



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 4th October 2021

PRESENT : Cllrs. Lewis, Wilson, Ackroyd, S. Chambers, Dee, Durdey, Evans, Hilton, Kubaszczyk, Organ, O'Donnell, Padilla and Radley

Others in Attendance

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment,
Councillor Richard Cook
Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, Councillor
Justin Hudson

Managing Director, Ubico
Head of Operations, Ubico
Head of Communities
Property Commissioning Manager
Policy and Development Officer
Democratic and Electoral Services Team Leader
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Field, Pullen, Castle and Zaman

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

31. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 6th September 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

32. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

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33. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions and deputations.

34. ELECTION OF CHAIR

35. ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

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

36.1 The Chair, Councillor Hilton, introduced the latest version of the Council Forward Plan and put forward some suggested items which he hoped the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could examine over the coming months.

36.2 The Chair suggested that the Committee consider the Capital Strategy, Temporary Negotiated Stopping Places and the Geographical Information Systems and Grounds Maintenance Contract. The Committee agreed to add these items to the Work Programme with dates to be confirmed.

36.3 The Chair further noted that the Green Travel Plan Progress Report and Update and Blackfriars Priory Development Plan were already on the Work Programme and reiterated his interest in considering these items once the Forward Plan dates were finalised.

RESOLVED –

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

37. WASTE STREET SCENE AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICES - TRANSITIONAL PROGRESS

37.1 The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the presentation and explained that mobilisation efforts were underway for Ubico to commence service delivery for Gloucester City Council from April 2022. He referred to the management structure and noted that beneath the programme board, there were project working groups in place for focused workstreams. He noted that one of these working groups had been set up to deliver a digital system which would allow automated workflows and processes to be used across the service, which was a countywide first/project.

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- 37.2 The Leader of the Council explained that efforts to secure the fleet were underway and that a communications plan had been established, with the next newsletter due in the Winter. The Leader of the Council highlighted that a progress table was attached at Appendix A.
- 37.3 Councillor Wilson expressed the view that the most significant challenge for the service delivery was delivery of the appropriate fleet service vehicles, due to the UK-wide supply chain issues. He raised concerns that there was a possibility of the vehicles not arriving in time for the start of the new service contract in April 2022 and asked whether Ubico had any contingency plans in place to mitigate the risk.
- 37.4 The Managing Director of Ubico confirmed that all large waste collection vehicles had been ordered and that delivery slots for these vehicles had been secured. She noted that most of the smaller specialist vehicles had been ordered but acknowledged that there were problems with the supply chain market. The Managing Director of Ubico confirmed that where problems were known, steps would be taken to mitigate the issues and consideration was being given to alternative options such as hiring vehicles. She emphasised that the situation was being well monitored and was a key priority for Ubico.
- 37.5 Councillor Dee asked whether hiring or leasing waste collection vehicles was usual practice. The Head of Operations for Ubico advised that it depended on the circumstances. By way of example, he noted that Ubico were currently pricing up work for Gloucester City Homes and if prudent, Ubico would hire vehicles at first instance.
- 37.6 In response to a question from Councillor Lewis regarding the timeframes for hiring fleet vehicles, the Managing Director of Ubico confirmed that colleagues at Ubico were analysing options in relation to the benefits of both owned and leased waste collection vehicles. She confirmed that Ubico were considering options such as short-term spot hire and noted that in her view, vehicles would likely be hired on a 6 to 12-month basis.
- 37.7 Councillor Durdey commented that a further key risk area was staffing and invited comments from Ubico as to how the organisation was dealing with the staff transfer and training. The Managing Director of Ubico confirmed that Urbaser had been helpful and cooperative in allowing Ubico to meet with staff ahead of the TUPE transfer process. She explained that the waste collection workforce is usually a large and steady one and noted that the organisation had not suffered problems with recruitment historically.
- 37.8 The Head of Operations for Ubico noted that a Q&A session would take place with staff in due course and that Ubico were aware of the benefits of communicating with staff. He confirmed that he was aware of driver vacancies and vacancies on fleet maintenance, and noted that Urbaser had raised its driver rates to match Ubico and so far had had a reasonably good update on new applications. The Head of Operations confirmed that he was confident that the vast majority of staff would transfer over.

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- 36.9 In response to a question from Councillor Hilton regarding potential staffing pressures caused by vacancies across other districts, the Managing Director of Ubico confirmed that Ubico had a driver shortage strategy and a medium-term plan to mitigate risks as they arose. She confirmed that Ubico would continue to monitor the situation and could tailor forces to meet demand. She also noted that Ubico had a policy to employ additional pool staff to cover holiday and sick leave which had been helpful so far, but acknowledged that there were challenges with pool staff vacancies as many pool staff were covering driver roles. The Managing Director advised that work was being undertaken on Ubico's advertising and marketing strategy, but the assumption was that there would be an ongoing difficult situation. The Managing Director of Ubico confirmed that the organisation had recently inducted five new starters and had met a further six candidates that week.
- 37.10 Councillor Hilton referred to previous issues with garden waste collection and noted that there were areas of the city which were difficult to navigate with large refuse vehicles. He asked for an update on the progress of trialing the new narrow waste collection vehicles. The Head of Operations for Ubico confirmed that a new refuse vehicle had been ordered which had a narrow track rear steer. He advised that the narrow waste collection vehicle would hold half a ton less than the regular fleet, but the benefits of navigating hard to reach areas far outweighed this. He noted that Urbaser had provided information to Ubico regarding the areas of the city they were struggling with, such as areas of Barton and Tredworth. He confirmed that the new vehicle had been trialed over the weekend and had reached these areas and that Ubico were therefore in the process of ordering one, however it would not be ready for by April 2022 as it had to be redesigned after discussions with the manufacturer.
- 37.11 In response to an additional question from Councillor Hilton regarding the electric vehicle mileage, the Head of Operations confirmed that the electric vehicles would be the smaller fleet and that the mileage was around 10 miles and back a day.
- 37.12 Councillor Dee noted that waste collection issues were a significant casework problem and asked whether residents could expect to receive newsletters regarding the service change. The Managing Director confirmed that the newsletter referred to in the briefing was an internal communication between Ubico and the City Council. She confirmed that external communications to residents was a matter for the Council, however she believed that the new digital system enabling automated workflows would open a good line of communication between Ubico and the City Council as the digital system would update customer services on driver information.
- 37.13 In response to a further question from Councillor Dee regarding the transfer of services, the Leader of the Council confirmed that his expectation was of a seamless transfer similar to that of the previous transfer between Amey and Urbaser.
- 37.14 Councillor Organ welcomed the positive news regarding staffing and asked whether Ubico offered apprenticeship or training schemes. The Managing

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Director confirmed that Ubico offered apprenticeships in various areas, including fleet maintenance. She noted that the driver training scheme had recently been adjusted, however there was a challenge with accessing testing slots due to the HGV driving test backlog. She confirmed that Ubico were carefully monitoring the situation for free slots and she hoped that the situation would settle down by April 2022.

- 37.15 Councillor Durdey asked whether Ubico were using UK manufacturers for their new waste collection vehicles. The Head of Operations for Ubico confirmed that the large vehicles were being built by Dennis Eagle who were based in Warrick, and that some smaller vehicles were being manufactured abroad.
- 37.16 In response to a question from Councillor Wilson regarding the transition of IT systems, the Head of Operations for Ubico confirmed that the transition was on track and that they were currently waiting on a visit from BT Openreach to look at installing a Gloucester data line. The Managing Director of Ubico further noted her expectation that the handing of data would be seamless and that the digital transformation would also assist with fast and efficient IT and data transfer.
- 37.17 In response to a question from Councillor Lewis about whether Ubico felt the depot was fit for purpose, the Head of Operations confirmed that it was fit for purpose however Ubico were looking at areas to improve, such as the vehicle workshop where there were issues with condensation which the property team were investigating.
- 37.18 Councillor Hilton noted that the decision to transfer the Waste Street Scene and Grounds Maintenance services to Ubico received cross-part support and asked whether the Leader of the Council foresaw any challenges.
- 37.19 The Leader of the Council referred to the well-documented difficulties with the previous contractor, Amey. He noted that Urbaser remained a good contractor and confirmed that he was confident with how the transfer of services was progressing. Councillor Hilton thanked the Ubico representatives for the update on progress so far.

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

38. DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2024

- 38.1 The Leader of the Council introduced the report and explained that the overarching vision of the Draft Council Plan 2021-24 was to work with partners and residents to build a 'greener, fairer, better Gloucester'. He noted that the Draft Plan set out the City Council's strategic direction over the next three years and how it intended to deliver the vision through two key priorities, namely tackling inequalities and taking action on climate change.
- 38.2 The Leader of the Council explained that the report outlined the timetable for the development of the final plan (8.1) and noted that the Overview and

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Scrutiny Committee were being asked to consider the information set out in the report as part of the consultation process. He noted that when the plan was approved, a detailed set of actions would be developed which set out how the City Council would achieve these goals.

- 38.3 Councillor Wilson expressed the view that there was little he disagreed with in the report and noted that the vision was a positive one. Referring to promise set out in Priority 1 to tackle food poverty, Councillor Wilson raised concerns that this was a complex issue and that this could be an over-promise. He asked for further information on the specific steps which the Council would take to address the problem.
- 38.4 The Leader of the Council confirmed that the City Council would continue to support the work of the County Council in this area as the City Council did not have the finances to tackle the issue in its entirety on its own. By way of example on steps to help tackle the issue, the Leader of the Council commented that he, and other Members had been working within their communities handing out food parcels to vulnerable families this year. It was clarified that the promise was to help with the issue rather than tackle it as a whole.
- 38.5 Councillor Durdey expressed the view that the plan was a bold one and commended the focus on creating equal opportunities and using regeneration to help tackle unemployment.
- 38.6 Referring to the promise to address the root causes of inequality in the city, Councillor S. Chambers asked whether the City Council was working with the County Council to engage with local communities in this regard. The Policy and Development Officer confirmed that it was and also noted that the City Council was playing a leading role in the work of the City's Commission to Review Race Relations. The Leader of the Council further confirmed that the Council would take this work forward with partners as far as possible.
- 38.7 The Chair referred to the promise relating to keeping residents safe and addressing anti-social behaviour. He noted that 3.7 in the report confirmed that a detailed set of key actions and projects would be drawn up in due course and asked for the Leader of the Council's comments as to his ideas on steps the Council could take to deliver this objective. The Leader of the Council responded that issues with anti-social behaviour had been debated at a recent Council meeting and that it was agreed that the Police and Crime Commissioner would attend a future Council meeting to discuss the matter. The Leader noted that close partnership working with the police would be needed to tackle the issue and that discussions regarding anti-social behaviour around the London Road area had taken place on many occasions. He confirmed that consideration was being given to extending the PSPG scheme was being considered.
- 38.8 In response to a further question from Councillor Hilton about how ambitious the projects and actions would be, the Leader of the Council confirmed that

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the plan would be made more structured and detailed and the purpose of the consultation process was to help with this.

- 38.9 Referring to the narrative in the report concerning the Digital Strategy, Councillor Dee noted that she was keen to ensure that older people were not isolated and asked whether there would be alternative avenues in place for people who were not so confident with accessing services online or using computers. The Leader of the Council confirmed that alternative facilities, such as the telephone, would always be in place for people who needed them but noted that the majority of residents were IT literate and many people preferred engaging with the Council online.
- 38.10 Councillor Wilson asked whether the Draft Council Plan had gone out to public consultation. The Policy and Development Officer confirmed that it had and that residents could submit their views online. He also noted that residents could request a paper copy by contacting customer services.
- 38.11 Councillor Lewis praised the aspirational nature of the Plan and welcomed that further detail would be provided in due course, as he felt that residents' views needed to be sought before detail could be added. In relation to the challenge of people finding it difficult to engage with the consultation online, Councillor Lewis suggested that awareness could be raised through noticeboards in supermarkets and a discussion ensued about whether notices could also be put in local newspapers and community newsletters. Members were reminded that residents who wished to engage with the consultation were welcome to contact customer services to request a paper copy.
- 38.12 The Chair suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the Draft Council Plan at a later date once further detail had been added to the plan following the consultation period. The Leader noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could make recommendations as part of the consultation process and that Members could also respond as individuals through the online consultation.

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

39. CITY COUNCIL ENERGY COSTS AND REDUCTION PROJECTS ANNUAL REPORT

- 39.1 The Leader of the Council introduced the report and explained that the purpose was to inform Members of the Council's energy costs and projects to reduce usage. He confirmed that the City Council had adopted a revised Energy Management Strategy back in 2012, and one of the objectives of this strategy included a commitment to reduce the Council's energy costs across its buildings by 2% a year, along with a yearly monitoring commitment and an annual report. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Council

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owned a large number of buildings which used significant amount of gas and electricity; however the Council had committed to reducing its annual spend on energy by £50,000 per year.

- 39.2 The Leader of the Council confirmed that the 2021 energy costs had not yet been finalised, however the Council was shielded by a 12-month price cap. He clarified that energy saving projects were being targeted towards buildings with a higher energy consumption, such as a lighting placement scheme at Oxstalls Tennis Centre and replacement of incandescent lights with LED lights at North Warehouse and the Guildhall. The Leader of the Council also confirmed that the move to a pool fleet had reduced the Council's carbon output.
- 39.3 In response to a question from Councillor Organ regarding the issuing of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), the Property Commissioning Manager confirmed that EPCs had to be undertaken for every building let or owned by the Council, and action had to be taken where the rating fell below E. She confirmed that colleagues were working their way through all higher risk premises, and noted by way of example that changing the lightbulbs at Tuffley Park to LED had changed the rating from E to B, and therefore simple changes could have significant and positive results.
- 39.4 The Leader of the Council further commented that the CLS Consultancy report referred to at 4.2 set out detailed recommendations for the property team, who were in the process of picking target sites, one of which was the depot. The Property Commissioning Manager confirmed that the City Council's Senior Building Works Surveyor would be visiting the depot next week to evaluate what changes could be made to optimise fuel and energy savings.
- 39.5 Referring to the significant drop in gas and electricity use in 2020 due to the pandemic, Councillor Hilton noted that there could be a spike in energy consumption after the pandemic and asked how the Council was monitoring any increased energy use and what it was doing to promote the use of renewable sources. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Council already secured all electric energy from renewable sources but at the moment, this was not possible to do with gas. He stated that he would question whether the 2021 figures would show any significant spike given that large numbers of employees were still working from home.
- 39.6 The Property and Commissioning Manager further added where possible, the Council would look to replace gas use with more renewable sources and there were a number of energy saving schemes under way, such as the installation of Solar PVs at Plock Court.
- 39.7 In response to a question from the Chair regarding which premises consumed the most energy, the Property and Commissioning Manager confirmed that HKP and GL1 Leisure Centres were historically large consumers, however the figures may not go back to pre-pandemic levels.

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- 39.9 In response to a further question from the Chair concerning the increased energy bills for staff working from home, the Property and Commissioning Manager confirmed that the Council hoped to bring staff on the journey and that it was good practice for the Council to share information amongst staff. The Property Commissioning Manager suggested that some may make changes to their home such as installing Solar PVs. She noted that there were home energy efficiency grants available from Government, and if any information came through regarding new grants, this would be fed through to staff.
- 39.10 Councillor Dee referred to the Climate Change Strategy in Appendix 1 which noted that the GL1 Leisure Centre was a significant gas consumer and asked whether it would be difficult to make savings in this area. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the easiest way to heat the large volume of water at GL1 was through using gas and that converting the energy use to solar panels would be very costly for the Council.
- 39.11 Councillor Wilson asked whether the combined heat and power engine at GL1 Leisure Centre was still in operation. The Property Commissioning Manager agreed to double check and provide this information in due course.
- 39.12 Councillor Lewis asked for the Leader of the Council's comments on how the authority could encourage the public and businesses to lower their energy costs. The Leader of the Council noted that the report had provided lots of examples as to how the City Council had saved money on energy costs and was setting a good example to local people and businesses. He confirmed that the City Plan had not yet been finalised, but consideration was being given to additional electric car charging points. He referred to his own experiences of installing solar panels for environmental reasons, however noted that to require solar panels as an obligation at planning permission level was something to be looked at Government level. Councillor Organ expressed the view that the Council had to be mindful of telling people what to do with their houses as this could have an impact on their house sale prices and underwriting issues.
- 39.13 In response to a question from Councillor S. Chambers regarding whether the Council considered whether organisations and businesses had green credentials before going into tender pacts, the Property Commissioning Manager confirmed that the Council would always look at the green credentials of possible tender partners.
- 39.14 Councillor Durdey referred to the data at 3.7 concerning Carbon Dioxide emissions and the pie chart illustrating the split of fuel use in 2018 and asked whether more up-to-date figures were available. The Property Commissioning manager confirmed that the data from the CLS report was not yet available, however this data would be made available once ready.

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

40. ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT UPDATE

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- 40.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods introduced the report and explained that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the support offered to current and former members of the armed forces, reservists and their families as part of the City Council's commitment to the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant. He explained that the Armed Forces Community Covenant was a voluntary pledge of support between the people of Gloucestershire and the local Armed Forces Community
- 40.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods noted that one of the aims of the Covenant was to recognise the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces community. He noted that by 2028 there would be an estimated 1.6 million veterans living in the UK and that the Government had this year renewed the Armed Forces Bill, with a particular obligation on Councils to pay due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant in terms of housing. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that armed forces members and veterans were able to access housing support and advice through the City Council's Housing Team and confirmed that the Council was also working with partner organisations including armed forces charities. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that the Council would be applying for the Bronze Defence Employer Recognition Award in Autumn/Winter 2021 and that an internal survey of City Council staff had taken place. He noted that it was hoped that the responses would indicate whether the Council needed to do better to support veterans. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods paid tribute to the work of Councillor Lewis as the Member Armed Forces Champion.
- 40.3 Councillor Radley asked for an update on what the City Council had done to reach out to staff at Alabarae. The Head of Communities confirmed that the Council had been dealing with some complaints relating to housing standards and that the Community Wellbeing Officer had been recently met with Alabarae. She noted that the Council were in a difficult position as there was a need to balance the standards enforcement role alongside the Council's obligation to offer housing to veterans and armed forces members. She also confirmed that the Communities Wellbeing Officer had a supportive and collaborative relationship with Alabarea and that the Council was open to further communication.
- 40.4 Councillor S. Chambers asked whether the City Council would be using outreach to raise awareness of support available for armed forces members and veterans, or whether awareness was being raised via the Council website and social media. The Head of Communities confirmed that the Council would promote awareness days online. She commented that generally, armed forces members tended to look to the voluntary sector for support at first instance, however if veterans were seeking help through the Housing Team, the Council would make sure they would have access to the appropriate advice and support available.

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- 40.5 Councillor Organ asked whether there had any been any major changes to Armed Forces Covenant since the legislation was renewed and asked whether the support outlined in the report applied to all members of the armed forces, including those people who may not have completed their training. The Head of Communities stated that it was her understanding that anyone serving as an armed forces member for any length of time would be eligible for the support. She also clarified that when the legislation changes were brought in, the City Council was already offering all of the support required. The Head of Communities went on to confirm that the City Council wanted to do more and that the Cabinet were supportive. She referred to the appointment of the Communities Wellbeing Officer, and explained that part of her role was to engage with the community and to take part in the County Forum. It was her view that having a Community Wellbeing Officer responsible for armed forces had made a big impact.
- 40.6 Councillor Lewis expressed the view that mental health issues were a real concern amongst the armed forces community and noted that the focus on mental health awareness and enhanced support were very welcome. Councillor Lewis paid tribute to the work of the Community Wellbeing Officer and reiterated that he was pleased to see mental health support at the forefront of her work.
- 40.7 Councillor Durdey referred to Army Recruitment Events theme in Appendix 1 and asked whether the Council was in the process of supporting any upcoming recruitment events. The Head of Communities confirmed that she was not aware of any upcoming recruitment events at the moment but noted that the Council would encourage the army to contact the local authority as part of recruitment event planning so that the events could be licensed appropriately.
- 40.8 In response to a follow-up question from Councillor Durdey as to whether any work was being undertaken to encourage local businesses to employ armed forces veterans, the Head of Communities noted that the City Council was starting with itself in order to set an example to local businesses. She referred to the staff survey and explained that the aim of the survey was to understand the experiences of staff who had served or had families who had served in the armed forces and that the Council would use the survey to help decide how the organisation could better support these employees. The Head of Communities reiterated that the Council was in the process of applying the Bronze award and had a reservist policy. She noted that the Council wanted to be the best employer it could be and after it achieved bronze status, the aim would be to apply for silver and gold, with mentoring from other organisations to achieve this standard.

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

41. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 1st November 2021.

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Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours
Time of conclusion: 8.04 pm hours

Chair