



Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 31 August 2021.

Councillors present:

Stephen Andrews
Gina Blomefield
Claire Bloomer
Patrick Coleman

Gary Selwyn
Roly Hughes
Ray Theodoulou
Nigel Robbins

Nikki Ind
Stephen Hirst

Officers present:

Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jan Britton, Managing Director (Publica)
Angela Claridge, Interim Monitoring Officer
Christopher Crookhall-Fallon, Head of Climate Action (CDC)
Jon Dearing, Group Manager for Residents Services
Claire Hughes, Business Manager for Corporate Responsibility
Ciaran O'Kane, Senior Procurement Business Partner
Ben Patel-Sadler, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Interim)
Jenny Poole, Deputy Chief Executive
Rob Weaver, Chief Executive
Frank Wilson, Group Finance Director (Publica)

Observers:

None.

OS.87 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Norris.

OS.88 Substitute Members

Councillor Hirst substituting for Councillor Norris.

OS.89 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

OS.90 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021 were agreed as written with the following amendments:

Councillor Nikki Ind was present at the 29 June meeting.

Councillor Robbins was not present at the 29 June meeting.

The date at the top of page five would be adjusted so that it read 29 June 2021.

At page seven of the minutes, the proposal had been approved by the Committee (not noted).

At page nine of the minutes, Councillor Andrews should have been identified as having become the representative of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the June meeting (it had previously been Councillor Neill).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021, be approved as a true record:

Record of Voting – for: 8, against: 0, abstention: 1 , absent: 1.

OS.91 Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements made by the Chair.

OS.92 Public Questions

There were no public questions submitted.

OS.93 Member Questions

There were no Member questions submitted.

OS.94 Called-in-Decisions

There were no Called-In Decisions.

OS.95 Work Plan 2021/22 and Executive Forward Plan

The Business Manager for Corporate Responsibility introduced the report where the Committee noted the items scheduled for consideration at future meetings.

Following a Member query in relation to the Council's planning department, the Committee noted that the nature of a task and finish group placed a significant demand on Officer and Member time. Although the task and finish exercise could be a beneficial process, the Committee agreed that the Council's planning department should remain as a provisional future agenda item.

The Committee noted the importance of ensuring that any provisional items were discussed fully so that they could be scheduled for consideration at appropriate meetings.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and noted the current versions of the Committee Work Plan and the Executive Forward Plan.

OS.96 Publica Update

The Committee received a report from the Managing Director of Publica, which provided an update on commissioning and procurement and on progress made in response to the Publica Board Review carried out in 2020.

Councillor Joe Harris provided the Committee with an overview of the importance of ensuring that the commissioning process was effective.

The Committee noted the unique commissioning model currently in place as part of the existing arrangements with Publica.

The Committee noted the recent appointments made to the Publica Board of Directors.

The Managing Director of Publica outlined the report and answered a number of questions from Members relating to the following topics:

The Committee noted the relationship between the Council and Publica, in that the role of Publica was to commission and procure services on behalf of the Council.

The Committee further noted the importance of an effective commissioning process which would ensure that procured services met the Councils requirements.

The Committee noted that one of the primary aims of Publica was to ensure it was an excellent organisation to work for. Members acknowledged the importance of achieving this objective to ensure that the best possible candidates were appointed to work for the business (and retained), thereby providing an excellent service on behalf of the Council and to the residents of the District.

Members specifically noted the work being undertaken to recruit planning staff to the Council, acknowledging the staff shortages in this area at local authorities across the country.

The Committee noted that the Local Government Mutual was a route to market in relation to insurance providers. The Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) was another route to market, specifically in relation to service providers who had completed a procurement process so they could appear on the DPS service providers list and be easily accessed by local authorities to procure services.

The Committee noted that work was being undertaken to produce a comprehensive database of service contracts and their associated expiry dates. This would ensure that effective commissioning could take place in advance of new contracts being procured in the future.

In relation to procurement, the Committee acknowledged that the Social Value Act would enable the Council to procure services not only based on cost, but also based on the social benefits associated with a contract. A briefing note around social contracts would be provided to the Committee.

The Committee expressed a view that service providers should be sourced locally wherever possible.

In relation to procurement frameworks and contracts, the Committee noted that quotes for services could be obtained in a relatively swift manner where urgency was important (the hiring of agency staff on a short-term basis for example). This method was not always the correct route to market and a full procurement process would be followed for other services and contracts.

The Committee further noted that work had been undertaken to identify areas where additional resources were required across the Council and the associated measures required to address any staff shortages. This robust process would be undertaken on an annual basis going forwards.

The Committee noted that the Member Representative Board (MRB) was related to the shareholders of the Publica company.

The Committee noted that both the Publica and Council Audit Committees received similar reports with both having very defined roles, functions and responsibilities. In relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members noted it was this Committee who played a role in holding Publica to account – Publica did not have its own standalone Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee further noted that the Council's senior management team were provided with performance information on a regular basis so that any issues could be identified and managed. Members and the Committees on which they sat could also raise any performance issues after receiving and analysing performance data submitted to them via reports.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report.

OS.97 Review of the Governance Arrangements associated with The Steadings, Cirencester - Draft Terms of Reference

The Committee received the draft Terms of Reference relating to the Review of the Governance Arrangements associated with The Steadings, Cirencester. The purpose of the review was to look at the governance arrangements surrounding the Community Management Trust (CMT) and the District Council's involvement in the CMT with a view to establishing whether they were compliant with any conditions and or legal agreements, and whether the Council was adequately fulfilling its role.

The Committee noted the importance of ensuring that residents were not in a position where they would be charged twice for the maintenance of public spaces.

The Committee noted that the proposed terms of reference for the Task Group were broad with the aim of ensuring that all aspects of the governance arrangements across the development could receive sufficient oversight and appropriate scrutiny.

The Committee further noted the importance of ensuring that conflict resolution was included within a terms of reference, primarily to ensure that any issues arising could be acknowledged and managed by the correct party (the Town Council, the developers, etc).

The Committee agreed that the defined responsibilities of the District Council, the Town Council and the developer should be outlined as part of the terms of reference for the Task Group.

The Committee could take a decision in relation to the Officers of the Council sighting Members with regards to any planning issues/breaches associated with the development, or for the Committee to become involved earlier on in the process of the development to ensure the governance processes associated with it were appropriate (complimenting the

CMT). This represented an opportunity to place another layer of governance around what was scheduled to be a significant development in the local area.

RESOLVED that the Committee agreed that further work should be undertaken on the proposed terms of reference before they were considered again at a future meeting.

OS.98 Financial, Council Priority and Service Performance Report - 2021-22 Quarter One

The Committee received a report from the Chief Executive which provided an update on the Council's priorities and service performance, along with information on the Council's financial position.

The report gave an overview of the changes made to the performance indicator set and these were detailed in Annex A to the report. The Council Priorities report, Performance Indicator report, Revenue Summary and Variances and a Summary of gross capital expenditure were all attached as Appendices B to E.

The Chief Executive introduced the report and the Deputy Chief Executive guided Members through the detail and key highlights of the report.

In relation to planning delays, the Committee noted that a task and finish group had been set up comprised of Members and Officers which was currently looking at resources and improving customer service along with the workloads of different teams within the planning function.

The Committee noted that to address the resourcing issue, the Council was advertising for two career-grade planners. By offering career grade planner roles, it was hoped that this would assist in the retention and development of staff. Planning applications were now being validated within six days. The backlog of planning applications were being managed at the present time.

The Committee further noted that improvements in the planning data dashboard would provide Members with additional data so that performance could be further analysed.

The Committee noted that performance data could not always represent current performance due to changes in IT packages and software – this affected how performance levels were displayed.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of ensuring that levels of customer service were always high, regardless of performance data trends.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
31/August2021

The Committee noted that a training session would be facilitated at a future date around performance trends and measures.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the technology supporting cashless parking was easy to use and did not inconvenience local residents.

The Committee noted the potential impact of a reduction in grant funding from central Government as time progressed.

The Committee noted that Members would be provided with an update in relation to the proposed broadband upgrades to be delivered across the District.

The Committee noted that a proportion of assigned but yet unspent funds would be assigned to specific projects before the end of the financial year. Members noted that budgets could be rolled forward to subsequent years if funds were not spent in the current financial year.

The Committee noted that despite the increase in costs of green waste collection, the Council had seen an increase in the number of subscriptions for this service.

Having considered the information and having asked officers to clarify a number of matters, the Committee

RESOLVED that

- a) The overall progress on the Council priorities, service delivery and financial performance for 2021-22 Q1, was noted; and
- b) The proposed changes to the performance indicator set were noted.

OS.99 Cotswold District Council Flood Plan

The Committee received a report from the Business Manager for Corporate Responsibility which detailed the draft Cotswold District Council Flood Plan.

The report explained that as a member of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), the Council benefited from a number of county wide, multi-agency Emergency plans. To support the LRF's strategic, high level, multi-agency Flood Plan, templates had been developed for completion by each District Council which would form annexes to the LRF's countywide plan.

The Committee noted that the Flood Plan had not yet been shared with Town and Parish Councils – it had been submitted initially for Member comments before it was then submitted to the Environment Agency. Town and Parish Councils would be included in the consultation process.

The Committee further noted that the County Council had been involved in shaping the template of the document as the lead local flood authority.

The Committee noted that a future Flood Fair could be arranged whereby members of the public and Councillors could attend to interact with specific authorities/agencies and find out what the responsibilities of each were when a flooding event took place.

RESOLVED that the draft Flood Plan was noted.

OS.100 **Climate Change Action Plan (Verbal Update)**

The Committee received a verbal update on the Climate Change Action Plan from the Head of Climate Action.

The verbal update covered the Government's targets around carbon reduction, the rate at which carbon levels had reduced in the District and the difficulties associated with reducing emissions from roads and the heating of private homes.

The Committee noted that the Council's main source of emissions came from the Ubico fleet of waste management vehicles. Work was being undertaken to determine how the emissions generated by the Ubico fleet could be reduced – this included determining if hydrogen power could be utilised in the future.

The Committee noted that the Council had accessed a Government grant to replace carbon intensive heating with more economically friendly heating methods such as air source heat pumps across some leisure sites. This work would be commissioned by March 2022.

Members noted that the Council was working to ensure its housing stock would meet the net zero carbon target.

The Committee noted that carbon literacy training had been made available to Members and Officers.

The Committee further noted that the Council was undertaking work to ensure that procurement processes adhered to the carbon neutral target.

The Committee noted that work was being undertaken to continue the roll-out of charging points for electric vehicles. Work was required to take place in relation to the grid requirements associated with the increasing number of charging points.

The Committee noted the challenges associated with improving the energy efficiency of listed buildings.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the verbal update.

OS.101 **Quarterly Digest (including County Matters)**

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the Quarterly Digest update.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
31/August2021

(END)