



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 7th September 2020

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

Others in Attendance

Executive Director at Gloucester Community Building Collective,
Richard Norman
Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources,
Councillor Norman
Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods
Corporate Director (Partnerships)
Head of Policy & Resources
Democratic & Electoral Services Team Leader
Democratic & Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Coole 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 9th of September 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 declarations and petitions.

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

- 7.1 Councillor Haigh requested that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme report is brought before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee prior to being considered by Cabinet on the 18th of November 2020.
- 7.2 Councillor Stephens asked if the devolution white paper could be added to the work programme for consideration once the consultation had concluded.
- 7.3 **RESOLVED:** - that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme report and the devolution white paper are added to the work programme.

8. GLOUCESTER COMMUNITY BUILDING COLLECTIVE

- 8.1 Richard Holmes, Executive Director of Gloucester Community Building Collective (CIC), gave a presentation which looked at some of the work undertaken by the CIC; evaluating impact, the organisation 's structure, and future plans. He then invited questions from Committee Members.
- 8.2 Responding to a question from Councillor Haigh, Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure, stated she was confident that the governance processes at Gloucester Community Building Collective (CIC) were robust. Furthermore, she added that CIC had made a positive impact in the last 12 months.
- 8.3 Richard Holmes responded to questions from Councillor Haigh as follows. He welcomed her input and collaboration on the use of gendered language in future work. In relation to the reference made at page 48 on "communities taking more power and ownership", he envisioned this to be about people becoming more engaged with where they live and greater civic engagement which would in turn lead to more democratic processes. With regard to the future of the CIC, he stated that it was important to identify when the organisation 's help was no longer needed in order to empower communities and prevent dependency. Additionally, he explained that, the Neighbourhood Fund, details of which were in the business plan was still a work in progress. On the topic of governance arrangements, the Corporate Director added that a governance review was being launched and additional directors would be recruited. The aim was to recruit directors based on skills as well as having a diverse group of people representative of the community.
- 8.4 Further, Councillor Haigh asked what the partnership with adult social care would look like. The Corporate Director advised that there would be three secondments with members of the adult social care team at Gloucestershire County Council. She added that the secondments were not about delivery adult social care but rather it was about the team carrying out the same work that the CIC does. She explained that the outcomes which CIC aimed to achieve namely fostering a sense of neighbourliness and supporting communities to support each other also have a positive impact on the adult

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social system. Replying to Councillor Haigh's question regarding funding, Richard Holmes outlined that whilst funding was a challenge, the organisation had so far secured contracts for work which was not being carried out by other organisations. He highlighted that the unique nature of the organisation was an asset. He advised that the long-term plan would be for community organisations to host community builders, and as such, raise capacity in the community enabling CIC to take a step back.

- 8.5 In response to Councillor Pullen's query on the difference between a story and a project in KPI 3.5, Richard Holmes advised that some stories could also be projects and vice versa. Councillor Watkins added that they had listened to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's comments at the meeting held on the 30th of September 2019 on the need to maintain ongoing evaluation of the work that was being undertaken by the CIC. However, there was a play off between the language used in the community setting and the more formal language which may be used by organisations. Ultimately, however, the goal of measuring performance was the same. Councillor Pullen agreed with this, noting the importance of using terms which can be understood by everyone,
- 8.6 Councillor Pullen stated that whilst he was pleased that the fundraising target for this year had already been surpassed, he was concerned that the future targets were perhaps too ambitious. He added that fundraising had become increasingly difficult even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the pandemic had only exacerbated this. Richard Holmes stated that whilst he agreed that the targets were ambitious, there was a shift in the funding market as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic with an increased appetite for bottom up community led projects such as CIC. Nonetheless, he noted the importance of ensuring that the company remained financially lean with a central costs centre. The Corporate Director echoed this, and pointed to the four pillars of the fundraising strategy in the business plan. A significant part of this was strategic funding. She added that the work that CIC carries out is exceptional which puts the organisation in a good position to receive grants. They had already acquired three contracts as a result of fundraising delivering for organisations who were not able to deliver in the same way as CIC. She outlined that the goal was to have a combination of fundraising and income generation. Lastly, she explained that the Board was reviewing finances at every meeting, the organisation had a robust cash flow, and they would ensure it remains financially stable.
- 8.7 Councillor Hilton commented that he had been impressed with the work of two Community Builders in particular, and noted the importance of Community Builders working collaboratively with Members and communities. He then asked how often Community Builders were expected to meet with Members. Richard Holmes advised that this was at the discretion of Community Builders and Members. However, they would welcome the opportunity to connect with Members. In response to Councillor Hilton's question about PCSOs, he explained that the relationship with the constabulary was that the CIC would train PCSOs on community building skills. The COVID-19 pandemic had put the plans to a halt; however, this was now being revisited. Responding to Councillor Hilton's questions around

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governance, the Corporate Director advised that the wider board would be recruited based on skills , quarterly performance meetings were being held with the City Council with the meetings being reports driven with finance reports, performance reports etc. She added that the meetings were robust. Finally, she outlined that whilst the CIC would be happy to attend Overview & Scrutiny Meetings as required, it was also important to remember that CIC was an independent company and the Council had to ensure that it did not unduly influence the company's work.

- 8.8 In answer to Councillor Toleman's query on whether there was a database of street champions available, Richard Holmes explained that this information was not held. The Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods added that in line with GDPR obligations, the data on street champions had only been made available to those key people involved in coordinating efforts only in response to COVID-19 and had not been shared widely. However, they were currently looking into how this information could be held securely.
- 8.9 Councillor Hyman stated that he welcomed the idea behind the CIC, particularly as it enabled greater engagement with community groups. Moreover, he added that he was keen to see someone from the CIC attending the City Council 's Equalities Working Group and perhaps other meetings with other Council bodies to ensure uniformity on matters of equality and diversity. Further, he pointed to the Council 's Equalities Policy outlining that an Equalities Impact Assessment must be carried out for any projects. Similarly, he stressed the importance of adhering to the legal requirements around equality and diversity under the Equality Act 2010. Richard Holmes stated that he agreed with this, and added that everyone must keep working towards this.
- 8.10 Committee Members discussed recommendations.
- 8.11 **RESOLVED** that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMENDS** that:
- 1.) The Overview & Scrutiny Committee receives an annual update report from the CIC.
 - 2.) That the City Council ensures that partner organisations adhere to the Equality Duty, in accordance with the duties required of them by the Equality Act 2010, and that language used in any documents is in accordance with the said duty.
 - 3.) The CIC produces a public facing document and associated public communications which outlines the business purpose of the organisation.

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9. GLOUCESTER RECOVERY PLAN - COMMUNITY RESILIENCE RECOVERY

- 9.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods introduced the report and outlined key elements. She explained that there were several actions which would be taken forward with both partners and communities. This work was the result of the themes emerging from the work carried out during the pandemic, conversations with communities such as the VCS Stocktake, and the work around food such as the Holiday Kitchen and the DEFRA programme. Moreover, there was work being carried out around digital access and inclusion in the event of a second lockdown. Lastly, she outlined that the report was co-produced with community partners around the City.
- 9.2 Responding to Councillor Wilson 's question on transforming the local 'help hub' infrastructure into community leadership/ownership, the Corporate Director advised that the county-wide help hub was continuing in the event of a local lockdown. Both the portal and the helpline remained open. However, the plan was to develop this further through work with the CIC. Moreover, it was hoped that a digital solution could be implemented to better manage the help hub with Street Champions being encouraged to join the group App. Further, a county-wide programme was being proposed with a mechanism for volunteers to be recruited and placed.
- 9.3 Responding to Councillor Haigh, both the Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhood and the Corporate Director stated that they would be happy to change the reference to "Task and Finish Group" on page 72 for clarity. In response to Councillor Haigh 's question on the reference to "joint stewardship of resources", the Corporate Director outlined that this was about better engagement with citizens. The Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods added that there was an opportunity to do more work in the future, for example, community asset transfer particularly around community building. The Council would continue to look at the shared stewardship of community building or the way in which funds were spent in the future. In relation to whether there were any proposals for more formal democratic structures within local communities such as parish councils, the Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods stated that the Council would be open to discussing any such proposals with local communities that wanted these structures in place.
- 9.4 **RESOLVED that:** - the Overview & Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the update.

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10. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 1

- 10.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources, Councillor Norman, introduced the report and highlighted key elements. She then invited questions from Committee Members.
- 10.2 The Cabinet Member for Policy & Resources responded to a number of questions raised by Councillor Wilson. Firstly, she explained that the government was looking to reimburse local authorities for fees and charges in relation to commercial property income which included parking charges. Thus, the report had been generated on the basis that approximately £1 million would be reimbursed through this scheme. She agreed with Councillor Wilson that the report indicated that the Council was in the “best worst position”. However, she highlighted that it was still only quarter 1 with a lot of the overspends and deficits in budgets related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, it was difficult to predict how quickly income would return due to the precarious nature of the pandemic. She added that as it stood the deficit could be taken from the general fund, however, this could change as the year progressed. Regarding Aspire Trust, she advised that the Head of Policy & Resources and the Head of Communities were having regular meetings with the Chief Executive where they considered detailed cash flow statements. She added that they were seeing increases in business quicker than expected in some areas. The Head of Policy & Resources echoed this and added that the cash flow was also improving as more areas of the business opened up. Nonetheless, it was expected that the Council would have to help the Aspire Trust at some stage, and this was reflected in the returns sent to the government. Lastly, the Head of Policy & Resources explained that the corporate funding included interest payable, retain business rates, and council tax, although this was expected to come in on budget.
- 10.3 Councillor Hilton noted that the Council ‘s financial position was more promising than anticipated in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources and the Head of Policy & Resources then responded to several points raised by Councillor Hilton. On the disposal of the HKP warehouses, they stated that the heads of terms had been negotiated between the Council and the purchaser. The next stage of this process would be negotiations with the Canal & River Trust. Regarding the capital receipts, they did not believe that this would apply this year. On the topic of retail parks, whilst retail was a challenging industry, a sinking fund has been negotiated in the deal with St Oswalds Retail Park, and there was a positive Council budget of over £400,000 due to commercial income. St Oswald’s Park was therefore doing relatively well. Some retailers were facing financial difficulties. However, there was provision for this in the financial results. In relation to car parking, they explained that the forecasting assumed a tapered return month on month with capacity expected at around 60-70%. Regarding Gloucestershire Airport, they explained that there had been no request for further help from the Council as a result of the pandemic and normal operations were resuming.

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10.4 The Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources and the Head of Policy & Resources responded to questions raised by Councillor Stephens as follows. They outlined that further details would be provided with regard to paragraph 10.1 and 10.2 of the report and noted that the majority of the costs were related to the lengthening of the garden and waste scheme. Moreover, they would be happy to share with Group Leaders the COVID-19 returns which are submitted to the government. Additionally, the Head of Policy & Resources stated that the £1 million claim to be submitted to the government as outlined in paragraph 4.5 of the report was a reasonable figure based on detailed work carried out alongside the Accountancy Manager. Finally, he advised that work towards the money plan had already started and the plan was for this to come to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December and then to Cabinet in February. He added that there would be some assumptions in the money plan based on the ongoing spending review and the outcome of the local government settlement.

10.5 **RESOLVED that:** - The Overview & Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the report.

11. GLOUCESTER RECOVERY PLAN - FINANCIAL SERVICES RECOVERY

11.1 The Head of Policy & Resources outlined that the key points in the recovery would be a,) to identify the in-year financial implications and b,) to assess the potential median to long-term financial implications of income and expenditure and then identifying review options to meet these. Moreover, to devise a strategy to close the budget gap in-year, for 2021-22, and for the Council medium term financial planning going forward. He added that the Council would keep working to getting a balanced budget for 2021-2022. However, there may be factors affecting the budget as time progresses with the Council perhaps having to make challenging decisions. The Head of Policy & Resources concluded by noting that financial recovery supported all the “R”s of the other service areas with all the recovery work having a financial impact. Thus, it was about ensuring that the Council’s finances could respond to this and ensuring that as more is learnt about the future, how the strategy can be delivered to balance this in 2020, 2021-22 and in the long term.

11.2 **RESOLVED that:** - The Overview & Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the report.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 2nd of November 2020 at 6.30pm

Time of commencement: 6:30pm

Time of conclusion: 8:23pm

Chair