



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 23rd February 2015

PRESENT : Cllrs. Lugg (Chair), S. Witts (Vice-Chair), Haigh, Hanman, Wilson, Ravenhill, Field, Taylor, Beeley, Hansdot, Toleman, Pullen, James and Norman

Others in Attendance

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Gravells, Lewis and Dee

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

84. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

85. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no questions from members of the public.

86. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

87. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 3

The Chair welcomed Councillor Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources and Mr Andrew Cummings, Financial Management Accountant, to the meeting.

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Councillor Norman presented Members with a financial monitoring report which set out budget variances, year end forecasts, and progress made against agreed savings targets for the third quarter ended 31 December 2014. The document also highlighted some key performance indicators.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the report, subject to any comments Members wished to make to Cabinet.

Members discussed the following matters:-

1. A Member queried the reason for the overspend of £58K (paragraph 6.1 of the report). Mr Cummings responded that this figure represented the worst case scenario and that the position would become clearer at the end of the financial year.
2. A Member asked how the estimated reserve of £150K arising from surpluses generated from the transfer of assets (paragraph 2.2(3)) would be allocated to regeneration projects. Mr Cummings advised the Member that full details would be reported back at the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

88. HOUSING STRATEGY

The Chair welcomed Councillor Organ, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure, and Ms Helen Chard, Housing Strategy and Enabling Service Manager, to the meeting.

Councillor Organ presented Members with a report which sought adoption and implementation of the final draft of the Council's Housing Strategy following consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the report, subject to any comments Members wished to make to Cabinet.

Members discussed the following matters:-

1. A Member commented that the document was detailed, and that although a number of objectives were set out, that there was no clear 'direction of travel' and questioned how the needs identified in the report would be met in the future. Councillor Organ replied that the strategy linked in with assumptions made in the Joint Core Strategy and the City Plan and that it was difficult to make exact predictions on population growth and the types of housing that would be required in the future. Ms Chard added that it was the intention to produce a summary document which would crystallise the key objectives of the strategy. The Member responded that a summary would be helpful and added that it was important to get the right kind of housing supply to meet the demands of the population.

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2. A Member acknowledged that the strategy in its existing format would provide a comprehensive guide to anyone living outside the City.
3. A Member remarked on the low levels of homeless people who attended drop in sessions at the Cathedral. Another Member pointed out that the definition of 'homeless' extended beyond those living on the street and included anyone who had moved out of a home into cramped or unsuitable accommodation. Councillor Organ acknowledged both these points.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

89. REVIEW OF CULTURAL SERVICES

The Chair welcomed Councillor James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture, Councillor Chatterton, representative from the cross party Member and Officer working group on the Cultural Services review, and Mr Martin Shields, Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods, to the meeting.

Councillor James presented a report detailing the findings of Michael + Partners (consultants) relating to the City and Folk Museums and the Guildhall which had been produced in conjunction with a cross party Member and Officer working group. The report sought approval for various recommendations for implementation and for permission to appoint a project manager. As part of the introduction, Councillor James explained that one of the recommendations relating to the Guildhall 'Creation of a new frontage with box office and cafe bar' would not be pursued as the option was deemed to be unaffordable. Councillor James clarified the reason for this decision. Councillor James thanked the other two City Council Members who had assisted on the cross party working group for the project.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the report, subject to any comments Members wished to make to Cabinet.

Members discussed the following matters:-

1. A Member asked Councillor Chatterton for his opinion on the report. Councillor Chatterton commended the report for its high level of detail and remarked that there were several initiatives which could be implemented fairly quickly to help maximise revenue opportunities at each of the sites.
2. A Member acknowledged the Cabinet's dilemma regarding the decision not to create a new frontage at the Guildhall whilst highlighting the fact that the Guildhall's current entrance was often overlooked by passers-by and asked how the Guildhall could be made more visible. During the discussion the Chair referred to the Committee's recent interaction with students concerning the night-time economy when it had become apparent that none of the students were aware of the existence of the Guildhall. Councillor James referred to Section 3.7 of the report 'Key Recommendations and Opportunities' which listed other initiatives for marketing and promoting the Guildhall and reminded Members that the building was listed which constrained the Council from being able to install neon signs. Councillor

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James added that plans to improve lighting and the illumination of the tree outside the building would help to signpost the entrance.

3. A Member speculated whether another form of signage outside the Guildhall could be considered which was not detrimental to the streetscene and commented that if the offer was attractive that the public would find the venue, irrespective of its location. The Member added that the right kind of cafe bar was a key part of an evening out experience. Mr Shields remarked that as part of the project the location of the cafe bar at the Guildhall would be reviewed with the possibility of moving it closer to the front of the building being explored. This would be a separate piece of work.
4. A Member asked if the County Council's Highways Department was being lobbied to improve street lighting. Councillor James confirmed that the City Centre Investment Fund monies would be used to enhance street lighting and it was intended to ask the County Council Highways Department to provide match funding for the scheme.
5. Two Members asked if there would be improvements to lighting and signage in the car park above the Guildhall. Councillor James replied that upgrades to lighting in the car park had already been addressed in the report and agreed to take forward the suggestion regarding improved signage for the car park.
6. A Member asked if a scale of charges for the different catering venues could be provided in one place. Councillor Chatterton said that this was one of the recommendations in the report which would be implemented. Mr Shields added that a review of pricing structures at the Museums and Guildhall had been carried out to ensure that the sites were operating on a commercial basis.
7. A Member sought clarification on the price of a Museum ticket for a full year. Councillor James confirmed that this was £5.
8. A Member noted that only 10% of the Museums collection was on display and asked whether any initiatives to exploit the potential value of the other assets in the collection had been explored. Councillor James responded that the Council had to be mindful of the fact that the accreditation ranking for the Museums could be affected if any parts of the collection were sold.
9. A Member queried the timescales for implementing the recommendations in the report. Mr Shields replied that meetings would be held shortly with heads of service and that there was a commitment to delivering the recommendations as quickly as possible. An action plan would be drawn up and the consultant would be assisting with the next stages of implementation.

The Committee welcomed the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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90. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 23 MARCH 2015

The Chair reminded the Committee of the Member Training session scheduled for 23 March 2015 and the agenda items which would be discussed at the main Committee meeting which would start at the later time of 19.00 hours.

91. MEMBER UPDATE ON OUTSIDE BODIES' ACTIVITIES

There were no updates on this occasion.

92. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 23 March 2015 at 19.00 hours.

Time of commencement: 18:30 hours

Time of conclusion: 19:20 hours

Chair