



Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 2 September 2024

Members present:

Gina Blomefield –Chair
David Cunningham
Angus Jenkinson
Patrick Coleman

Gary Selwyn –Vice-Chair
Michael Vann
Tony Slater
Clare Turner

Jon Wareing
Tristan Wilkinson

Officers present:

Robert Weaver, Chief Executive
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and
Chief Finance Officer
Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services
Officer
Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst

Matthew Britton, Interim Forward Planning
Lead
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and
Development (Monitoring Officer)
Gemma Moreing, Business Information Lead
Joseph Walker, Community Partnership
Officer

Cabinet Members present:

Joe Harris, Leader of the Council
Mike Evely, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services

OS.91 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Dilys Neill.

OS.92 Substitute Members

Councillor Patrick Coleman substituted for Councillor Dilys Neill.

OS.93 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

OS.94 Minutes

An amendment had been made to the minutes under OS.84. The fourth bullet point was revised for accuracy. “The impact of the increased employer pension contributions resulting from the transition was discussed. In the immediate short-term, employer pension

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contributions will increase by £346k in a full year. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that due to how the Local Government Pension Scheme functioned, the longer-term impact on the Council would not be clear until the results of the next actuarial valuations in March 2025 and March 2028 were known. Therefore, the short-term financial impact is as set out in the Waterfall Chart contained within the report.”

Councillor Jon Wareing proposed accepting the minutes and Councillor Gary Selwyn seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2024.

Voting record- 9 For, 1 Abstention

OS.95 Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting

In relation to the previous meeting, members discussed missed bin collections which occurred on a Friday, which could not be reported until Monday if customers did not have an internet connection.

Members also highlighted that there was no date in the work plan for the Publica transition report to be considered by the Committee, the Chief Executive stated that they would provide the Committee with dates for this.

OS.96 Chair's Announcements

The Chair explained that the Sewage Summit item was due to be scrutinised by the Committee but was now going to be presented to Full Council. Therefore it was removed from the agenda. The Chair noted the large agenda and reminded members to remain succinct when asking questions of Officers.

OS.97 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

OS.98 Member Questions

Councillor Angus Jenkinson stated that some reports did not consider the Climate and Ecological Emergency implications whereas others did. The Interim Executive Director stated that they would ensure this is consistent on future reports.

OS.99 Report back on recommendations

Members referred to the recommendations from the previous meeting, raising that the recommendation for resourcing ecology should be brought to the next meeting of the Publica Review Working Group. The CEO stated that they would add this to the agenda for the next meeting.

OS.100 Neighbourhood Planning Update

In introducing the item, the Chair asked members to focus on the strategic aspects of it. The Chair stated that members should also be aware that the Stow-on-the-Wold and the Swells Neighbourhood Plan should not be discussed Neighbourhood Plan should not be discussed as

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it was liable to a the Council was in the pre-election period ahead of the referendum on 26 September 2024.

The purpose of the item was to update Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Council's activity supporting parish-led neighbourhood plans across the district.

The Cabinet Member provided a summary of the neighbourhood planning activity across the district since 2011 when the legislation had been introduced.

The Community Partnerships Officer explained that neighbourhood planning was liable to alter in light of the changes to the NPPF, though no explicit alterations were proposed at present.

Members discussed the report, raising the following points;

- The report stated that there was little explicit guidance for creating neighbourhood plans but equally stated the importance of ensuring that a plan does not contradict a principal council's local plan. The Community Partnership Officer explained that there was Government guidance focused on end results but this was not explicitly set in statute.
- Some policy areas, such as water, were outside of the purview of neighbourhood plans, although plans could influence development.
- Instances where neighbourhood plans might become out of date were discussed. The Community Partnerships Officer explained that some policy areas such as playing spaces would be slow to go out of date, but that they had regular communication channels with Town and Parish Councils that had made plans in order to review policy areas that may be out of date.
- The Council had previously received a grant of £20,000 per plan to support with neighbourhood plans. Concerns had been raised over whether there would be any budget implications going forward. The Community Partnership Officer stated that further government funding was potentially coming forward, but that as the money had not been ring-fenced, there was still money in the short term.

RESOLVED: To note the update

OS.101 National Planning Policy Framework Consultation and the Implications for Cotswold District

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the item and made the following points:

- The NPPF was going through a consultation exercise.
- There were housing pressures in the Cotswold district area and t a need to increase affordable housing.
- Subject to its approval at the Cabinet Member decision-making meeting and any comments that the Committee made, the final consultation response would be submitted to the Government by 25 September 2024 and the new NPPF responses will be published by the end of the year.

The purpose of the item was to advise Cabinet of the current NPPF consultation and agree proposals for submission of a consultation response on behalf of the Council.

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The Cabinet Member explained that the recommendation to Cabinet was to Delegate the submission of the Council response. This was to allow time for the Interim Forward Planning Lead to finalise a proposed response, taking on board Member input.

Members discussed the report, raising the following points;

- It was important that the decision be made as transparent and open as possible and therefore it was regrettable that the timescales around the response meant that it was not possible to fully scrutinise the response before its submission.
- The Interim Forward Planning Lead explained that the changes would mean that the District's housing need would go up to 979 per year, and that there would be fewer exceptions than at present.
- The proposals included reference to the development of brownfield sites. In response to Member questions on this, the Interim Forward Planning Lead explained that they would email members more information on how long an area was classed as a brownfield site.
- There was no reference to accessibility of local services within the proposals, which raised concerns over climate change implications from longer and more car journeys. The Interim Forward Planning Lead explained that this would be highlighted within the response.
- The consultation was open, and therefore Ward Members could submit their own responses if they wished to highlight local issues specific to their ward. The Interim Forward Planning Lead also explained that Members not on the Committee would be made aware of this through Democratic Services.
- It was suggested that the delegation be made to the Cabinet Member, and therefore the decision could be made as part of a public meeting.

RESOLVED: To NOTE the report.

OS.102 **Building the Budget**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Deputy Leader introduced the report. He explained that the report outlined the cycle within the budget building process. The next report to the Committee would be considered at its meeting in November.

The purpose of the item was to provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee an outline of the Council's budget setting process, key decision points, and a brief outline of the administration's approach to the annual budget consultation.

Members discussed the report, raising the following points;

- The impact of the Publica Transition on the budget and its timeline. The Cabinet Member for Finance explained that the cost of the staff transfers would be factored into the budget but that the transformation of the services could not be estimated.
- In relation to the Pay Award there was a typo within the report, where it read 'April 2023' instead of April 2024.
- The Arlingclose (treasury advisory firm) contract was due to be reviewed and would be managed closely.

RESOLVED: To NOTE the report.

OS.103 **Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report.

The purpose of the item was to set out the initial budget monitoring position for the 2024/25 financial year.

The following material variations were set out within this as follows;

- Underachievement: Land Charges (£24k), Cemeteries (£35k)
- Additional income: Bulky Waste (£38k), Green Waste (£15k)
- Commercial Property rental income (£23k adverse variation)
- Car Park Expenditure – underspend on business rates £58k
- Elections – Overspend of £54k forecast due to expenditure with Civica on the trial of Tablets that could not be claimed through the Parliamentary Election expenses scheme.
- Bank Charges – Additional cost arising from increased volume of card and bank charges of £26k. A revised contract for debit and credit card fee processing charges would be in place later in the financial year.
- £72k additional expenditure for Communications and Customer service support for the rollout of the Waste and Recycling rezoning.
- Treasury Management and interest receivable performance (£0.125m positive variation)
- Publica Review impact (part-year) of £0.148m included as a provision.

Members discussed the report, raising the following points;

- Questions were raised regarding the £72,000 overspend for communications and customer service support for the roll-out of waste changes. The Deputy Leader explained that this was £50,000 to communicate the changes to households, £15,000 for the costs associated with an extra collection date on Saturday and £7,000 for in-cab technology. The Cabinet Member explained that the changes hadn't been reflected in the savings, hence being an overspend.
- Costs of agency staff were discussed by the Committee, particularly as it pertained to the Publica transition. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that there was an ongoing piece of work to reconcile this position for Development Management, but that in other areas the cost was lower. The cost would be presented to the Committee once the position was known.
- The Committee asked for details on the reserve fund positions. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this was outlined in the February Budget Council report and was in the Statement of Accounts.
- £54,000 more than was budgeted for was spent on elections activities. The Chief Executive explained that some of this had been associated with trialling new technology including introducing tablets at some polling stations to improve efficiencies, as well as needing to buy more ballot boxes due to the additional parliamentary seat in the district. He explained that the election budget had not been revised for a number of years, and while there was ongoing work to evaluate this, the figure was partially due to assumptions based on historic costs.

RESOLVED: To NOTE the update.

OS.104 **Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One**

The Chief Executive Introduced the report. In doing so, they highlighted areas on and off target.

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The purpose of the item was to provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance.

Members discussed the report, raising the following points;

- There were increased missed bin collections due to Ubico staff sickness especially in August. The Chief Executive explained that this was due to a sickness bug which had caused an increase in unexpected sick leave. The Committee felt that Members should have been better informed about the issues so as to be in a better position to communicate them to their residents, but the Cabinet Member stated that the Council had been notified about the underlying reasons and extent of the issues late. The Council and Ubico were working on remedying the issues, with particular focus on repeated missed collections. Members also asked if future reports could include missed bin collections.
- As part of the missed bin collection discussion, one member stated that these issues could be resolved with improved trade union membership.
- Planning enforcement was discussed. Members asked if they could be provided with statistics on the breaches and processes for planning enforcement, which the Leader said they would provide.

RESOLVED: To NOTE the report.

OS.105 **Updates from Gloucestershire County Council Scrutiny Committees**

The representative from the Heath Overview and Scrutiny Committee had sent apologies and there had been no further updates. The Economic Scrutiny Committee was due to meet in September under the new name of the Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee.

OS.106 **Work Plan and Forward Plan**

The work plan was noted.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 7.00 pm

Chair

(END)