



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MEETING** : Monday, 4th January 2021

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

### **Others in Attendance**

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

Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure, Councillor Morgan

Head of Policy & Resources

Head of Cultural Services

Democratic & Electoral Services Team Leader

Democratic & Electoral Services Officer

**APOLOGIES** : Cllrs.

### **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 meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 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 Councillor Lewis requested that the Cultural Strategy Update report and the final Festivals & Events Programme report are brought before the Committee at a future Committee meeting.
- 7.2 **RESOLVED:** - That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the forward plan and work programme.

**8. REVENUES AND BENEFITS CONTRACT**

- 8.1 Councillor Norman introduced the report and highlighted key elements. Firstly, she pointed to paragraph 3.5 of the report which outlined that the service quality delivered by Civica remained at high levels. In particular, Civica had continued to deliver a good service to the Council during the COVID-19 pandemic despite the increase in workload as a result of a higher number of claimants and business grants which they had brought online and paid out efficiently. Councillor Norman added that for this, Gloucester City Council had been recognised as one of the most highly performing district councils nationally for its ability to process claims and the percentage of payments made. Furthermore, she outlined that the City Council had worked with Civica since 2011 and in that time had developed a partnership with them beyond a supplier/Council one. This had a positive financial impact enabling the Council to make efficiencies and cost savings in the contract, as well as benefitting from Civica bringing the latest efficiencies and policy with regard to how to process changes in national policy, for example, the introduction of Universal Credit. Referring to the draft budget proposals brought before the Committee in December 2020, Councillor Norman advised that there was a proposed cost saving of £100,000 with Civica per annum throughout the life of the 2021-2026 money plan. She then thanked the Civica team for their hard work particularly during the pandemic during which the team had regularly worked outside their normal working hours. Councillor Norman also extended her thanks to the Intelligent Client Officer for her hard work also. Lastly, Councillor Norman reiterated that she believed the contract provided a good service, good value for money with a provider who was well respected and willing to innovate.
- 8.2 Councillor Norman and the Head of Policy & Resources responded to Committee members' questions as follows. Firstly, in answer to the Chair 's question about Hull Framework, the Head of Policy & Resources explained that this was an established single supplier framework which meant that the Council could make a direct award to Civica for procurement purposes. Secondly, on the question of whether a People Impact Assessment (PIA) had been carried out for the new contract, he advised that this was not required as Revenues & Benefits was not a front facing service and the service was not being changed or reduced. However, he would be happy for a PIA to be carried out if Members' wished. Responding to Councillor Wilson's query regarding Option 2 which was not being recommended in the

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report, the Head of Policy & Resources explained that the reason for not going to the open market was not because of the length of time this would take. He added that if the report was rejected by Members, the OJEU process could be done in a shorter timeframe. Nonetheless, awarding the contract to Civica was being recommended rather than this option for the reasons outlined in the report.

- 8.3 In answer to the Chair 's query about KPIs and any benchmarking used to measure performance at Civica, Councillor Norman and the Head of Policy & Resources outlined that the Council had monthly updates and regular service reviews with the Civica on performance and the KPIs within the contract. Overall, Civica provided a good quality service and even when the City Council 's performance was compared to other Councils. Moreover, there were very low numbers of complaints made regarding the service, and even lower numbers of complaints which were then upheld. Finally, the Head of Policy & Resources reiterated that awarding a new contract to Civica through Option 1 would be more prudent and did not believe that the same level of savings could achieved under Option 2.
- 8.4 Furthermore, Councillor Norman replied to queries raised by Councillor Stephens as follows. Firstly, she clarified the timeline of this report coming before the Committee. Secondly, she explained that there was an opportunity for career progression within the Civica contract regarding Apprenticeships. The aim was to hire Apprentices from the local area and to then keep them within the company. Councillor Norman added that this social value element of the contract was welcomed. Thirdly, the Head of Policy & Resources explained that the report had originally been written to take into account EU law, however, this would be adjusted where necessary as the UK had since left the EU. Moreover, further information on Apprenticeships in the Civica contract and a brief outline of the impact of the UK leaving the EU on the contract would be provided to Committee Members. Lastly, on the question of benchmarking, the Head of Policy & Resources outlined that he would try and gain insights from other Councils to better understand how well Gloucester was performing in comparison to them. He also proposed that he could share the latest monthly report from Civica with the Committee further highlighting that there is detailed monitoring of the performance of the contract. The Chair stated that this would be welcome as well as any further information available on benchmarking from other Councils noting that LG Inform available through Local Government Association could be useful for this.
- 8.5 Councillor Pullen raised a number of points which the Head of Policy & Resources responded to in turn. With respect to whether services and jobs provided under the new contract would remain in Gloucester, he advised that since the Council and Civica entered into a contract in 2011, the aim had always been to protect the jobs and keep them local – the contract with Civica had ensured that this happened, and this would not change under the new contract. He added that an on-demand service was used as required, but overall, the contract and jobs remained in Gloucester. Further, when the on-demand service was used this was costed and agreed beforehand with the level of resource agreed with the Contract Manager and Head of Service.

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A contract change notification put in place whilst the project was in hand. Under an in-house service the Council would have to procure any on demand services separately and in this regard the contract with Civica was also beneficial.

8.6 The Chair proposed a recommendation.

8.7 **RESOLVED** that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMENDS** that:

- 1.) A full People Impact Assessment is carried out in respect of the new contract with Civica UK Ltd. Furthermore, the Committee asks that this PIA is circulated to its Members.

## **9. FESTIVALS AND EVENTS PROGRAMME**

9.1 The Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure, Councillor Morgan introduced the report and highlighted key elements. He reminded Committee Members' that this report was in draft form, and thus could be subject to revision as required, particularly in light of any changes to the COVID-19 guidelines. He added that a meeting had been set up between Council Officers and various stakeholders and partners on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 to decide whether the Bright Nights Festival would proceed either in part or in full. Following this, further details would then be circulated.

9.2 Councillor Morgan then responded to Members' questions as follows. In answer to Councillor Hilton he outlined that, on balance, the City Centre was considered the best location for the Gloucester Goes Retro event. Moreover, having a City Centre location for the event helped to raise the City 's profile and image. Regarding the Tall Ship Festival, he stated that the proposal was for this to go ahead during the May bank holiday weekend unless there were changes to the COVID-19 guidelines and if there was any evidence that it could not be held successfully in line with COVID-19 restrictions. He added that the Head of Cultural Services had in depth discussions with contractors to implement measures to ensure the event was held in line with COVID-19 restrictions. Both Councillor Morgan and the Head of Cultural Services reiterated that that the date of the event could be changed should there be any change to COVID-19 guidelines to this effect.

9.3 Councillor Hilton stated that whilst he supported Gloucester Goes Retro and wanted to see it continued, he remained concerned that it had a potential negative impact on trade in the City, and suggested that data could be collected for this year 's event to measure this. Councillor Organ responded to say that he was pleased to hear there was support for the event. However, in contrary to Councillor Hilton 's suggestion the event was designed to increase tourism and footfall in the City, and it had the benefit of bringing people to the doorsteps of the City 's businesses and organisations. He added that evidence suggested that the event actually increased revenues for businesses rather than the opposite. Further, he outlined that key businesses and organisations such as Gloucester BID supported the event.

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In terms of the location of the event, he stated that the use of the gate streets was important as they were closely linked to the City 's history and were part of the overall attraction of the event. Lastly, he explained that the event would only be success if businesses supported it and those who have supported the event in the past have themselves benefitted.

- 9.4.1 In response to Councillor Ryall 's query Councillor Morgan stated that firstly, 2020 had been a learning curve in terms of having to adapt to the ever-evolving COVID-19 pandemic. As such, some of the cultural events had been moved online and this was something which could be built upon in 2021. The Council was aiming to be flexible and this was reflected in the budget, with those in the creative industries being invited to submit ideas for events during this period with the Council providing funding. Secondly, in answer to Councillor Ryall 's question about events geared towards health and physical fitness, he outlined that Active Gloucestershire had provided funding towards some events which encouraged people to get outdoors such as Of Earth and Sky and Bright Nights Festival. He added that the Council placed importance on these types of events which encouraged physical activity and had thus been able to secure funding from Active Gloucestershire for example. Councillor Ryall stated that she would like to see more events focused on physical wellbeing, health and fitness.
- 9.5 Responding to Councillor Lewis, Councillor Morgan agreed that the City needed an event/s to bring interest and activity in Gloucester once the proposed lockdown restrictions had been lifted and if the COVID-19 guidelines at the time permitted such an event/s. He further outlined that he would like to see Gloucester Park utilised for this. Nonetheless, whilst there was funding in the budget available for this there was still a lot of uncertainty on the future landscape as a result of the pandemic. The Chair echoed the comments around the park being a good location for events.
- 9.6 With regard to questions raised by Councilor Pullen on the Tall Ships Festival, Councillor Morgan outlined that the Council 's investment and potential liability for the Tallships event was limited to £50,000. Further, the Gloucester Shanty Festival was an integral part of the TallShips Festival in 2020 and the City Council was in discussions to potentially hold this event again. In terms of ticket pricing of the TallShips festival, he advised that this would be decided with the events management company in conjunction with the City Council and Partners. The Head of Cultural Services added that the contract with Richmond Event Management Ltd was for 2021 with the option to extend this for future years if it was mutually beneficial. As such, the Council was not at risk as it had not committed to the contract beyond 2021, and could terminate the contract following the 2021 festival if necessary. This provided flexibility for both parties, but also provided an opportunity for the company build on its work in future years. He added that there had been a robust procurement process with Richmond Management ultimately chosen.
- 9.7 Finally, Councillor Morgan responded to Councillor Pullen and Councillor Stephens as follows. In response to Councillor Pullen he stated that the City

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Council was working closely with Richmond Event Management Ltd and it was not in anyone's interests to outprice the City's residents. Thus, any discussions would be mindful of this. Responding to Councillor Stephens' query about charging at the foreground last year which was a part of the festival, he stated that he was not sure if there were plans for a foreground at this year's festival, but the Council and Richmond Event Management Ltd were mindful of some of the lessons learnt from last year's event. Overall, however, last year's festival had been well-received.

9.8 **RESOLVED** that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee **NOTES** the report.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2021.

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

**Time of conclusion: 7:46pm**

**Chair**