



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MEETING** : Monday, 2nd March 2020

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

**Others in Attendance**

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

Councillor Norman, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources

Councillor Morgan, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Corporate Director

Head of Policy & Resources

Democratic & Electoral Services Officer

**APOLOGIES** : Cllrs. Coole, Lewis and Organ

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

### 4. MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** - That the minutes of the meetings held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

### 5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

### 6. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions and deputations.

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**7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN**

- 7.1 The Chair reminded Members that there would be a meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 on the topic of Marketing Gloucester Limited (MGL). Following this, the Committee would be in purdah for the Local and PCC elections to be held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings would resume on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2020.
- 7.2 She asked Committee Members whether they wanted to add any further items to the work programme. Committee Members did not have any further items which they wished to add to the work programme.
- 7.3 **RESOLVED that:** - that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the Work Programme and Forward Plan.

**8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 3**

- 8.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Norman introduced the report. She highlighted that the report tracked the Council's performance on 17 key indicators for Quarter 3 of 2019/20. She explained that appendix 1 sets out the performance data including comparative information from 2018/19, where available. Moreover, where a target exists, this had been included along with a narrative to explain the data.
- 8.2 Councillor Norman outlined that performances with an improving trend included the percentage of complaints that progressed to stage 2, number of major planning applications agreed on time, wait time for face to face contact with Customer Services, and footfall at the Museum of Gloucester. Finally, indicators which were declining in the short term include the staff absence rate and recycling collected. She then invited questions from the Committee.
- 8.2 Councillor Stephens opened the discussion. He stated that the average number of households in B&B accommodation as shown in H24 was disappointing. Councillor Norman responded to say that although there were some positive developments such as the opening of Potters Place, this was an area which needed more work. Furthermore, as the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, she would be happy to look at the business case for opening more facilities.
- 8.3 Referring to HR4 (absence rates), Councillor Wilson queried to what extent working from home would be possible for staff in the event that the organisation was affected by Coronavirus. Councillor Norman explained that working from home was something which was already used by Council Officers, and thus self-isolation whilst working from home would be possible. The Head of Policy and Resources added that all members of staff working at Shire Hall had laptops, and thus would be able to work from home. The situation with the outstations and other areas of the Council would require more thought.

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- 8.4 Councillor Wilson further questioned whether there were any members of staff on zero-hour contracts, and if so, what steps, if any, would be taken to ensure that they would be remunerated. The Head of Policy and Resources replied to say that there were some members of staff who were on zero-hour contracts. Councillor Norman stated that an option would be for these members of staff to receive Statutory Sick Pay if they were affected by coronavirus. However, this would need to be looked at in more detail as the situation evolves.
- 8.5 Councillor Wilson questioned why Performance Indicator CDG8 did not have a corresponding graph. Councillor Norman stated that she would clarify this with the Performance and Improvement Officer and come back with a response.
- 8.6 Councillor Pullen reiterated his concerns about the complaints procedure not being prominent enough on the website, an issue which he had raised in a previous Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting. Furthermore, he was dissatisfied with the response he had previously received from Cabinet Members and Officers on the issue. Moreover, Councillor Patel questioned whether the complaints procedure was not on the 'Contact Us' part of the website like Cheltenham Borough Council. Councillor Norman explained that the concerns surrounding the prominence of the website would be looked at again as part of the Together Gloucester Phase 2 process.
- 8.7 **RESOLVED:** - That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.

## **9. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 3**

- 9.1 Councillor Norman introduced the report. She explained that the report was the current best estimate of the council 's year-end position, and hence the impact on the general fund. Moreover, it was hoped that there would be further positive traction in some service areas before year end. The Quarter 3 report showed a year end position of an increase in the General Fund of £55,000 versus a budgeted position of £91,000 decrease.
- 9.2 Councillor Norman outlined that there were pressures within the report in the Planning and Housing portfolio which at present was forecast to be £527,000 over budget by year end. The reason for this variance, as outlined in 9.2 of the report was the reduction in the current volume of planning applications which were forecast, hence a reduction in income. Similarly, as set out in paragraph 9.3, the department had spent approximately £100,000 in relation to the City Plan and £60,000 for the JCS. Councillor Norman added that whilst this was disappointing, it was worth noting that in the previous year, the Planning and Housing portfolio had outperformed its allocated budget by over £200,000, and had thus helped to balance the overarching Council budget
- 9.3 Additionally, the Environment and Culture and Leisure portfolios were also experiencing small scale pressures within their budgets. Councillor Norman pointed to paragraph 8.4, explaining that report pressures in Culture and

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Leisure could be attributed to lower than budgeted income at Blackfriars, and reduced income from the Guildhall café.

- 9.4 On the other hand, the Regeneration and Economy, Communities and Neighbourhoods and Performance and Resources portfolios were currently forecast to be on budget or underspent by year end. Within Performance and Resources, it was anticipated that there would be a £132,000 underspend this year. This portfolio included the Revenues and Benefit Admin line item and Housing Subsidy figures. With a budget of around £42 million, even the slighted shift could have an impact either way as year-end approaches.
- 9.5 Finally, Councillor Norman explained that as the present report was for Quarter 3, the costs to the Council as a result of MGL entering insolvency proceedings would not be displayed. However, any costs from this would be shown in the year-end financial position. Additionally, as this report was generated for Quarter 3, the Regeneration and Economy portfolio still had a single cabinet member. She informed the Committee that although the finance team had offered to split the portfolio for the year-end report, she had suggested that this was left in its current structure in order to receive a consistent full year picture. After the local elections which were due to be held in May 2020, decisions on that portfolio and other portfolio structures would be made, and a new report format could be created and used.
- 9.6 Councillor Hilton questioned whether the demolition of Bruton Way Car Park had an impact on the other car parks in the City. Councillor Norman stated that Bruton Way Car Park had been occupied by NCP, and the idea was that NCP would vacate the car park, and it would become a service car park. This would be cost neutral for the Council. She stated that there was capacity in the City for parking, for example at Eastgate Car Park. Longsmith Street Car Park was a potential concern in terms of parking. She highlighted that a potential business case for Longsmith Street Car Park was being looked at, however, she could not comment on this at present.
- 9.7 Councillor Haigh asked whether the County Council was proposing to build a 500 space car park. Councillor Norman stated that she was not aware of any proposals by the County Council to this effect.
- 9.8 Councillor Haigh stated that she was disappointed with the persistently reduced income at Guildhall Café. Furthermore, she asked when Members would be made aware of changes to the Guildhall, if any. In her view, Guildhall Café was a lost opportunity, given the potential it had to generate income given the number of visitors that the Guildhall attracted.
- 9.9 Councillor Norman advised that this would be a question for the Head of Cultural Services and the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure. Moreover, it was an issue which could be included into the Overview & Scrutiny meeting for consideration at a future date. Councillor Morgan stated that he had looked at this issue since seeing the figures from the Financial

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Monitoring Q3 report. Improving the Café would require a lot of work alongside the rest of the Guildhall. For example, part of the solution could be to reduce costs.

- 9.10 Councillor Haigh asked for clarity on whether there would be a reduction in quality. Councillor Haigh stated that there would not be a reduction in quality just a reduction in costs.
- 9.11 Councillor Hilton asked for clarification on the GL1 emergency works and tall ships easement in the Capital Programme (Appendix 2). The Head of Policy and Resources explained that the £46,490 was the budget for GL1, whilst the tall ships easement was historic, and was included in error.
- 9.12 Councillor Stephens stated that he would welcome the improvement to the Guildhall. He then asked for further clarification on the forecast £160,000 overspend in relation to IT as outlined in paragraph 7.2. Secondly, he expressed his concern with the £80,000 variance in relation to the Guildhall. He questioned when this would be turned around, and whether the targets were good enough. Thirdly, referring to paragraph 10.2, he queried why the Amey contract indexation was higher than the Council had budgeted for.
- 9.13 The Head Policy and Resources responded to Councillor Stephens as follows. Firstly, the forecasted overspend in IT was in relation to the continued spend on transformation projects. The aim was to balance this out at year end, and to see what could be capitalised on. Councillor Stephens replied to say that it would perhaps be more useful to have a more detailed breakdown of the expenditure within the transformation projects, and information on which, if any, expenses would be recurring. The Head of Policy and Resources explained that there would be a more detailed breakdown of the expenditure in the 2019-2020 Financial Outturn report. In relation to Councillor Stephens' query about the Amey contract indexation, he advised that the higher indexation was a one off due to the fact that the pay element of the indexation was budgeted at 2.5% , but the actual staff working at Amey were lower grade NJC staff for which National Agreement applied an increase of 4.5%. This would lead to an additional pressure for 2019/20.
- 9.14 Lastly, Councillor Norman responded to Councillor Stephens' query about the Guildhall. She explained that the Interim Head of Cultural Services had only taken over the role in November 2019. Thus, it could take some time before changes were put in place. She noted however that the Head of Cultural Services was undertaking work at the Guildhall café. Moreover, an analysis would be carried out to look at why income at Blackfriars Priory was lower than usual. She suggested that, in part, this could be because there were fewer wedding bookings than usual, perhaps, as a result of the building works which were being carried out near Blackfriars. The sight of the building work could have perhaps deterred people from making wedding bookings.

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- 9.15 Councillor Wilson referred to paragraph 5.4 and asked whether this was income lost. The Head of Policy and Resources advised that there was no income lost.
- 9.16 Councillor Wilson pointed to paragraph 10.3, and asked whether the Head of Policy and Resources and Councillor Norman could elaborate on the services and opportunities which had been identified at the Crematorium. The Head of Policy and Resources informed him that this was primarily in relation to expanding the services offered. For example, offering different services such as sunrise services, as well as opening a tearoom. Thus far, these initiatives seemed to be promising, and had added approximately £4000,00 to the Crematorium 's monthly income.
- 9.17 **RESOLVED;** - that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.

**10. CULTURAL STRATEGY UPDATE**

- 10.1 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Morgan, introduced the report and highlighted key elements. Firstly, he brought Members' attention to paragraph 3.3 of the report (strategic performing group). He noted that a meeting was scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 which he would be chairing. He added that the purpose of this would be to look at options of scoping out and then cascading this to other organisations. He stated that he would update the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on this. Secondly, he referred to paragraph 3.6 and stated that the Council would be moving ahead to enable the Culture Trust to expand what they do, and the results would be worth it. In relation to paragraph 3.7, he stated that the Council was having considerable success in raising funds for the Music Works. Councillor Morgan further highlighted paragraph 3.9 which outlined proposals to submit a bid for the City of Culture 2025.
- 10.2 Councillor Hilton expressed his discontent with the proposals to place a bid for the City of Culture 2025. He stated that in prior discussions with Councillor Morgan, he had asked Councillor Morgan to withhold the proposals to place a bid for the new administration until after the May 2020 local elections. Furthermore, he was dissatisfied with the fact that approximately £500,000 would be used towards the bid itself. Moreover, Councillor Hilton stated that he would not support the City of Culture bid at this moment in time. Finally, he asked Councillor Morgan for reassurance that the work being undertaken for the City of Culture bid was merely groundwork for the new administration.
- 10.3 Councillor Morgan outlined that any money for the bid would only be spent after the election. He informed Members that the Culture Trust had recently received £150,000 from the Arts Council. This would provide further resources to look at the City of Culture bid in further detail. Similarly, he suggested the fact that the Arts Council had provided the grant to the City was promising.

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- 10.4 Councillor Hilton questioned whether the £150,000 grant was specifically for the City of Culture bid. Councillor Morgan advised him that it was a more general fund. Councillor Hilton reiterated that he did not support the bid for which he felt the money required was too much, and also suggested that the bid itself felt rushed.
- 10.5 Councillor Stephens was of the view that the decision to pursue the City of Culture Bid was arrogant on the administration's part. In addition, he stated that the bid did not have cross party support as outlined in a letter sent previously to Councillor Morgan. He stated that the administration should take on board recommendations made by the opposition Groups.
- 10.6 Councillor Morgan highlighted that there was support from the Council's partners to pursue the City of Culture bid based on discussions he had with them. He added that the Council's partners saw considerable advantages to running for the bid. The money which would be spent on the bid was not a waste of taxpayers' money, but would help position the City for the bid.
- 10.7 Councillor Stephens asked Councillor Morgan whether he agreed that they should only proceed with the bid with cross-party support. Councillor Morgan stated that he agreed.
- 10.8 Councillor Haigh stated that the Council should not pursue the City of Culture bid. However, improving the cultural offering in the City itself, such as diversity, was welcome. She submitted that the City of Culture was not permanent, and that the focus should rather be on having a sustainable and diverse improvement of the City's cultural offering. Additionally, she believed that any initiative to improve the City's cultural offering should involve residents. Furthermore, she stated that there were other areas which needed to be improved in the City before pursuing a City of Culture bid. Likewise, she queried whether the City of Gloucester should partner with the City of Cheltenham if it did place a bid. In support of this, she pointed to the fact that many of the authorities who had won the City of Culture bid had been unitary authorities, rather than district authorities.
- 10.9 Councillor Morgan advised that the criteria for entering the Bid was still to be confirmed by the Government. He agreed with Councillor Haigh that community involvement in any future arrangements was vital. On the topic of the legacy, he stated that being named City of Culture has some permanence to it, and would raise the bar for the City both in the present and the future. Responding to a query on whether there was capacity to run for the City of Culture bid in terms of the work required, Councillor Morgan outlined that Cabinet would not ask Officers to divert attention away from their work. Rather, the £500,000 required would be raised from partners, and professional capacity may need to be bought in.
- 10.10 Councillor Haigh queried why capacity would need to be brought in, and noted that the City would be competing with places such as Bradford and Lancashire. Furthermore, she was dissatisfied with the idea of buying in

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professional capacity, stating that the Council should not be trying to 'reinvent the wheel'. She suggested that the City of Culture bid should be rooted in the place, and that this would be undermined by buying in professionals from elsewhere.

- 10.11 Councillor Morgan reemphasised that the City of Culture bid was about the people of Gloucester. However, professional assistance would be required.
- 10.12 Councillor Finnegan asked for how long the Interim Head of Culture would occupy the role. She was informed that he would be in role until November 2020. Referring to Councillor Haigh 's earlier comments about the City of Bradford, Councillor Finnegan asked Councillor Haigh if she could provide further details about the city. Councillor Haigh stated that as a City it was a district authority with a good cultural offering. Councillor Finnegan added that she had previously visited Bradford, and she felt that it had as good a cultural offering as Gloucester.
- 10.13 Councillor Stephens reminded the Committee that the meeting should not descend into a debate about the City of Culture bid.
- 10.14 Councillor Ryall asked how the assimilation of former MGL staff into the City Council was going. Councillor Morgan advised that this had been successful so far. Likewise, the staff were working on a detailed programme of festivals and events programme, with a number of events already planned.
- 10.15 **RESOLVED;** - that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report

**11. TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE ROAD MAP**

- 11.1 The Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Cook introduced the report and highlighted key elements. He explained that it was not a detailed strategy at this stage, as it would require a two-stage process.
- 11.2 Councillor Stephens commended the Environment and Ecology forum, and stated that cross-party consensus on the issue at hand was important. He suggested that as a major business, Gloucestershire Airport Limited (GAL) should be included within Gloucester City Council 's 'estate' for carbon accounting purposes, should carbon accounting be adopted in the strategy. In relation to paragraph 3.15, Councillor Stephens' standpoint was that to date there had been little communication of the proposals to members of the general public from the Council. Furthermore, he suggested that the proposals on renewable energy could be enhanced by engaging with Gloucester City Homes (GCH) on what they are doing, if anything on this issue. Additionally, he recommended that any electric car charging should also include Private Hire Vehicles. Lastly, he outlined that he welcomed the social value policy and the report.
- 11.3 Councillor Cook responded to Councillor Morgan as follows. Firstly, he agreed that carbon accounting for GAL was a key consideration, and stated

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that he would be meeting with Cheltenham Borough Council who were a joint shareholder of the company with Gloucester City Council to discuss the issue. Secondly, on the issue of community action, he stated that part of the reason for having the Environment and Ecology forum was to promote community action and to engage with residents on the issue of climate change. Moreover, there were other initiatives on a County level to promote community action, for example, the Youth Climate Panel. He also added that a key part of tackling climate change was about individuals taking steps themselves. Thirdly, Councillor Cook stated that Councillor Stephens had made a good point in relation to extending any renewable energy policies to GCH. He added that the Supplementary Planning Documents Scrutiny would help towards this.

- 11.4 Councillor Haigh stated that the City Plan was clear on a policy compliant scheme in relation to energy efficiency for new homes. However, she was concerned that developers would not see it as a viable scheme. She queried whether anything would be put in place to prevent a situation where Council Officers could negotiate away the energy efficiency requirement for developers. Councillor Cook explained that this a difficult area which would require direction from Central Government. Whilst energy efficiency was included in the City Plan, it would be for Central Government to decide on viability. The issue was that if too much of a demand was placed on developers to incorporate energy efficiency, this would raise the costs for them, and potentially, developers would be deterred from building new homes.
- 11.5 Councillor Haigh asked where the balance was in terms of what could be potentially sacrificed in order to incorporate energy efficiency in new homes. Councillor Cook suggested, as an example, that a policy requiring that all homes must be totally carbon neutral could deter developers.
- 11.6 Councillor Ryall questioned whether there were any Central Government initiatives or grants to enable carbon neutrality. The Climate Change and Environment Manager advised that he was not aware of any Central Government initiatives or grants to this effect. However, he added that this was a rapidly changing sphere, and it could be that these would become available in the future. Councillor Ryall further asked whether the use of electric bikes would always be feasible when taking into account factors such as weather and the extra time which could be required for travel. The Climate Change and Environment Manager informed her that electric bikes could at times be faster than travelling by car, for example, where there is a lot of traffic. Moreover, it was possible that wet weather gear would be provided by the Council. Further, Councillor Ryall asked whether there were any beehives in the City. The Climate Change and Environment Manager outlined that there were some beehives on City Council land, however, they did not belong to the City Council. Councillor Cook stated that there were proposals to plant more flowers to enable insects to propagate.
- 11.7 Councillor Patel highlighted the link between improving air quality and tackling climate change. Thus, air quality was an important consideration in

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the debate. Councillor Cook agreed with this. He added that on a county level there was a Scrutiny Task Group focused on tackling this issue.

11.8 Councillor Taylor queried whether Stagecoach Group which was the main provider for bus services in the City would be switching to renewable electricity. Councillor Cook noting that transport was the remit of the Gloucestershire County Council, informed him that Stagecoach Group was part of a bus group which was committed to not having diesel vehicles after 2025. He added that it was not necessarily feasible to have a fully electric bus. Finally, he stated that buses, even where they were run on diesel could be seen to be better from an environmental perspective as they carry more people than a car.

11.9 Councillor Dee highlighted the success of the flood defence systems in the City. He noted that there had previously been issues with flooding, particularly in areas such as Stroud Road and Grange. However, there had been a lot of money spent on the drainage systems and this had a positive impact, as there was less flooding than there would otherwise have been.

11.10 Councillor Cook thanked Councillor Dee for pointing out the successes in the flood defence systems. He added that investing in flood defence systems had made a lot of difference. Moreover, investments were still being made in this area. Finally, he reminded Committee Members that everyone needed to continue to work hard in order to tackle climate change.

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

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2020.

**Time of commencement: 6:30pm**

**Time of conclusion: 8:00pm**

**Chair**