COTSWOLD
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 4 November 2024

Members present:

Gina Blomefield – Chair	Gary Selwyn – Vice-Chair	
David Cunningham	Michael Vann	Jon Wareing
Angus Jenkinson	Tony Slater	Tristan Wilkinson
Dilys Neill	Clare Turner	

Officers present:

David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer	Claire Locke, Interim Executive Director
Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager	Joseph Walker, Head of Economic Development and Communities
Ana Prelici, Governance Officer	Simon Anthony, Business Manager for Environmental Services

Ubico- Marc Osment, Rob Heath, Ian Bourton, Mike Evemy, Joe Harris and Lisa Spivey

Cabinet Members:

Joe Harris, Leader of the Council
Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Safety

OS.107 Apologies

There were no apologies.

OS.108 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

OS.109 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

OS.110 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2024 were discussed. The Chair explained that these had been amended after publication, prior to the meeting.

There was no further discussion on the minutes.

RESOLVED: To APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2024.

OS.111 Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chair outlined the actions from previous meetings. They explained that two new members of staff had been recruited into Ecology, and they were content that the resourcing issue was resolved.

OS.112 Chair's Announcements

The Chair explained that they had attended a meet and greet lunch led by the CEO and supported by the Communications consultant.

The Chair noted the length of the agenda and invited members to keep their comments succinct.

Members introduced themselves and the wards they represented.

OS.113 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

OS.114 Member Questions

There were no Member Questions.

OS.115 Report back on recommendations

There were no recommendations from the previous meeting to discuss.

OS.116 Community Safety Partnership Update

The purpose of the item was to provide updates and RAG ratings against the 'Cotswold Community Safety Partnership' Plan for the period of April 2024 to September 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Safety introduced the item. The Cabinet Member explained that at the previous meeting they had committed to

introducing 'Red Amber Green' ratings and clear actions for delivery. She explained that the report set these targets out.
Members discussed the report, raising the following;

- Members asked how data was captured for the statistics on Antisocial Behaviour was discussed. The Cabinet Member explained that the report relied on people reporting instances of anti-social behaviour (ASB) to the police.
- There was discussion about the Committee's crime and disorder responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Head of Democratic and Electoral Services explained that as part of this, the Committee had the ability to make recommendations to the Council's Cabinet but there was no requirement to do so.
- In response to questions on the structure of the partnership, the Cabinet Member explained that the Community Safety Partnership sat within the broader Gloucestershire partnership.
- The Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) domestic abuse champion scheme was discussed. This was open to Members to attend, and two had completed the training. Democratic Services had written to Members about this and would send a reminder.
- Members stated that the community alerts programme was working well.
- It was stated that the Cotswold Community Safety Partnership could take a more systematic approach on their work. The Cabinet Member stated that they would report this back to the partnership.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the report.

OS.117 Feedback on Waste Round Rezoning

The purpose of the item was to provide the Committee with feedback on the recent waste collection round rezoning project.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the item. In doing so he apologised for the missed bin collections and said that these had been partly caused by exceptional levels of sickness absences at Ubico. The Deputy Leader explained that the levels of missed collections had almost returned to the levels prior to the service change in June. The Business Manager for Contracts and Waste added that missed collections were often collected within 24 hours of the original collection.

In discussing the report, Members raised the following points;

- Whether solutions like what3words could be used for collections. The Ubico Head of Operations explained that, while this was possible, it didn't resolve issues such as historic expectations e.g. of putting the bins out at the rear of the property, which would require historic knowledge.
- Members asked if there were any best practices, e.g. from neighbouring authorities that could be incorporated to make savings. The Ubico Head of

Operations explained that they were not aware of any unexplored. The Deputy Leader stated that they could identify opportunities for savings within the budget setting process.

- It was stated that the reporting process could be improved.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the report

OS.118 Waste Services Update

To provide the Committee with a Waste Services Update including greening the waste fleet, efficiency of collections and data behind service changes

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance did not introduce the item as it followed on from the previous item.

Members discussed the item, raising the following points;

- There was disappointment expressed in the statistics on how much waste was being incinerated. While the recycling rate was considered to be good, Members asked whether more could be done to avoid generating some of this waste. The Cabinet Member explained that the Council had been running several waste minimisation campaigns, such as tackling food waste and encouraging sustainable shopping practices. The Cabinet Member stated that there was always more that could be done to encourage waste reduction and agreed with the objective.
- Members asked whether there was any work to analyse the composition of the waste. The Business Manager for Waste and Contracts explained that this had been carried out through 'bin diving', and the initial results showed that 30% of the waste in black bins was food waste at the kerbside. Recycling had the next lowest rates and more could be done to particularly encourage more resources to be recycled.
- Annex A of the report had mentioned various scores that vehicles and drivers were monitored on. Members raised concerns over the HR implications of this. The Ubico representatives explained that this was to do with acceleration monitoring of the vehicles, and that the individuals were not being monitored.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the update.

OS.119 Draft Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Strategy

This report sets out the Budget Strategy to support the preparation of the 2025/26 revenue and capital budgets and presents an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the item. They raised the following points;

- The Business rate reset had been delayed, with a three-year settlement expected in 2026/27, and a one-year settlement expected in the interim.
- Inflationary pressures were expected to ease.
- The Local Government Pay Award was at a lower cost than the one budgeted for.
- The minimum wage increase announced by the Government in the autumn budget was expected to have an impact on future pay settlements.
- The numbers within the report showed that further savings and transformation of services were needed.
- There was a change to the business rates pool which was expected to generate income for the Council.
- The draft budget assumed a £5 increase in Council tax for a Band D property.
- The assumption was that the core grant funding to the Council was not going to change.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that the increase in Employers National Insurance Contributions was expected to increase the cost of employing people for the Council. He also stated that there was a new funding stream of £1.1bn across Local Government.

Members discussed the report, raising the following points:

- Members asked about the estimated cost associated with phase two of the Publica transition. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the second phase was more challenging to estimate due to the roles being fragmented across the different councils.
- Members asked about the prospect of the Council serving a Section 114 insolvency notice, in the context of other councils which had done so across the country. Specifically, Members asked which projects or non-statutory services the Council would get rid of if it meant avoiding being in this position. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that, some investment was necessary to balance the revenue budget, and that in the case of replacing waste vehicles, it was necessary to borrow.
- The Committee asked if it was possible to generate revenue from collecting business waste e.g. from holiday lets. The Cabinet Members stated that while Ubico were working to ensure that no waste from holiday lets was accidentally collected, due to logistical issues it was not a viable income stream.
- Members asked why it had not been possible to set money aside to save for the replacement of refuse trucks instead of borrowing the money and also wished to know whether the length of the contract was the same as the loan period. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that due to the cost of the replacement and the financial pressures that the Council was facing, it was not possible to have set

the money aside. The length of the loan would not exceed the vehicle's lifespan and it was important that the vehicles be managed in order to maintain their life.

- The Cabinet Member stated that the key risk to the Council's budget was reduction of income from the business rates reset.
- Members discussed how the changes to the minimum wage and employer's national insurance contributions would impact Ubico. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the expectation was that the Government was likely to compensate Local Authorities for this increase in national insurance contributions but that this wouldn't be known until late December. They were engaging with Ubico on the topic of minimum wage.
- The budget consultation was going to be presented to the Committee, but the timescales and approach had not been finalised.
- The Deputy Chief Executive stated that if the issues as presented in the report were not addressed there would be a £10m shortfall by the end of 2027-28.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the report.

OS.120 Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Committee discussed the work plan, raising the following points:

- The Empty Homes Strategy had been deferred to January.
- The Interim Executive Director stated that a work planning meeting would be scheduled for February, and the Chair stated that members could suggest topics at any time.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the work plan.

OS.121 Updates from Gloucestershire County Council Scrutiny Committees

Councillor Angus Jenkinson, as the representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee (formerly the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee) provided. They explained that the Committee met on Friday 20 September, and that this was the first meeting for a year. Councillor Jenkinson stated that he thought there was a reduced role for districts in the Committee's arrangement and that he was disappointed in this.

Councillor Dilys Neill reported on the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She explained that the focus of the October meeting had been on winter planning. The provision of adequate social care was important for easing pressures on A&E waiting times and therefore ambulance response times. Councillor Neill explained that it was a complicated and interlinked problem.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the report.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 7.00 pm

Chair

(END)