



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 6th September 2021

PRESENT : Cllrs. Field, Pullen, Lewis, Wilson, Ackroyd, Castle, Dee, Durdey, Evans, Hilton, Kubaszczyk, Organ and Tracey

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

Managing Director
Head of Policy and Resources
Democratic and Electoral Services Team Leader
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. S. Chambers and O`Donnell

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

19. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 5th July 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

21. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

22. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

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There were no petitions and deputations.

23. ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- 23.1 The Chair introduced the new agenda item and explained that the purpose was to provide Members with an update on action points arising from previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. He noted that a useful infographic had been provided to help Members signpost homelessness advice and explain the support available for people who had been made homeless. The Chair also noted that a breakdown of lost income in Cultural and Leisure Services had been provided and that the figures were as expected due to Coronavirus restrictions enforcing the closure of cultural venues. He noted his hope that that these figures would improve going forward, in line with the lifting of these restrictions.
- 23.2 Referring to the Gloucester Goes Retro Festival which had taken place on Saturday 28th August 2021, Councillor Tracey expressed the view that it was an excellent day and asked where the money collected through charity collection boxes would be donated. Councillor Organ confirmed that the money would be donated to the Mayor's charities, and recipients would include the local MS Therapy Centre, Cancer Research UK and the Alzheimer's Society.
- 23.3 Councillor Lewis asked whether the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could have sight of the footfall figures for recent events which were taking place in the city, including the Gloucester Retro Festival, Gloucester Day and Gloucester Pride Day. It was explained that there were clicker systems in place to monitor the number of people attending these events, but Members acknowledged that it would be difficult to provide an exact figure. It was agreed that officers would request that estimated footfall figures be included in future Festivals and Events reports for the Committee to note.
- 23.4 The Chair explained that the Group Leads had pointed out that there was no formal avenue to update Members on the outcomes of Council Motions, and whether actions which had been agreed during Council meetings had been followed through. He asked for views from the Committee as to whether Members would like this to be included as a regular standing agenda item at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.
- 23.5 Referring to the timescale for asking officers for updates on the actions resulting from Council Motions, Councillor Pullen noted that the Group Leads had proposed a 6-month time frame between a motion being accepted and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requesting an update.
- 23.6 Councillor Wilson noted his support for the idea and commented that it would be useful to have a review of action points from previous Council meetings.
- 23.7 Councillor Hilton noted that he was in favour of the idea and shared the view that it would be useful for the updates to be in the public domain so that any members of the public who were interested in the outcomes of Council Motions could easily find them. Councillor Hilton also suggested that the

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Committee ask for concise updates so as not to add excessively to officers' workloads.

- 23.8 Councillor Lewis suggested that the Committee only request updates on Council Motions which had been accepted and it was agreed that this would be added to future Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas as a standing item.
- 23.9 Councillor Hilton referred to the update provided on the installation of external defibrillators (3) and asked for a timeframe as to when discussions were likely to take place with ward Councillors for the areas where defibrillator gaps had been identified. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment noted that £6,000 had already been set aside and expressed the view that it would be sensible to use this funding which had been made available. The Chair noted that Councillors were occasionally approached by community organisations, such as local football teams, and commented that there may be a willingness from the community to get involved. It was agreed that an update on discussions with ward Members would be provided in due course.

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

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

- 24.1 The Chair introduced the latest version of the Council Forward Plan and invited suggestions from Members as to items which they would like to see on the Work Programme over the coming months.
- 24.2 Councillor Hilton requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Future of Tourism and Destination Marketing Team report and it was agreed that this item would be added to the Work Programme for the meeting on Monday 1st November 2021.
- 24.3 Councillor Hilton also asked whether the Committee could examine the report relating to the disposal of the public open space at Cross Keys Rest Garden. He noted that he was interested in ensuring that due processes were followed and suggested that the Committee could consider whether processes needed to be more robust going forward.
- 24.4 The Managing Director noted that the Cabinet had previously decided to defer the item as further work needed to be undertaken to allow Cabinet Members to consider the processes which were followed in relation to the disposal of the land.
- 24.5 Councillor Hilton expressed concern that the developer had undertaken work on the land whilst the public consultation was still ongoing and noted his view that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should consider this item so that

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Committee Members could also understand the processes and be reassured that the correct protocols were followed.

- 24.6 The Leader of the Council explained that the occupation was an error on the part of the Developer and that as soon as officers learned of the Developer's action, the Council intervened to instruct them to stop work at once which they then did. The Leader of the Council reiterated that Cabinet had asked to review the matter and that Cabinet Members would consider the report at a future meeting. It was agreed that the Cross Keys Rest Garden report would be added to the Work Programme and a date would be confirmed in due course.

RESOLVED –

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

25. MEMBERSHIP OF UK100 AND GLOBAL COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR CLIMATE AND ENERGY

- 25.1 The Leader of the Council introduced the report and explained that its purpose was to consider whether Gloucester City Council should join the membership of the UK100 network, which would involve bringing forward the City Council's net zero carbon commitment by five years to 2045, and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. The Leader of the Council stated that the Council had declared a climate emergency back in 2019, and noted that it would be sensible for the City Council to bring forward Gloucester's target of net zero by 2045 alongside the County Council.
- 25.2 The Leader of the Council explained that UK100 is a network for locally elected leaders who had committed to join the effort to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. He confirmed that the administration had an ambition to be at the leading edge of climate change action and noted that joining the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy would help the Council maintain a long-term vision to combat climate change.
- 25.3 The Chair noted his endorsement of the report and commented that in his view, it made sense to align with the County Council as the responsible authority for highways. The Chair expressed the view that the Council faced a conflict between welcoming income from parking as this contributed to footfall in the city, and tackling climate change. He asked the Leader of the Council whether the administration had plans for encouraging the use of public transport.

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- 25.4 The Leader of the Council referred to the predicted increased use of electric cars over the coming years and noted that one option might be to install more charging points in off-street carparks in the city.
- 25.5 Councillor Wilson welcomed the proposals and asked for further information about how the organisations would engage with the Council and how much of a role the Council would be expected to play. In relation to the mandatory monitoring reports referred to at 3.8(2) and 3.12, Councillor Wilson asked whether these reports could be combined to make the best use of resources.
- 25.6 The Leader of the Council noted that the City Council had only recently appointed a Climate Change Manager and he had not yet seen details about the level of engagement expected from local authorities. The Managing Director confirmed that he was not aware of any conflict between the two reporting systems but explained that if the Council were to become a signatory to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the organisation would provide a framework for the Council to follow. The Managing Director noted that this would provide a structure to assist the Council develop a Sustainable Energy Action Plan. He also noted that the Climate Change Strategy which the Council had chosen to adopt had been used by other cities.
- 25.7 In response to a question from Councillor Pullen about the Council's climate change targets, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the targets were already set out in the report. He noted that although authorities may have the same targets, such as reaching net zero carbon by 2045, Councils may have different proposals on the steps and processes to meet those targets.
- 25.8 Councillor Hilton referred to paragraphs 3.9 and 3.14 in the report confirming that there were no membership fees for joining UK100 and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. He expressed the view that a lack of joining fee was unusual and invited comments from the Leader of the Council.
- 25.9 The Leader of the Council responded that it was possible that the organisations had received funding from central Government to support their funding models. The Managing Director further explained that with a network of business support, it was possible that they received private sector and central government subsidies.
- 25.10 In response to a further question from Councillor Hilton about how useful the annual reports would be for UK100, the Leader of the Council commented that regardless of whether or not the reports were useful for UK100, the reports would certainly be useful for the Council as they would help the Council measure its own performance against the climate change targets and also its performance against neighbouring Councils.

RESOLVED that –

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMENDS** that

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- (1) When this item is considered at the Council meeting on 23 September 2021, further details be provided as to the funding models of the UK100 network and Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.

26. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 REPORT

- 26.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources introduced the report and confirmed that the purpose was to provide an update on the Council's current financial position against the agreed budget for the 2021/22 financial year. She confirmed that the forecast for the year-end position for the current financial year was an increase to the General Fund balance of £173k against a budgeted increase of £123k, resulting in a surplus of £50k.
- 26.2 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that there were significant variances in budget between Cabinet portfolios. She noted that the forecast variance for the Performance and Resources portfolio was currently £1,560m. Referring to the £30m of Housing Subsidy payments, she confirmed an expected budgetary pressure of £183k but confirmed that this would be balanced out by other portfolios. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources expressed the view that she was cautiously optimistic about the Quarter 1 figures.
- 26.3 Councillor Pullen referred to the reduced income from parking outlined at 5.4 of the report. He noted that more people may be using public transport for environmental reasons and commented that there was less footfall in the city generally as many people were still working home. Councillor Pullen asked for the Cabinet Member's views as to whether this was a concern, and whether consideration had been given to adjusting to a more realistic target.
- 26.4 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that any long-term change in consumer demand for car parking spaces was outside of the Council's control, however she suggested that if people were changing their vehicles to electric cars for environmental reasons, a solution might be to alter the facilities at existing car parks to include more charging points. Referring to recent events which had taken place in the city, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that there were encouraging trends relating to footfall in the city centre. The Head of Policy and Resources reiterated that the report outlined figures relating to Quarter 1, and highlighted there were still some Covid-19 restrictions in place during the Quarter 1 period which would have had an impact on footfall in the city. The Head of Policy and Resources noted that if there was a long-term reduction in income from parking, then the Council would have to look for savings elsewhere.
- 26.5 In response to a further question from Councillor Pullen on the reopening of the Arbor venue at the Crematorium, The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that the Arbor had reopened and noted that she had recently visited the venue. She confirmed that a risk assessment had been undertaken and that the venue had robust Covid-19 safety precautions,

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including hand sanitizer stations. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources indicated that she was confident that there would be an improvement in income generated from the Arbor in the coming months.

- 26.6 The Chair raised concerns about the cycling infrastructure and facilities for cyclists in Gloucester and asked what the administration was doing to make the city more accessible for cyclists.
- 26.7 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that the County Council was the responsible authority for highways matters and suggested that this was an issue which twin Members for the City and County Councils may wish to pursue with the County Council.
- 26.8 Councillor Wilson asked whether the year-end forecasts were based on assumptions of a slow recovery. The Head of Policy and Resources explained that St Oswalds and the Eastgate Shopping Centre were delivering income for the Council. He noted his hope that with the arrival of the new Primark store which was due to take up tenancy at the old BHS unit, there would be increased footfall in the Kings Walk Shopping Centre area. In response to a further question from Councillor Wilson about contingency plans in the event of a further lockdown, the Head of Policy and Resources explained that even during previous lockdowns, there was no great change in income generated from St Oswalds which therefore remained key to economic recovery in the city.
- 26.9 In response to a question from Councillor Hilton about the Council's plans to facilitate electric cars, the Head of Policy and Resources confirmed that consideration was being given to the use of electric cars for the Council's own fleet and options for installing charging points at existing car parks were being considered. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources further noted that the Council would need to react as consumer demand changed and would be something for this and future administrations to monitor. Referring to the Forum development, she confirmed that the attached car park would have electric car charging points and would act as a case study as to whether further electric car parking facilities were needed in the future.
- 26.10 Councillor Hilton raised concerns about the £571k in lost income from the Council's commercial property (5.2). The Head of Policy and Resources explained that with the arrival of the new Primark store in the old BHS unit, there had already been new leases issued for the units next door and there was a hope that the shopping centre would become more attractive to other businesses. He confirmed that arranging lease extensions in the current climate were challenging but with the completion of Kings Walk and new Forum development, this particular area of the city would become more attractive.
- 26.11 In response to a question from Councillor Tracey about the rent-free period agreed with the new Primark store, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that negotiations about rent-free periods, refurbishment and dilapidation costs were a standard process when

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landmark retailers like Primark look to occupy a large unit. She expressed the view that it was important to secure landmark tenants like Primark for the growth of the city and was confident that this would feed through and encourage other retailers into the city.

- 26.12 Councillor Pullen asked for clarification as to the timeframe for the agreed rent-free period for the new Primark store. The Head of Policy and Resources confirmed that this information would be provided to Members in due course, subject to commercial confidentiality requirements.
- 26.13 Councillor Kubaszczyk expressed the view that a good quality Primark store was important for the city as it was likely to draw customers into the town centre.
- 26.14 In response to concerns raised by Councillor Tracey about the misuse of electric scooters in the city, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources clarified that this was a matter that Members may wish to raise with the County Council, who have responsibility for highways issues.

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

27. PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 REPORT

- 27.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources introduced the report and confirmed that the purpose was to inform Members of the Council's performance against key measures in Quarter 1 of 2021/22. She explained that where targets exist, they had been included along with a narrative to explain the data.
- 27.2 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that improving trends had been seen in areas including the number of environmental-crime FPNs issued and the percentage of major and minor planning applications where decisions were made within the agreed timescale or extended period. She noted that indicators showing a declining trend included the percentage of domestic waste collected on time and the number of complaints received by the Council escalated to stage 2.
- 27.3 The Chair asked for clarification as to whether the performance indicator relating to the number of telephone calls (CS-6) should be recorded as an improving trend rather than a declining trend, as the Council appeared to be receiving fewer calls and fewer calls had been recorded as 'missed'. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that this could well be a positive trend and the recording of declining trend could be down to a programming issue. It was agreed that enquiries would be made with officers to investigate whether the programming could be adjusted.
- 27.4 Councillor Wilson noted that the figures in performance indicator CS-6 indicated that around 45% of calls were being missed and invited comments

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from the Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that the definition of a 'missed call' was not necessarily always where the call had gone unanswered, but could also be where a call had been ended when the customer realised they needed a different department whilst in a queue. She noted that calls were also recorded as 'missed' where customers had left the queue because of time related reasons or where they had listened to prompts suggesting that the query could be addressed online instead.

- 27.5 Referring to the performance indicator relating to the percentage of broadly compliant food premises (CWB-13), Councillor Wilson asked whether the current value of 77% of food premises being broadly compliant with the required standards could be explained by officers carrying out checks more frequently, or whether more resources were needed in this area. Councillor Wilson also asked for clarification as to whether the stickers were updated when it was found that a premises' 5-star rating needed to be removed.
- 27.6 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources offered to seek clarification from the Communities team in relation to Councillor Wilson's queries and it was agreed that follow-up enquiries would be made with officers.
- 27.7 In relation to CWB-13, Councillor Durdey recalled that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting were previously advised that the sample was targeted towards food premises deemed as higher risk rather than premises where there were no previous concerns. He asked whether this could be an explanation behind the current value for Quarter 1. He also asked whether there were any staff shortages in the team.
- 27.8 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that she was not aware of any vacancies in the team and it was agreed that follow up enquiries would be made with the Communities team on both of Councillor Durdey's questions.
- 27.9 Councillor Pullen referred to the performance indicator relating to the average customer waiting time on the telephone (CS-8) and noted that lengthy telephone waiting times was a common complaint he received from constituents. He referred to the statement in the narrative confirming that staffing levels had dipped at the beginning of the quarter due to staff retiring, being seconded and the ending of fixed term contracts and expressed concern that the Council should have been aware of these issues and asked for comments from the Cabinet Member.
- 27.10 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that there would be an additional roll out of the 'Report It' facility and confirmed that arranging transfer of bulky waste would soon be added to the list of options. She noted that this would hopefully help address the lengthy call times as around 75% of the calls received by the council related to waste queries. It was agreed that an update on Customer Services recruitment plans would be sought from the Customer Services team.

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27.11 The Chair asked the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources to clarify whether the impact of Brexit should be included in the narrative as a further explanation for the declining trends in the number of affordable homes delivered (H-25) and shortage of HGV drivers (WR-12). The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that some HGV drivers had decided to retire or pursue career changes following the challenging year brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. She also noted that there had been challenges with recruiting new drivers due to the Covid-19 restrictions on driving tests and lengthy waiting lists for tests.

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

28. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 4th October 2021.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.00 pm hours

Chair