



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 3rd July 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Field (Chair), Durdey (Spokesperson), Ackroyd, Campbell, Castle, Dee, Evans, Hudson, Hyman, Kubaszczyk, Sawyer, Toleman, Wilson, Chambers-Dubus and Conder.

Others in Attendance

Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Andrew Lewis
Monitoring Officer

Head of Finance and Resources

Asset Management Officer

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Hilton, Pullen and Zaman.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Conder, Campbell, Dee, Sawyer and Toleman declared an interest in agenda item 8 (Blackbridge Sports Hub) owing to their positions as Council Planning Committee Members. They left the room for the duration of this item and took no part in any aspect of the discussion.

15. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 5th June 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

17. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
03.07.23

18. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

19. ACTION POINT ITEM

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

20. BLACKBRIDGE SPORTS HUB

20.1 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Andrew Lewis, introduced the report and explained that it proposed that Cabinet approve the acquisition of the freehold interest in land from Gloucestershire County Council, for the purpose of leasing the land plus additional land owned by the Council to Blackbridge Charitable Community Benefit Society (BCCBS) to build a community sports hub. He reminded the Committee that part of the land was currently subject to an outline planning application which was due to be considered by the Council's Planning Committee on Tuesday 4th July 2023.

20.2 Councillor Lewis expressed his support for the acquisition, noting that building a community sports hub in the south of the city would complement the Oxstalls facilities in the north. He also noted that the development of a community sports hub would support the aims of the Council's Sports and Physical Activity Strategy.

20.3 The Chair confirmed that he supported the Blackbridge development and that he felt as the local ward Member for Podsmead that it was the right thing for the Council to do. He further commented that he felt that a 125-year lease was a positive move in that it would provide security and preserve the land for that particular use. The Chair referred to the legal implications set out at section 10 of the report and risk and opportunity management implications set out at section 11, and asked whether these indicated that there were significant risks around the proposals, or whether the Council was simply being diligent. The Asset Management Officer explained that with a large scheme, there would inevitably be risks involved and the provisions set out in sections 10 and 11 of the report aimed to address these risks and cover every eventuality.

20.4 The Chair commended BCCBS for their work in leveraging additional funding, observing that it was impressive for a charitable organisation to obtain such a significant contribution towards the estimated £5 million cost of the scheme. Councillor Lewis noted that the Council had supported BCCBS but had stepped back from driving this exercise.

20.5 Councillor Wilson commented that the scheme was impressive and uplifting, and expressed the view that a community sports hub would be a positive contribution to the city. He further noted that BCCBS should be commended for raising so much money for the scheme. Councillor Wilson referred to 3.11 in the report and requested clarification as to access arrangements which the Asset Management Officer provided.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
03.07.23

- 20.6 Councillor Castle reflected on provisions at the Aspire Leisure facility and asked whether additional consideration needed to be given to car parking facilities at the sports hub. Councillor Lewis stated that parking provision was a matter which would have been considered by the Planning Committee when the initial Blackbridge Sports Hub application was determined back in June 2023 and noted that the Gloucestershire County Council Highways Team were satisfied that sufficient provisions were in place.
- 20.7 The Chair provided additional information around the proposed parking arrangements and stated that the scheme also included proposals for a dedicated entrance for pedestrians and cyclists by way of encouraging visitors to walk or cycle to the hub. He also noted that there was a bus stop nearby.
- 20.8 In response to further comments from Councillors Castle and Ackroyd, the Monitoring Officer reminded Members that the report related to acceptance of the transfer of land, and that as the Blackbridge Sports Hub had received planning permission back in June 2023, detailed arrangements would be delivered by a third party rather than the Council. Councillor Lewis also noted that issues raised by Members would have been taken into consideration during the planning stage.
- 20.9 The Chair suggested that if Committee Members had any further queries regarding the details of the scheme, they contact BCCBS or refer to the conditions of planning permission.

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

21. 2022-23 FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT

- 21.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman, introduced and summarised the report. She advised the Committee that the year-end position for the financial year 2022-23 was currently a decrease to the General Fund balance of £278k against a budgeted net zero position, and that the level of earmarked reserves had decreased by £3.209m to £4.264m.
- 21.2 Councillor Norman stated that 2022-23 had been a challenging year, with service areas still experiencing the impact of Covid-19 pandemic, the cyber incident of 2021 and rising inflation. She noted that there had been an additional pressure of £360k as a result of the Council providing increased support to Aspire Leisure Trust to assist with additional energy cost pressures during the year. Councillor Norman confirmed that parking levels had continued to increase and were now at normal pre-Covid levels, however inflationary pressures alongside a slow return to normal parking levels had led to an adverse position of £260k. She noted that the Council's IT had proved close to budget, despite significant spending needed to restore services following the cyber incident and that although the Commercial Property portfolio was averse to budget by £0.8m, it had contributed a net income of £2.57m.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
03.07.23

- 21.3 In relation to other portfolio areas, Councillor Norman confirmed that the outturn position for the Communities and Neighbourhoods was a minor underspend due to the performance of Shopmobility and community grants. Referring to the Culture and Leisure portfolio, she confirmed that the planning of works at the Museum of Gloucester to utilise the MEND grant funding in 2023-24 was underway.
- 21.4 Referring to paragraph 2.2(1)v in the report, Councillor Wilson asked how long it was likely to take for the volume of data to be fully analysed and reconciled. The Head of Finance and Resources confirmed that the process of re-hydrating the financial systems for 2021-22 was complete, and that the Finance Team were in the process of producing the 2021-2022 end of year accounts. He explained that once this was complete, the Finance Team would be able to work on the 2022-23 financial year. The Head of Finance and Resources noted that following this, there might be some adjustments but neither he nor the team expected material differences.
- 21.5 Councillor Wilson referred to the challenges caused by high inflation and the pandemic and noted his understanding that the Council had used the VAT shelter to hedge against the interest rate rises. He asked whether the rates had risen more than expected, to which the Head of Finance replied that they had. He confirmed that the Council had taken out short term borrowing to cover year 1, with rates expected to return to more normal levels over the next few years.
- 21.6 In response to an additional query from Councillor Wilson, the Head of Finance and Resources confirmed that the Council was still working within the expected parameters. Councillor Norman noted that the latest developments on interest rates were discussed on a regular basis at Major Projects Board and Cabinet Briefing meetings, and that she was confident in the advice being given.
- 21.7 In response to an additional query from Councillor Wilson regarding the outturn on Waste and Recycling, Councillor Norman confirmed that the Council's previous arrangement with Urbaser was on a fixed-rate basis, however its current arrangement with Ubico was a 'Cost Plus' model. She explained that this meant that if there was a cost increase, there would also be a cost to the Council, and encouraged ward Members to be mindful of these additional costs.
- 21.8 The Chair asked for clarification as to what the £305k in the Museum Bequest reserves was likely to be used for. It was clarified later in the meeting by the Head of Finance that the Museum Bequest reserves were intended to be used to support the Museum of Gloucester's development.
- 21.9 In response to an additional query from the Chair regarding the Lottery reserve, Councillor Norman explained that this reserve was utilised when lottery players had not allocated to a certain charity, as this money was put into a centralised reserve for the Communities Team to allocate to various charitable organisations.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
03.07.23

21.10 Councillor Hyman referred to the narrative concerning prompt payment performance at 8.1 in the report and asked whether the Council was now up to date with payments. The Head of Finance confirmed that the Council had paid all suppliers promptly, however the cyber incident had caused a delay in producing the data.

21.11 In response to a question from Councillor Wilson regarding car parking revenue, Councillor Norman referred to the recommendation made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been accepted by Cabinet to include additional narrative in quarterly Financial Monitoring Reports on car parking usage and income performance. She confirmed that updated figures on car parking usage would be provided in the Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Report.

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

22. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2022-23

22.1 The Chair introduced the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022-23 and invited comments from Members. He advised that the Annual Report was due to be considered by Council on 13th July.

22.2 Councillor Wilson expressed his view that the report provided a good summary of the Committee's achievements over the year.

22.3 The Chair reflected on the amount of work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2022/23 and thanked Members for their contributions. He highlighted that it was testament to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that recommendations were nearly always accepted by Cabinet.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the Annual Report.

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

23.1 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.

23.2 The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer informed Members that arrangements would be made in due course for an Annual Work Programming Workshop following the recommendation of the Peer Review Panel.

23.3 Councillor Hyman suggested that the Committee request an update from the Council's appointed representative on Gloucestershire Airport Ltd. The Chair noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were due to receive an update from the Chairman and Managing Director of Gloucestershire Airport

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
03.07.23

at an upcoming Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. He suggested if Members had any queries or issues to raise in the meantime, that they ask a question at full Council or a Cabinet meeting. Councillor Norman noted that the appointed representative would report to the Leader of the Council.

- 23.4 The Chair noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Review Report at the meeting on 4th September 2023. He observed that this report was also on the Cabinet Forward Plan for July 2024. It was agreed that clarity would be sought from relevant Officers as to whether this was an update report.
- 23.5 Councillor Dee suggested that the Committee consider the next Council Plan Update and Members agreed to add this item to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.
- 23.6 The Chair asked whether Members would be interested in considering the Festivals and Events Report and it was agreed that this item would be added to the meeting on 8th January 2024.

RESOLVED –

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

24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 4th September 2023.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 7.14 pm hours

Chair