



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 24th April 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Field (Chair), Ackroyd, Campbell, Castle, Dee, Evans, Gravells MBE, Hilton, Hudson, Sawyer, Trimnell, Wilson and Zaman

Others in Attendance

Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman
Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Andrew Lewis.

Managing Director
Head of Culture
Program Manager
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer.

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Pullen, Durdey and Kubaszczyk

125. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Castle declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11 (Sports and Physical Activity Strategy) owing to her position as a trustee on the board of Aspire Leisure Trust.

126. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

127. MINUTES

127.1 Councillor Hilton referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 27th March and noted that the attendance list did not include Councillor Conder, despite her being present and taking part as a substitute. It was agreed that the attendance list would be corrected and that the minutes would be returned to the Chair for signing at the following Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

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RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

128. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

129. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

130. ACTION POINT ITEM

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

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

131.1 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.

131.2 Councillor Hilton informed Members that the Liberal Democrat Group had called in the recent Cabinet Decision relating to the Nominations to the Gloucester City Homes Board. The Managing Director confirmed that Officers had consulted with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair and relevant Cabinet Member, and that the Democratic Services Team were in the process of finding a mutually convenient date to hold a Special Meeting to consider the request. He further noted that this was likely to take place during the week commencing 8th May and that the Chief Executive of Gloucester City Homes had indicated that he would also be willing to attend.

131.3 The Chair suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy and Asset Management Strategy and it was agreed that these items would be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for the meeting on 5th June 2023. Councillor Gravells noted his support for considering the Asset Management Strategy in particular, commenting that it would be useful for Members to understand the criteria required of community groups when transferring assets.

131.4 In response to a query from Councillor Sawyer regarding her request for an agenda item concerning Water Quality and River Pollution, the Chair confirmed that this had been added to the Work Programme under 'dates to be confirmed'. The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer advised that she would be making enquiries to ascertain who the most appropriate Officers would be to assist with this request.

131.5 Councillor Trimnell suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Kings Quarter Financial Update report. It was noted that

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Members would have the opportunity to debate this item at the full Council meeting on 13th July 2023.

- 131.6 Councillor Wilson indicated that he would like the Committee to consider the 2022-23 Financial Outturn Report and it was agreed that this item would be added to the agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 5th June.
- 131.7 The Chair suggested that the Committee may wish to consider the Readoption of the Matson and Podsmead Supplementary Planning Documents and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to add this item to the meeting on Monday 3rd July 2023.

RESOLVED –

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

132. MEETING WEBCASTING UPDATE

- 132.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman, advised Members that since the Committee received an initial briefing back in February, there had been an update on the proposed webcasting solution which was outlined in the agenda papers. Councillor Norman explained that Officers had consulted a third party which specialised in webcasting to explore more traditional webcasting technology. She advised that costs were expected to be in the region of £60-£80k and confirmed that she would be happy to share the project plan with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee once the relevant quotes had been received.
- 132.2 The Chair queried whether the expected spend was comparable to packages received in other local authorities. The Program Manager advised that colleagues in Stroud District Council had confirmed similar costs. He noted that the set-up cost was estimated at around £30k for the initial software, with the remaining costs for hardware refresh and implementation of audio-visual equipment and technology.
- 132.3 In response to an additional query from the Chair as to whether meeting webcasting was likely to generate revenue for the City Council in the future, Councillor Norman stated that she did not expect webcasting to be an income generating resource, noting that there might well be additional costs to factor in relating to software licensing.
- 132.4 Councillor Hilton indicated that he welcomed the change of position, noting his view that the Civica ModGov Meet solution initially explored would have disrupted the interaction between Members and Officers during Council meetings. He felt it was the right decision to explore a more traditional webcasting solution and stated his hope that the Section 151 Officer would

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be able to source funding for the project. Councillor Norman explained that the situation had changed following confirmation from Civica that they would not be in a position to deliver the ModGov Meet offering for 6-8 months, and it was felt that this was too long to wait. She provided assurances that she had discussed the matter with the Section 151 Officer and that a breakdown of detailed costs, including ongoing software costs was key. Councillor Norman further advised Members that consideration needed to be given as to whether specialist Guildhall or additional Democratic Services staff might need to be present to support webcasting delivery during meetings. She noted that ongoing revenue costs were a concern for the City Council.

- 132.5 Councillor Hilton stated his expectation that the additional administrative burden was likely to be prior to meetings rather than during. He expressed the view that the webcasting project needed to go ahead, noting that Gloucester City Council was one of just two councils in Gloucestershire which did not have meeting webcasting facilities in place. Councillor Norman reminded Members that there had been delays with implementing the project due to the cyber incident. The Program Manager further explained that neighbouring district councils had adopted different proprietary systems, however there tended to be ongoing software costs.
- 132.6 The Chair commented that meeting webcasting could compliment the recommendation of the Peer Review report to undertake a review of the council's delivery arrangements for external communications. Councillor Norman noted that she did not expect webcasting to be a large communication channel for the City Council, reflecting on the audience during the Covid-19 pandemic while meetings were held virtually. She agreed that it was important to have an open channel of communication with residents but stated that expectations needed to be managed around viewing take-up. It was noted that some residents might be more likely to watch meetings retrospectively rather than live.
- 132.7 Councillor Wilson reflected on his experience of visiting the Stroud District Council Chamber and noted that the cameras were automated and not visible, with no need for a director. In relation to the expected costs, he queried whether the £60-£80k figure related to set up costs alone or also annual revenue costs. The Program Manager estimated that set up costs would be around £30k and that he would be looking for quotes from multiple suppliers for the best value option.
- 132.8 In response to an additional query from Councillor Wilson regarding timeframes, Councillor Norman clarified that the 6-8 month timeframe related to the Civica ModGov Meet package which was no longer being considered as a solution. She confirmed that if progress was made with implementing the audio-visual equipment, webcasting should be in place sooner than this timeframe.
- 132.9 Councillor Dee noted her assumption that there were no current plans to move the City Council Chamber from the North Warehouse Civic Suite, but queried whether the new equipment would be transferable. Councillor

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Norman confirmed that there were no plans to relocate the Council Chamber at the moment, however transferable software would be key to longevity.

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

133. RESPONSE TO CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

- 133.1 Councillor Norman introduced the report sharing the recommendations resulting from the Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in November 2022, and the Council's resulting Action Plan. She outlined the themes considered by the peer team during their review which were set out at 3.5 of the report. She advised the Committee that the City Council had also asked the peer team to provide feedback on how the council responded to the cyber incident, and whether work undertaken by the council to tackle inequalities was improving outcomes for residents.
- 133.2 Councillor Norman highlighted the findings of the peer team at Appendix 1, noting that they had identified the commitment and talent of City Council Officers as a key strength, as well as the City Council's track record of strengths-based community development work and relationship with voluntary and community groups in Gloucester. She also referred to comments at 4.2 in the full Corporate Peer Challenge report recognising the council's commitment to culture and the Commission to Review Race Relations. Councillor Norman confirmed that that the peer review team had highlighted some challenges and the Action Plan included at Appendix 2 set out the proposed response to address those challenges.
- 133.3 The Chair commented that the Corporate Peer Challenge report was an interesting one and referred to the narrative at 4.3 in the full report stating that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should consider an annual work programming session. Councillor Norman confirmed that the Cabinet would very much welcome input from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in this way. She reflected on her previous experience of sitting on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and recognised that Members might welcome the opportunity to drive policy rather than solely reacting to the Forward Plan.
- 133.4 In response to a query from the Chair regarding the proposed annual work programming session, the Managing Director noted that Officers from the Local Government Association (LGA) had offered to work with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Group Leads, with potential opportunities for the Leads to observe how Members undertake policy development roles in neighbouring authorities. He further confirmed that Officers would be very willing to facilitate an annual meeting to develop a long-term Work Programme. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported this unanimously.
- 133.5 Councillor Wilson referred to the narrative in the full Corporate Peer Challenge report at 4.4 and the statements that 'consideration should be given as to whether resources in the Finance Team were sufficient to deliver the Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 budget monitoring reports' and that 'additional capacity' may be needed. He asked for further information as to what had

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caused the peer review team to reach this conclusion. Councillor Norman explained that the Corporate Peer Challenge had taken place in November 2022, during a period where the cyber incident was having an ongoing impact on the finance system and the ability of the team to produce the routine Financial Monitoring reports. It was her belief that the comments around delivery of reports were a reflection of the time. Councillor Norman further noted that the former Director of Policy of Resources had decided to focus on supporting individual members of the Finance Team rather than recruitment.

- 133.6 In response to a follow-up question from Councillor Wilson as to whether the Finance team were moving away from manual transactions and now up to date with their work, Councillor Norman confirmed her understanding that the team had mostly recovered from the cyber incident and that when the new Head of Finance and Resources had been recruited, it would be down to them to determine whether additional resources were needed.
- 133.7 In response to a query from the Chair concerning the challenges identified around Member/Officer relations and Member conduct, the Managing Director referred to the Action Plan outlining the proposed steps to address the recommendation. He confirmed that a permanent Monitoring Officer had been recruited, and that the Corporate Governance Group would be working on a robust induction plan for the new cohort of Councillors following the 2024 Local Elections. He further confirmed that the City Council's Monitoring Officer was in the process of reviewing the Member Code of Conduct and Member/Officer Protocol which would be brought before the General Purposes Committee in due course. Councillor Norman added that as Chair of the Member Development Working Group, she was considering the possibility of assigning political buddies to new Councillors as well as an Officer buddy to complement their induction.
- 133.8 Councillor Hilton referred to the statement at 4.5 in the full report that the 'peer team found GCC's organisational leadership and management to be at the limits of their current capacity'. He raised concerns that Officers tended to take longer to progress Member referrals than when he was initially elected as a Councillor, noting that this was a reflection of capacity issues rather than Officers' skills.
- 133.9 The Managing Director noted that political Group Leaders had been briefed but explained for the benefit of the Committee that proposals had been developed for a staffing restructure, which had been amended following feedback from staff. He noted that in consultation with the City Council Cabinet, this restructure proposed to expand the Senior Management Team with the creation of a Head of Finance and Resources post and a Head of Transformation and Commissioning post. The Managing Director explained that it was hoped that these changes would bring about more organisational efficiency, capacity, and would ultimately improve the customer journey. Councillor Norman noted that the financial climate of local Government had changed with particular challenges for second tier authorities in recent years. She expressed that priority needed to be given to managing resources to meet the needs of the city as a whole rather than focusing on single wards.

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- 133.10 In response to a query from Councillor Hilton regarding 8.2 in the report and the ‘check-in’ meeting in 6 months’ time, the Managing Director clarified that the meeting would take place 6 months following the publication of the Action Plan, and would likely be during the autumn.
- 133.11 In response to a question from Councillor Gravells regarding the City Council’s Here to Help facility, the Managing Director confirmed that in his view, the current Here to Help provision did not totally satisfy all customer enquiries and that he believed there were ways to make the service more user-friendly.
- 133.12 Councillor Gravells referred to the previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee where Members received an overview of the Here to Help Facility. He noted that this was an example of showing how the work of Councillor scrutiny could add value to City Council processes. The Managing Director confirmed that Member communication would be taken into account during any review of the customer journey.
- 133.13 A discussion ensued around the role the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could play in developing City Council policy. It was suggested that the Committee consider commissioning a Task and Finish Group to work alongside the new Head of Transformation once they were recruited to develop Here to Help and the customer experience. Councillor Gravells noted that he would be interested in taking part in such a Task and Finish Group.
- 133.14 Councillor Norman thanked all Officers and Members who took part in the Corporate Peer Review, and paid tribute to the Senior Management and Corporate Support teams for their hard work in facilitating the peer review interviews. She also thanked partner organisations and community groups who had contributed to the review.

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

134. SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY

- 134.1 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Andrew Lewis, introduced the report. He explained that the development of a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy was one of a number of actions arising from the options appraisal conducted by the Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC) back in 2022. Councillor Lewis further advised that Active Gloucestershire had been commissioned to help devise the strategy, which identified 4 priorities including achieving health and wellbeing outcomes, reducing inactivity, and increasing participation, delivering a positive customer experience, and working with local clubs, groups and the third sector.
- 134.2 Councillor Lewis informed Members that the Strategy included a set of 18 Key Performance Indicators to help monitor progress. He noted that the

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document was in draft form and that any suggestions for improvement from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be welcome.

- 134.3 In response to a request for clarification from the Chair as to what was meant by 'physical literacy', the Head of Culture explained that the KPIs set out in the draft strategy were based on Sport England guidance and that 'physical literacy' was a term used by Sport England to measure competency, enjoyment and confidence amongst young people undertaking physical activity.
- 134.4 The Chair referred to proposals for a Blackbridge Community Sports facility and noted that the proposal was for the facility to be run by a charitable trust rather than the City Council. He asked whether the Cabinet Member had received any updates on the position of GL1 Leisure facility. Councillor Lewis noted that he did not have any particular comments on GL1 but expressed the view that the Blackbridge proposals were good and that it was his hope that the facility would fit in well with the local community.
- 134.5 Councillor Hilton referred to the narrative at 3.2.3 in the report stating that a series of interviews had been undertaken with 12 Gloucester organisations during the development of the strategy. He noted that it would be useful for the list of these organisations to be shared with Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members. The Head of Culture explained that some of these organisations included the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and local sports clubs. It was agreed that the full list of organisations would be shared with Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in due course.
- 134.6 Councillor Hilton raised concerns that the strategy did not refer to elite athletes and how the City Council proposed to support talented young people who were progressing in their sport. He also noted that he felt more consideration needed to be given to swimming provision for young people. Councillor Lewis noted that elite athletes tended to be supported through their sporting bodies and associations, expressing the view that those organisations were best placed to provide specialist support. Councillor Lewis confirmed that the document was an aspirational and overarching strategy for the general public and welcomed suggestions from Members.
- 134.7 Councillor Hilton commented that in his view the strategy should deliver for both the general public and talented sportspeople and stated that it was important that aspiring athletes were not challenged by poor facilities. The Head of Culture explained that tackling health inequalities had been a key theme within the feedback from organisations and the strategy was aimed at targeting city-wide challenges rather than elite sport.
- 134.8 Councillor Sawyer queried whether the strategy was the first draft of the document. Councillor Lewis confirmed that it was.
- 134.9 In response to a further query from Councillor Sawyer, Councillor Lewis confirmed that the City Council had previously recognised that a Sports and Physical Strategy was needed which was why it had commissioned Active Gloucestershire to develop the strategy.

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- 134.10 Councillor Sawyer noted that Gloucester had many green open spaces to for residents to make use of when undertaking physical activity. She noted that although the Glevum Way route was an asset for Gloucester, it was overgrown in some areas, and she was aware of some anti-social behaviour concerns. Councillor Lewis stated that he was not aware of specific plans to address any overgrowth on the Glevum Way route and suggested that Councillor Sawyer refer the matter to Here to Help for the relevant Officers to investigate.
- 134.11 In response to an additional query from Councillor Sawyer as to whether there was any possibility of linking some of Gloucester's green spaces, Councillor Lewis confirmed that she was welcome to send him her ideas.
- 134.12 In response to a question from Councillor Castle regarding indoor facilities, Councillor Lewis noted that funding was a challenge and that the City Council was focusing on improving the facilities it had. He reiterated that suggestions from Members were always welcome.
- 134.13 Councillor Castle raised concerns about the condition of the trail between Plock Court and the University of Gloucestershire Oxstalls Campus. It was agreed that enquiries would be made to ascertain which organisation was responsible for maintaining the track and Councillor Lewis agreed that he was happy to raise the matter during his monthly meetings.
- 134.14 Councillor Trimnell commented that lots of work had clearly been put into the strategy and noted that she liked the vision. She commended the inclusion of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and asked for further information as to how this data would be fed back. Councillor Lewis confirmed that this data would be collected annually as there would be lots of information to collate.
- 134.15 Councillor Trimnell noted that the Council's landlord responsibilities for GL1 Leisure Centre were due to come to an end and asked for further information as to next steps for the Centre. Councillor Lewis confirmed that there would be a tender process with an opportunity for companies to bid.
- 134.16 Councillor Sawyer noted that football pitches appeared to be the default open space offering from developers and queried whether consideration could be given to discussing alternative open space options with developers, such as nature reserves. Councillor Lewis agreed that informal play and outdoor space for physical activity were important and that he would be keen to ensure that equipment such as picnic tables were available in local open spaces. He expressed the view that the City Council needed to steer away from being too prescriptive.
- 134.17 In response to further comments from Councillor Sawyer regarding how open space areas could be maximised for the benefit of the public, Councillor Lewis invited her to write to him with further details about her ideas.

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

135. TASK AND FINISH GROUP - REVISED MEMBERSHIP

135.1 The Democratic Services Officer explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were being asked to approve a revised membership of the Task and Finish Group on Damp and Mould in Gloucester's rented accommodation. She noted that a Task and Finish Group progress update was outlined in the agenda papers and that it was hoped that the Committee would receive the Task and Finish Group report in June or July 2023.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **APPROVE** the revised membership of the Task and Finish Group.

136. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 9th May 2023.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.13 pm hours

Chair