



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 9th January 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Field (Chair), Pullen (Vice-Chair), Durdey (Spokesperson), Ackroyd, Campbell, Castle, Dee, Evans, Gravells MBE, Hilton, Hudson, Kubaszczyk, Sawyer, Wilson and Zaman

Others in Attendance

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

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman.

Director of Policy and Resources.

Managing Director of Gloucestershire Airport Ltd.

Chairman of Gloucestershire Airport Ltd.

Policy and Development Officer.

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer.

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. O'Donnell

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

74. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

75. MINUTES

75.1 The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer referred to minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2022 and advised that since this meeting, the Transfer of Sites in Podsmead to Enable the Regeneration of the Estate report had been made public. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members

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agreed that the full minutes of this meeting should also be made public accordingly.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 28th November and 5th December 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

76. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

77. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

78. ACTION POINT ITEM

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the updates.

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

79.1 The Chair introduced the latest version of the Council Forward Plan and invited suggestions as to any items Members wished to add to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme. The Chair suggested that the Committee may wish to consider the Cultural Strategy Update and Equalities Action Plan, and it was agreed that these items would be added to the agendas for the meetings on 27th February and 27th March respectively.

79.2 The Chair also suggested that the Committee consider the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule and Members agreed that this item should be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for the meeting on 5th June 2023.

79.3 Councillor Hilton queried whether the Committee could receive an update on the commitment to webcast Council meetings. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman, agreed that she would be willing to provide an update to the Committee in due course and it was agreed that this update would be requested at the meeting on 27th February.

79.4 Councillor Gravells referred to his previous request for a briefing on the Here to Help reporting facility. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that she was committed to the session, however the City Council was in the process of recruiting a new Transformation Manager and it had been suggested that this session take place once the Transformation Manager was in post to provide a forward-thinking perspective as well as an update on the current position.

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- 79.5 Councillor Gravells expressed the view that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive an interim update on Here to Help with an additional update from the new Transformation Manager when they were appointed if necessary. Councillors Pullen and Hilton noted their agreement with Councillor Gravells and it was agreed that the item be added to the agenda for the meeting on 27th March.
- 79.6 Councillor Norman highlighted that it was important to factor in the outcome of the recent Peer Review within the session and confirmed that she had not yet seen the draft Peer Review Report. Councillor Pullen commented that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should also consider this report and Members agreed that the Peer Review Report should be added to the Work Programme.
- 79.7 Councillor Hilton noted that a decision on the City Council's Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bid was expected towards the end of January and requested that this update be added to the next available Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting once the City Council had been advised of the decision.
- 79.8 It was noted that a Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been arranged for Monday 13th March 2023. The Chair explained that this meeting would be a Transport Scrutiny Session with senior Officers from Gloucestershire County Council's Transport team. The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer also noted that colleagues from Gloucestershire NHS Trust had agreed to attend the meeting on 27th March to provide an overview of the new Integrated Care System.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be amended to reflect the above and
- 2) To NOTE the Work Programme.

80. CAR PARKING - TARIFF INCREASE REPORT

- 80.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman explained that the report proposed to review and update the current car park tariffs and car parking zoning across the city. Councillor Norman advised Members that a change had been made to the report following advice from the Monitoring Officer, who had confirmed that this was a Cabinet decision and that any recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be debated by Cabinet on 11th January.
- 80.2 Councillor Norman confirmed that the council understood the importance of car parking sites to the development of the city. She noted that the last amendment to the City Centre car park tariffs took place back in 2017, and that over the last five years the Retail Prices Index (RPI) had increased by 28.5% and the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) had increased by 18.5%. As a

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result of these inflationary increases and the increased costs of staffing, cleaning and ongoing maintenance, Councillor Norman confirmed that the council needed to increase car parking charges.

- 80.3 Councillor Norman advised Members that the Car Parking Tariff Review had led to the proposed amendments to the car park tariffs which if approved would lead to the standardisation of parking charges across the car parks in the current parking Zones 1 and 2, and the removal of the 1-hour tariff to encourage longer stays by visitors to the city centre. She noted that parking charges for council owned car parks were still considerably cheaper than privately owned car parks, even with the proposed increases. Councillor Norman thanked officers for undertaking detailed analysis, and confirmed that much of this modelling had taken place during the challenging period of recovery from the cyber incident.
- 80.4 The Chair thanked Councillor Norman for the report and acknowledged that there was a tension between encouraging visitors to travel into the city centre and meeting the City Council's net zero aspirations.
- 80.5 Councillor Wilson referred to the proposed Car Parking Tariffs in Appendix 1 and observed that the proposed tariff increase for residents parking for 1 hour or less would be significantly higher than the other bands. He asked whether thought had been given to a more moderate increase across the bands. Councillor Norman confirmed that during their analysis, officers had considered data from authorities with a similar size and economic make up to Gloucester and that many authorities did not provide a 1-hour parking option. She noted that the proposed removal of the 1-hour tariff might provide visitors with an incentive to make other retail visits.
- 80.6 In response to further comments from Councillor Wilson regarding 1-hour tariff options still being offered by some authorities including Cheltenham and Worcester, the Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that he was aware that Worcester City Council were also intending to undertake a review of car parking.
- 80.7 In response to an additional question from Councillor Wilson regarding on-street parking provision from Gloucestershire County Council, Councillor Norman confirmed that short stay on-street parking was available in designated areas if residents needed to make a short visit to the city centre, and residents also had the option to use public transport as an alternative means of travelling into the city.
- 80.8 The Chair asked whether there was an option to change the car parking tariffs before the biennial review in the event that the new car parking tariffs had an adverse impact. Councillor Norman confirmed that the decision could be reviewed at any time. She advised Members that car parking data was reviewed on a monthly basis and that this data would also be assessed as part of the routine quarterly financial monitoring reviews which would ascertain whether there were any changes to income.

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- 80.9 Councillor Pullen asked whether the council had consulted with car park users, residents, and local businesses. Councillor Norman explained that the council had not undertaken a consultation exercise. She reiterated that the council had not made amendments to car park tariffs since 2017 and that with the increased costs of staffing and materials as a by-product of the cost-of-living crisis, the increases were necessary if the council wanted to continue investing in the maintenance of city centre car parks and implanting changes such as increase electric car charging points.
- 80.10 Councillor Pullen asked for further information on the analysis which had been undertaken on the removal of the 1-hour tariff and asked whether officers had allowed for a reduction in income should the number of visitors making use of the car parks decrease. Councillor Norman confirmed that modelling undertaken by officers had been modest, and a decrease in car parking usage as a result of individuals choosing not to use council owned car parks because of the tariff increase had been taken into account during this analysis. The Director of Policy and Resources further confirmed that this risk had been taken into account.
- 80.11 Councillor Dee asked whether consideration had been given to removing zones entirely and standardising the car parking tariffs for all council owned car parks. Councillor Norman explained that zones had been created to reflect car park popularity. She noted that the analysis had shown a negligible difference between Zone 1 and 2 in terms of usage and the report therefore proposed to combine these into a single zone, however the car parks in Zone 3 were still outliers and there was phased pricing to reflect this.
- 80.12 In response to a further question from Councillor Dee regarding the opportunity for increased revenue if the tariffs across all car parks were standardised, Councillor Norman noted her concern that this might stop visitors from utilising car parks in the current Zone 3. She confirmed that she would not rule out future changes but felt that the recommendations in the report were a reasonable set of changes.
- 80.13 Councillor Hilton queried whether the changes would come into effect from the 11th January if Cabinet accepted the recommendations, or whether they would come into force on 1st April 2023. Councillor Norman confirmed that they would come into effect from 1st April.
- 80.14 Councillor Hilton referred to the narrative at 9.3 in the report and asked whether the council was confident that the proposed changes would generate the estimated £125k. The Director of Policy and Resources responded that this figure was based on the analysis of the information officers had access to at the time and was based on the best estimate. He noted that the monthly data reports would monitor the situation and any adverse effects, however these were not expected.
- 80.15 In response to a further query from Councillor Hilton as to whether Members could make amendments to the Council Budget to adjust the proposed fees

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and charges if they felt it necessary, Councillor Norman confirmed that the option to make suggested changes to the budget ahead of the full Council meeting in February was open to opposition parties. She also noted that the Finance team were happy to meet with Group Leaders to discuss any proposed budget amendments.

- 80.16 Councillor Hilton asked whether the City Council had consulted with Gloucestershire County Council on the proposed tariff increases. Councillor Norman confirmed her understanding that a formal consultation with the County Council had not taken place, however she noted the County Council did not necessarily consult with the City Council when taking decisions around their parking provision. It was her view that the number of visitors opting not to use City Council car parking would be limited as they were still the cheapest car parks in Gloucester.
- 80.17 Councillor Durdey expressed the view that the increase in tariff from 1-hour was a modest one and that visitors who were minded to shop in Cheltenham instead would likely weigh up fuel costs for travel compared with parking locally. He asked for clarification as to how often the new tariffs would be reviewed. Councillor Norman commented that the administration had previously been reluctant to review parking charges however with the rising inflation costs, it was now necessary.
- 80.18 The Chair suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee request an update on the impact of the proposed tariff increase. A discussion ensued and Councillor Norman confirmed that she would be happy to accept a recommendation from the Committee to include a specific paragraph on the impact of the car parking tariff increase in future quarterly Financial Monitoring reports.

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

- (1) Additional narrative be added to future quarterly Financial Monitoring reports on car parking usage and income performance following the proposed car park tariff increase.

81. ANNUAL REPORT FOR ENERGY COSTS AND ENERGY REDUCTION PROJECTS

- 81.1 The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Richard Cook, introduced the report and confirmed that its purpose was to inform Members of the council's energy costs and projects to reduce energy usage. He advised Members that Cabinet was being asked to resolve to note the council's energy usage and consumption from April 2021-22 and that future reporting would focus on energy saving initiatives and projects by the Climate Change Manager.
- 81.2 Councillor Cook explained that one of the key objectives of the Energy Management Strategy was a commitment to yearly monitoring of energy

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costs, however due to the significant changes to the council's property portfolio with the completion of the Kings Square development, occupation of void units post-Covid-19 and the increased use of cultural and leisure facilities, this was no longer the best means of demonstrating improvements. Councillor Cook further advised Members that the council could no longer commit to reducing its annual spend on energy by £50k per annum with the property portfolio increasing, the council's Warm Spaces initiative and people returning to work in the city centre.

- 81.3 Councillor Wilson referred to the narrative at 3.6 and 3.7 in the report concerning commodity prices and commented that it was good to note that the City Council had procured commodity prices for 2023/24 at 61% below current market rates. He asked when the council's contract with West Mercia Energy (WME) was initially put in place, and when the council was required to negotiate a new contract. The Director of Policy and Resources agreed to follow-up this information and provide the committee with clarification in due course.
- 81.4 In response to a query from Councillor Durdey as to whether the City Council was considering the installation of solar panels on its property, the Director of Policy and Resources referred to recent projects at Plock Court and the Guildhall roof refurbishment and provided assurances that the council would always look to make sure its buildings were as climate friendly as possible. He also confirmed that officers would continue to monitor grant funding opportunities to help facilitate these improvements.
- 81.5 Councillor Pullen referred to the St Oswalds Retail Park and asked whether consideration had been given to installing solar panels on the B&Q roof. The Director of Policy and Resources noted that this was likely to provide efficiency benefits for B&Q rather than the council but confirmed that the council could open discussions regarding their intentions.
- 81.6 Councillor Sawyer referred to the data at 9.1 in the report and observed that gas made up 39% of the City Council's fuel use. She asked whether there were any plans to try and reduce reliance on gas fuel. Councillor Cook explained that the council used the most economic fuel where appropriate and noted by way of example that gas fuel was the most economic means of heating the pool facilities at GL1 Leisure Centre. He confirmed that the council would consider more environmentally friendly alternatives wherever possible when they became available in the future.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the report.

82. GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL PLAN 2022-24 UPDATE

- 82.1 Councillor Cook introduced the report and informed Members that it provided an update on the delivery of key projects and commitments outlined in the Council Plan 2022-24 which was approved unanimously by Council in January 2022. He reminded Members that the Council Plan included three priorities to help achieve the City Council's vision of a greener, fairer, better

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Gloucester, namely building greener, healthier and more inclusive communities, building a sustainable city of diverse culture and opportunity and building a socially responsible and empowering council.

- 82.2 Councillor Cook stated that the Council Plan set out 45 actions split equally across the three priorities. He noted that of these actions, 6 had been completed, 34 actions were expected to complete on time and 5 actions were currently delayed.
- 82.3 In terms of progress made in implementing the Council Plan priorities, Councillor Cook referred to the opening of the Learning Hub at the Forum in August 2022, the Kings Square regeneration project which had been completed and opened back in Spring 2022, the seamless transition to the new waste partnership with Ubico and the successful bid for capital investment funding from Arts Council England for improvements to cultural venues in the city. Councillor Cook felt that all of these achievements ought to be celebrated.
- 82.4 The Chair asked Councillor Cook to expand on plans to implement the 5 delayed actions. Councillor Cook explained that in relation to the development of Wessex House, the site was currently being used as a construction compound for the forum development and an options appraisal for the site was due to be commissioned within the current quarter to inform a planning application. Councillor Cook confirmed that the Home Improvement Agency would be implemented through a series of key steps throughout the coming year. With regard to the Matson and Podsmead regeneration, Councillor Cook explained that officers were working with Gloucester City Homes (GCH) on the Podsmead regeneration scheme however there were limitations with the Matson regeneration as GCH did not have the funding to progress the scheme as originally planned. He noted that the other delayed actions related to the digital strategy which had been delayed as a result of the cyber incident experienced by the council in December 2021.
- 82.5 Councillor Hilton requested further information regarding the development of Wessex House and asked for estimation as to when a report was likely to be brought forward on the options appraisal for the site. Councillor Cook confirmed that the options appraisal was likely to take place during the first quarter of the year and that officers would be very willing to discuss the matter with ward Members and hear their views.
- 82.6 Councillor Pullen referred to the key action to set up an in-house Home Improvement Agency to support vulnerable and disabled residents to remain in their homes and queried whether Gloucestershire County Council were expected to have any involvement as the responsible authority for adult social care. Councillor Cook confirmed that he would check this with officers in the Housing team and that Councillor Pullen would be provided with clarification in due course.
- 82.7 Councillor Gravells expressed the view that Home Improvement Agencies were very helpful in facilitating changes and queried whether consideration

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could be given to a jointly funded scheme with the County Council. Councillor Cook noted that the issue causing the delay was expected to continue until March 2023 and that there would be greater clarity on how the project would be implemented thereafter. He commented that if there were opportunities to seek funding alongside the County Council then officers would look to pursue them.

- 82.8 In response to a query from the Chair regarding the recruitment of a Food Inclusion Officer, Councillor Cook confirmed that this position had been filled internally.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the report.

83. GLOUCESTERSHIRE AIRPORT UPDATE

- 83.1 The Managing Director of Gloucester Airport provided an overview of the history of the airport, the main activities, future priorities of the airport and green initiatives including Gloucestershire Airport's low carbon and jet zero strategies.

At this point in the meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that the press and public be excluded during the following discussion on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of business to be transacted or the nature of those proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during the discussion there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A (paragraph 3) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the presentation as per the exempt minutes.

84. TASK AND FINISH GROUP DISCUSSION

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee establish a Task and Finish Group to investigate mould and damp issues in Gloucester's social housing.
- 2) That the proposed membership of the Task and Finish Group be approved.

85. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 30th January 2023.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.34 pm hours

Chair