority.

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to receive a report outlining the priorities of the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner (once those priorities had been determined).

This was proposed by Councillor Andrews and seconded by Councillor Bloomer.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report.

Record of Voting – for 9, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.

OS.83 Financial, Council Priority and Service Performance Report - 2020/21 - Q4 and Year End

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report, explaining that this was a review of the 2020/21 year. The following points were highlighted:

- (a) The Council had continued to function throughout the Pandemic, despite the majority of staff working from home.
- (b) Over £57 million in grants had been paid out by the Council to small businesses during the Pandemic.
- (c) Financial support had been provided to residents who had been required to self-isolate during the Pandemic.
- (d) Leisure providers had been provided with financial support after they were forced to temporarily close during the Pandemic.
- (e) The Pandemic had resulted in a fall to Council income, particularly in relation to the reduction in car park usage.
- (f) The Council had seen an increase in the amount of collected recycling due to the increase in working from home and people staying at home due to national lockdowns.
- (g) The data within the report related to the revised budget which was submitted to Full Council in September 2020. There was a small budget surplus of £21,000, which would transfer to the Council's General Fund.
- (h) Planning income had increased during the year and exceeded the target as outlined in the revised budget.

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- (i) The report outlined the grants which had been received by the Government to support local communities and businesses throughout the Pandemic.
- (j) The significant fall in net business rates income had impacted on the Council's Collection Fund. The grant received from the Government to support the decline in business rates would be placed into earmarked reserves for the forthcoming financial year and would be called upon to repay the Collection Fund deficit.

In relation to Planning, a view was expressed that it would be helpful for the Chair of the Planning Committee to receive regular updates on the financial information relating to this area of business.

The Committee noted that the contribution to the Council's General Fund was around £180,000 less than when the original 2020/21 budget was set. This was a due to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

In relation to electric vehicle charging points, the Committee noted that work would be undertaken to determine which charging devices would be installed at each site according to anticipated demand, cost and charging performance.

A note updating Members on empty properties would be circulated for information.

The Committee noted that the implementation of the new revenues and benefits system had been successful. Any change of circumstances information had to be held before the data was migrated from the previous system to the new. Work was then undertaken to ensure that any delays associated with the system migration were kept to a minimum. The aim of the revised system was to improve the user experience.

It was noted by the Committee that a review of office space requirements was being undertaken which would determine how much physical office space was required at the Trinity Road site. Further reports on the results of this work would be shared with Members as the review progressed. Each Business Manager was responsible for ensuring that their staff were working in the most effective and appropriate way, whether this be office, home-based or a hybrid of the two. At the current time, CDC

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staff could choose to work from an office location subject to agreement with their line manager.

A note updating Members on the progress of providing high-speed fibre broadband to all areas of the Cotswolds would be circulated.

With regards to the provision of affordable housing, Members expressed a view that it would be helpful to include a breakdown of properties within this category – the number of proposed social properties, affordable rent properties, etc.

The Committee requested that an update on cashless parking be brought to a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report and provided comments on potential amendments in advance of submission to Full Council.

Record of Voting – for 9, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.

OS.84 Appointments to Gloucestershire County Council Scrutiny Committees

The Committee noted that the proposal was for Councillor Brassington to continue as the CDC representative on the Police and Crime Panel, that Councillor Blomefield would continue as the CDC representative on the Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that Councillor Andrews would become the CDC representative on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the Committee agreed to the appointments to the Gloucestershire County Council Scrutiny Committees as outlined above.

OS.85 Quarterly Digest (including County Matters)

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The Committee noted the updates provided by Members in relation to County Matters along with the minutes of previous Gloucestershire County Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

OS.86 Work Plan 2021/22 and Executive Forward Plan

The Committee expressed an interest in considering a future item in relation to Ubico. This would be subject to the production of a draft terms of reference to determine what a potential task and finish group would seek to achieve.

The next meeting was to take place on 31 August 2021, which would include items on the Steadings, Publica Update, along with other standing items.

The Meeting commenced at 4:00pm and closed at 6:20pm

Chair

(END)