



## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MEETING** : Monday, 25th November 2019

**PRESENT** : Cllrs. Coole (Chair), Ryall (Vice-Chair), Dee, Finnegan, Haigh, Hilton, Hyman, Lewis, Organ, Patel, Pullen, Stephens, Taylor, Toleman, Tracey, Walford and Wilson

### **Others in Attendance**

Councillor Cook, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment;

Councillor Norman, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources;

Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods

Head of Policy and Resources

Head of Communities

Community Wellbeing Officer

Democratic and Electoral Services Team Leader

**APOLOGIES** : Cllrs.

### **17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

17.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **18. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING**

18.1 There were no declarations of party whipping.

### **19. MINUTES**

19.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record. Feedback was sought on the Committee's recommendations in respect of the Council Tax Support Scheme. Councillor Norman confirmed that all war pensions would be disregarded under the scheme and that the decision of minimum payments would be deferred until January.

### **20. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)**

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- 20.1 In regard to agenda item 8, a Podsmead resident active in the Podsmead grass cutting scheme asked why the proposed continuation of the scheme referred to one year contracts rather than two. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighborhoods suggested that this could be considered when the item was discussed. This was agreed by the resident.

#### **21. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)**

- 21.1 There were no petitions or deputations.

#### **22. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN**

- 22.1 The Chair informed Members that the meeting that would take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> December would consider the budget only. He further informed Members that there would be a special meeting to consider the review into Marketing Gloucester's governance and financial operations. This would take place on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December.
- 22.2 Councillor Haigh suggested that a review of the Central Gloucestershire Growth Board be undertaken as it was important that the City Council have input. This was agreed by Members.
- 22.3 Councillor Stephens asked what the position on the scrutiny of property investment decisions was and whether a discussion in relation to this be timetabled.
- 22.4 Councillor Hilton queried what developments, if any, had been progressed in respect of 67-69 London Road. It was suggested that an update be provided at the meeting taking place on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020.
- 22.5 **RESOLVED that:-** Subject to the above, that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the Work Programme and Forward Plan.

#### **23. HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY**

- 23.1 Councillor Watkins outlined the key themes and priorities in the report. She stated that the key priorities were to increase supply and improve the existing stock as well as addressing homelessness and rough sleeping. A discussion then took place on the consultation aspect of the report.
- 23.2 Councillor Haigh stated that it was positive to see the strategy and, in terms of banding, welcomed working with the County Council care strategy for the provision of specialist housing. She also stated that the strategy should take a stronger view on types of tenure, consider what 'affordable housing' means and how social housing could fit in to the strategy. Councillor Watkins advised that she would expect greater detail to come in time and agreed that communities should be integrated and not isolated. She further advised that the housing needs assessment was pending. The Head of Communities

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stated that the housing strategy team would like to explore the idea of living rents – rent that is based on someone's ability to pay.

- 23.3 Councillor Stephens stated that it was a very good, high level document. He queried what was meant by the development at Bristol Road – Bristol Road encompassing a large area. In relation to 'Priority 2' and the reference to making best use of existing stock, Councillor Stephens noted that there may be insufficient staff for this and suggested that when the action plan is developed further that resources should be considered.
- 23.4 The Head of Communities stated that further detail would be provided on the development at Bristol Road. Councillor Watkins stated that the reason there was a time frame running through the strategy was so that resources could be considered.
- 23.5 Councillor Hilton asked what a robust regime for Houses in Multiple Occupation would look like and that he believed that the Council was due to implement landlord licensing. Councillor Watkins advised that there would be licensing and that conditions were being checked. Councillor Pullen stated that he was pleased to see the suggestion of landlord licensing, that a scheme should be piloted and that a scheme would fund itself.
- 23.6 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson regarding his not seeing reference to homelessness prevention in the strategy, Councillor Watkins stated that there were discussions to be had with the County Council and partners.
- 23.7 In response to a query from Councillor Patel regarding methodology in calculating the rough sleeper count, the Head of Communities advised that the count was conducted on the same day each year using information from partners to form an estimate. An actual count must be conducted every five years which is why figures varied.
- 23.8 Councillor Watkins clarified that the figure of 28% of children living in poverty when housing costs were included, Councillor Watkins clarified that this was relative poverty and stated that some narrative regarding statistics would be included in the strategy.
- 23.9 **RESOLVED that:-** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

## 24. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ACTIVITY

Councillor Coole vacated the Chair for this agenda item with Councillor Ryall (Vice-Chair) replacing him in the Chair.

- 24.1 Councillor Cook, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced the report and informed Members that it was to agree the renewal of the grass cutting contract in Podsmead. In response to the earlier public question, he advised that, at this stage, a one year contract

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was being considered because of the possibility of transferring operations to the Podsmead Big Local organisation.

- 24.2 Councillor Cook noted that there had been some issues in some larger areas but that a new mower had been acquired from Amey. He further noted that there had been fewer incidences of Anti-Social Behaviour in the area and that those who had undertaken the work were recognized by the community for their work.
- 24.3 Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, stated that there had been good social value from the scheme. She further stated that it had offered opportunities for a number of younger residents and had provided jobs. Councillor Watkins shared her view that it was good to allow communities to come forward with ideas for their own area which is what had been seen in Matson and Robinswood.
- 24.4 Councillor Field in his capacity as ward Member for Podsmead stated that the scheme was a good idea in principle and that he would be keen for it to continue but to observe how it operates. He also stated that, if the scheme were to continue, the young people carrying out the work needed to be considered. Councillor Field shared his view that the work should be diversified with other work such as gardening to be included. He stated that it needed a training scheme attached with wages provided all year round.
- 24.5 Councillor Watkins stated that she was happy to consider a longer contract. The resident from Podsmead stated that there was a need for conservation work to continue in the winter but that this did not happen. She asked if it could be included in the contract. Councillor Cook advised that, in season, Amey's conservation team did such work. He stated that, if finances were available, it would be a good idea for the scheme to include this work.
- 24.6 In relation to exploring such a scheme for Matson, Councillor Coole did not agree with a scheme being introduced in Matson. He advised that this idea was rejected by Matson residents two years ago and he expressed his disagreement that ward councilors had not been approached in regards the proposal to explore introducing a similar scheme.
- 24.7 Councillor Watkins noted that residents had observed the Podsmead scheme and had approached the Council. She could not comment on why Matson residents had not approached the ward Members and that the proposal was merely to explore the possibility of introducing a similar scheme.
- 24.8 Councillor Haigh noted that one of the proposed resolutions was to delegate authority to establish or continue a scheme. She asked who had approached the Council and noted that it could be the same group who had wanted the scheme two years ago. Further, she stated that she would be surprised if this group had done it without other groups in the Matson partnership. Councillor Haigh also shared her view that what was needed was a scheme with rights, pensions and respect at work.

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- 24.9 Councillor Watkins reiterated that the proposal was to explore a scheme in Matson, that the report pointed to social benefit and that the administration was receptive to matters pertaining to employment. Councillor Watkins also stated that she was happy to have the delegation of authority removed.
- 24.10 Councillor Pullen shared his view that, if there was a proposed change to a ward, Members should be briefed. Councillor Watkins advised that there was not a proposed change to a ward – rather it was a discussion to examine if there could be a further trial. Councillor Cook stated that he would be happy for Members to be involved.
- 24.11 Councillor Finnegan stated that it was interesting and positive to hear of the reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- 24.12 Councillor Stephens stated that he was pleased the scheme had been a success in Podsmead and he welcomed Councillor Field's comments. With regard to the contract being for one year, Councillor Stephens shared his view that longer contracts would be preferable as the young employees required security. He stated that he would prefer three years to give certainty to those carrying out the work. With regard to exploring expanding the scheme to Matson, Councillor Stephens stated that he did not see how the community's view had changed.
- 24.13 Councillor Watkins advised that she was happy to explore all options and that the whole of Matson would be part of the consultation process.
- 24.14 Councillor Hilton expressed concern over the scheme's budget. He stated that those undertaking the work were not employed full-time and suggested that if the scheme were to be rolled out to other areas, there would be a risk of providing insecure work. Councillor Hilton advised that he would not support extending the scheme to Matson as the Podsmead scheme should be improved and observed further.
- 24.15 Councillor Lewis informed Members that Quedgeley Town Council organized their own grass cutting and that perhaps it was time to ask Matson if they would like such a scheme again.
- 24.16 Councillor Patel stated that there were many positives and learning points from the Podsmead project. He also stated that he was surprised that Members may appear to want to prevent a community organisation from starting a similar scheme.
- 24.17 Councillor Wilson commented that the Podsmead scheme was a basic service and queried whether there had been any more heavy-duty work that had not been carried out due to a belief that the clearance team would be doing it. Councillor Cook responded that there had been no confusion in regard of the division of duties and that Amey had assisted on one occasion with heavier duty work.

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24.18 Councillor Tracey stated her preference for two or three year contracts. She suggested that a decision should be deferred in order to iron out any difficulties prior to extending the scheme.

24.19 It was recommended that para 2.3 be in report be replaced with:

*To approve plans to explore a further trial of the scheme in Matson & Robinswood ward and any other community which comes forward.*

24.20 **RESOLVED that:-** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that para 2.3 in the report be replaced with:

To approve plans to explore a further trial of the scheme in Matson & Robinswood ward and any other community which comes forward.

## 25. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 2

25.1 Councillor Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, introduced the report. She stated that the Cabinet was hopeful of further positive work. She also advised that planning income had overperformed in the previous year and that there were small scale pressures in the Environment and Culture portfolios. Councillor Norman also advised Members that the reduction in the customer service figure was due to it being adjusted into the transformation figures.

25.2 Councillor Wilson asked:

- why the disposal of the HKP warehouses had been delayed;
- How much was capitalised and recharged to the relocation budget; and
- How had the lending facility to Marketing Gloucester been accounted for.

25.3 The Head of Policy and Resources advised that:

- Bids for the HKP warehouses were being reviewed. As the building was owned by the Canal and River Trust, it would be necessary to negotiate with that organisation;
- Capitalization and recharging figures would be clarified; and
- The lending facility made available to MGL would only be drawn upon when necessary. He further advised that, for accounting purposes, it would be reflected as a debtor and, as such, would not appear as a forecast.

25.4 Councillor Hilton noted the projected overspend in respect of the contract with Amey. He stated that Members had been advised that more funds would be forthcoming. He asked if the expected figure appeared in the report. The Head of Policy and Resources advised that, when the report was written, an agreement had not been reached and that a further figure would be reflected in updated figures.

25.5 Councillor Pullen asked the running costs at the bus station had increased. The Head of Policy and Resources advised that there were higher costs

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incurred in order to maintain the facility to a high standard. He further advised that income would increase due to what the City Council would receive for each departure.

25.6 With regard to the Culture portfolio, Councillor Haigh asked whether a review of the Guildhall (both the building and its operations) had been considered. Councillor Norman stated that part of the newly in post Head of Culture's remit was to conduct such a review.

25.7 Councillor Patel asked how much was awarded in respect of the homelessness prevention grant. He also asked how much income was generated by planning applications. The Head of Policy and Resources advised that he would provide such figures.

25.8 **RESOLVED that:-** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the report.

**26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

26.1 2<sup>nd</sup> December at 6.30pm in the Civic Suite, North Warehouse.

**Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours**

**Time of conclusion: 8.45 pm hours**

**Chair**