



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 27th November 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Field (Chair), Chambers-Dubus, Ackroyd, Campbell, Castle, A. Chambers, Conder, Dee, Evans, Hilton, Hyman, Kubaszczyk, Wilson and Zaman

Others in Attendance

Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman

Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, Councillor Raymond Padilla

Managing Director

Head of Finance and Resources

Head of Transformation and Commissioning

Community Wellbeing Team Leader

Inspector, Gloucestershire Constabulary

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Pullen, Durdey, Hudson, O'Donnell and Sawyer

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

61. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

62. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 30th October 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to an amendment to paragraph 56.11 and the correction of a typing error at paragraph 57.6.

63. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

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64. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

65. ACTION POINT ITEM

65.1 Councillor Hilton referred to the update regarding GL1 Leisure and noted that he would be interested to see documentary evidence of the Council selling the nearby nightclubs and when this occurred. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Norman, pointed out that this sale would have taken place a long time ago and that this information was likely held by Gloucestershire Archives.

65.2 Referring to the update concerning the Covid Memorial, Councillor Dee noted her disappointment in the update and design proposals. She stated that she disagreed with the location and the look of the stones, and that she would be interested to know who had contributed to the design.

65.3 Councillor Wilson noted that he shared Councillor Dee's view and expressed that he found the proposed design disappointing. In response to additional comments from Councillor Wilson, the Chair pointed out that the design proposals did include a plaque to provide context.

65.4 In response to a query from Councillor A. Chambers as to whether there was any way Members could raise their concerns, it was suggested that Members pass their concerns onto the Leader of the Council as the Cabinet Member with portfolio responsibility for the Covid memorial. The Managing Director noted that the Council aimed to have the memorial in place by the Spring, and that work had been underway for some time with Ecclesiastical Insurance as the funding partner. The Managing Director noted that the location had been selected as it was near the Ecclesiastical Offices, and that the Gloucestershire Community Foundation had been involved in the work.

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

66. COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW

66.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, Councillor Padilla, provided an introductory overview. He advised that the Council's Community Safety Team had doubled in 2023 as a result of external funding secured by the team, noting that the Community Wellbeing Team Leader as the Community Safety Lead had secured £1.08m of external funding to help the Council deliver community safety projects.

66.2 Councillor Padilla outlined some key developments within the Council's community safety work, including the receipt of Safer Streets funding from the Home Office which had enabled the Council to recruit a Safer Spaces Lead Officer, and the work of the Stronger Safer Gloucester Partnership (SSGP) which he noted was regarded as the most active community safety

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partnership in the county. Councillor Padilla paid tribute to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and local policing teams for their work in addressing safety issues, and advised Members that the Community Safety team would be looking to develop a new Community Safety Strategy for Gloucester from 2025 onwards.

- 66.3 The Community Wellbeing Team Leader delivered a presentation providing further information about the work of the Community Safety team over 2023, including the Stronger Safer Gloucester Partnership, youth violence prevention, external funding updates and Street Aware work, including the 'Op Ebrius' operation to tackle street drinking in Gloucester city centre. She also updated Members on the Council's Safer Spaces work and initiatives the team were exploring to gather data around how safe people feel within the city.
- 66.4 The Inspector introduced himself to Members and provided an overview of burglary and vehicle crime statistics, noting that there had been a 14% reduction in these crimes in 2023 compared to 2022. He advised Members that he would be happy to provide further data if requested.
- 66.5 Councillor Wilson asked whether the Community Wellbeing Team structure chart could be circulated to Members, to which Community Wellbeing Team Leader agreed that she would be happy to do so though the Democratic Services team.
- 66.6 In response to an additional question from Councillor Wilson regarding the Street Aware and Safer Streets Officers, the Community Wellbeing explained that these were different roles with different responsibilities.
- 66.7 In response to a further question from Councillor Wilson regarding the amount of time the Community Wellbeing team spent submitting bids, the Community Wellbeing Team Leader confirmed that bid writing did take up a significant amount of time when funding became available, as there was a need to be reactive when funding submissions opened.
- 66.8 The Chair asked whether it was the responsibility of the same team member to write funding bids. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader confirmed that it was her responsibility to put funding bids together, and that it was useful that the Council had a strong working relationship with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner as they were helpful with endorsing funding bids where this was needed. She noted that maintaining good working relationships with partners was a key element of the role.
- 66.9 In response to a further question from the Chair as to whether the Community Wellbeing Team were well-resourced, the Community Wellbeing Team Leader confirmed that the team were in a better position following the recruitment of the Youth Engagement Lead and Safer Spaces Officer, however additional resource to assist with community safety work would be welcome.

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- 66.10 Councillor Dee asked for further information around engagement with young people and how this took place. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader advised that the Youth Engagement Lead Officer was very experienced and had previous experience in running a youth engagement voluntary sector organisation. She confirmed that the Youth Engagement Lead Officer engaged with young people directly, and also closely engaged with Gloucester Academy.
- 66.11 Councillor Dee further asked whether youth engagement work involved discussions with parents and schools. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader noted that the Community Wellbeing Team were in the process of writing a Youth Violence Strategy and throughout this process, the Council would need to undertake more family-based work alongside working with partner agencies such as the County Council's Social Care team.
- 66.12 Councillor Castle asked whether the Council had engaged with the University of Gloucestershire around its Safer Spaces work. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader advised that the Safer Spaces Lead Officer was currently working on a Communications Plan and that she would welcome suggestions from Members about which agencies should be included. She confirmed that representatives from the University of Gloucester and Hartpury University were already included in the NightSafe partnership group.
- 66.13 Councillor A. Chambers asked for further information regarding the Op Ebrus street drinking enforcement work, including where the figures were taken from, and which areas of Gloucester were included in the operation. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader confirmed that the operation took place over a 2-month period within the city centre.
- 66.14 In response to concerns raised by Councillor A. Chambers regarding anti-social behaviour in the city, the Community Wellbeing Team Leader noted that in her view, Op Ebrus was a success due to good partnership working between the Council and police teams and had brought about daily returns.
- 66.15 Councillor A. Chambers asked whether Op Ebrus was a one-off operation to which the Community Wellbeing Team Leader responded that it was initially intended to be a one off, however consideration was being given to repeating the operation in December.
- 66.16 In response to a further question from Councillor A. Chambers regarding sexual violence and prevalence of sexual offences in the city, the Community Wellbeing Team Leader pointed towards initiatives such as Ask Angela which encouraged women and girls to report instances of sexual violence. She noted that spikes in sexual violence could sometimes be caused by increased awareness, and it was therefore important to have strong engagement work in place to gather data for analysis.
- 66.17 Councillor Conder asked how often patrols took place in the Kingsholm and Barton and Tredworth areas. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader confirmed that Kingsholm was on the patrol map, and that the team had not

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seen displacement, however Sinope Street was still an issue. She further noted that the team were hoping to broaden the patrol area once the city centre situation had improved. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader advised Members that currently, City Protection Officers operated in the Business Improvement District (BID) area, however as the team had been successful in bidding for additional funding from the Home Office Safer Streets fund, this would be used to deploy Officers to work in hotspot areas.

66.18 In response to a question from Councillor A. Chambers, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods noted that Gloucester was a working progress and safer than it used to be.

66.19 The Chair suggested that if Members had any further queries, it was open for them to ask questions at the upcoming Cabinet meeting.

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

67. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 2 REPORT

67.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman, introduced the report. She advised that the report sought to outline year-end forecasts and the financial pressures on the Council during Quarter 2 ending in September 2023, as well as the performance of the Council against certain key performance indicators. Councillor Norman highlighted that the forecast year end position was currently a decrease of the Council's General Fund balance of £1,078k against a budgeted decrease of £104k.

67.2 Councillor Norman referred to 4.3 in the report and highlighted that key pressures facing the Council included temporary accommodation costs which were at an overspend of £456k, however she noted that the position had improved due to Council's decision to acquire emergency temporary accommodation. Councillor Norman outlined that further pressures included the decline in planning income as a result of development costs increases, and the closure of Longsmith Car Park and costs associated with repair maintenance work and lost income.

67.3 The Chair asked whether Longsmith Car Park was likely to be open before the end of the financial year. Councillor Norman explained that she was awaiting the final report measures, however Financial Monitoring reports and estimates tended to be on the pessimistic side.

67.4 In response to a further query from the Chair as to what was meant by 'NJC Green Book staff', the Head of Finance and Resources confirmed that this referred to the National Joint Council.

67.5 The Chair asked whether Councillor Norman was worried about the financial outlook. Councillor Norman replied that currently, local government finance was challenging with inflationary pressures impacting on every local authority, however she had confidence that Officers and the administration would take the necessary decisions in the Council's financial interest.

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- 67.6 Councillor Wilson referred to the £500k utility charge for Aspire Trust and asked whether the Council had managed to recover any of this debt. The Head of Finance and Resources confirmed that this £500k was an historic debt from the previous financial year. In response to a further question from Councillor Wilson as to likelihood of the Council reclaiming any of this money, the Head of Finance and Resources noted that this was a possibility however it was dependent on the Aspire Leisure Trust's liquidators.
- 67.7 Councillor Hilton asked whether the administration had any intention to sell Gloucestershire Airport. Councillor Norman confirmed that no formal discussions had taken place at Cabinet level but invited Members to put forward any questions they had to the Leader of the Council, as the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder, at the next Cabinet Meeting.
- 67.8 Councillor Hilton reflected on conversations he had had with Cabinet Members at Cheltenham Borough Council regarding a possible sale. Councillor Norman reiterated that no formal discussions had taken place at Cabinet level, however Councillor Hilton could ask the Leader of the Council at the upcoming Cabinet meeting if he so wished.
- 67.9 Councillor Hilton observed that there was currently no upcoming decision pertaining to Gloucestershire Airport in the Cabinet Forward plan and stated that no discussions had taken place with political Group Leads. He noted that he would hope for full disclosure of the options being considered as the Airport was an important asset in the County. Councillor Norman confirmed that the administration was committed to complying with all consultation and decision procedures, including Forward Plan notice requirements and the option for any report to be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 67.10 In response to a query from Councillor A. Chambers regarding the £24k overspend outlined at 5.17 in the report, Councillor Norman explained that this related to Senior Management costs.
- 67.11 In response to an additional question from Councillor A. Chambers, the Managing Director explained that the Council paid a flat fee of £50k a year for 2.5 days a week for Monitoring Officer resource. He noted that there was no daily rate for this work and that this figure compared favourably to staffing costs previously incurred for interim Monitoring Officers in recent years. The Managing Director further confirmed that he was satisfied that the Council was getting its fair share of Monitoring Officer resource.
- 67.12 Councillor A. Chambers referred to the £617k overspend in Homelessness and Housing and asked whether the overspend was due to costs associated with housing asylum seekers. Councillor Norman confirmed that housing for asylum seekers was funded by the Home Office. She noted that reasons for this budgetary pressure varied from the cost of accommodation and changes to local housing allowances, and confirmed that this was the reason the Council had opted to acquire more emergency temporary accommodation.
- 67.13 In response to a further question from Councillor A. Chambers regarding the variance around HR and Communications, Councillor Norman explained that

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this related to the shared Communications Service with Gloucestershire County Council, including press and social media communications, rather than the Council's postal arrangements. The Head of Finance noted that this also included recruitment costs, such as advertising.

- 67.14 Councillor A. Chambers asked for further information around the £125k overspend in Cemeteries and the Crematorium. Councillor Norman explained that this was linked with the substantial rise in energy costs and the fact that cremators use large amounts of energy. She noted that the Council might need to compare its fees and charges in this area with other Councils.
- 67.15 Councillor A. Chambers asked whether the cremator was being replaced, to which Councillor Norman confirmed that the Council was in the process of replacing the cremator.
- 67.16 In response to an additional question from Councillor A. Chambers, Councillor Norman confirmed that the administration had ambitions for the city of Gloucester to grow and be attractive for residents and visitors. She expressed her hope that regeneration in the city, through projects such as the Forum development, would attract more investment opportunities which in turn, would generate more footfall for local businesses and feed through to other areas of the city. She expressed that she was proud of the investment the Council had made in the city.
- 67.17 Councillor Hilton referred to the narrative in the report at 4.4. He asked for further information about the grant submission to Sports England. He also asked in relation to the property purchases to increase the availability of temporary accommodation, how close the Council was to making the properties fit for occupation. Councillor Norman confirmed that offers had been made on various properties, and that the Council had discounted making offers on properties which required lots of work to make them fit for occupation. In relation to the Sports England bid, the Managing Director advised Members that the Council had submitted a bid in August for around £1m in capital funding, and that it was anticipated that successful bids would be announced in January 2024.

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

68. REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF THE CYBER INCIDENT AND THE LESSONS LEARNT

- 68.1 Councillor Norman introduced the report and welcomed the Head of Transformation and Commissioning. She paid tribute to all Officers for their hard work and innovation during the cyber incident and subsequent recovery. In particular, she thanked the Managing Director and former Director of Finance and Resources for their leadership, as well as the Council's IT team for their dedication in recovering the Council's IT systems.
- 68.2 Councillor Hilton thanked the Head of Transformation and Commissioning for the report and Council staff for their work in dealing with the cyber

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incident. He noted that the latest figures confirmed a total recovery cost of £1.142m and observed that the costs had therefore exceeded £1m. He asked whether the recovery had improved systems, and whether all applications had been transferred to the Cloud. Councillor Norman stated that she had previously asserted that she was not willing to give assurances that the total recovery costs would not exceed £1m, and that the Council had received some grant funding towards the costs. She also noted that some of the recovery work was already part of the IT recovery plan and that it had front-ended some upcoming planned improvement work. The Head of Transformation and Commissioning further added that an advantage of the Cloud was that it increased resilience through a distributed structure. He added that the investment had provided the opportunity to reengineer systems from scratch.

- 68.3 Councillor Hilton asked whether the Council had made a mistake in not investing in its IT systems earlier, particularly following the cyber incident experienced by the Council back in 2014. Councillor Norman noted that the latest attack experienced by the Council was sophisticated, however the Council had invested in its IT systems and was already in a much stronger position than other authorities at the time of the 2021 cyber-attack. The Managing Director also advised that the Council had heavily invested since 2014 in improving its defences, upgrades, and improving awareness and business continuity plans. He stated that hostile agents were evolving threats and it was his view that the Council was not unprepared for the attack.
- 68.4 Councillor Wilson referred to the narrative in the report at 12.1 and the statement that the configuration of some systems had been customised by external consultants. He asked whether this had the potential to make the Council's systems weaker if this happened in the future. The Managing Director noted that one positive arising following the incident was that the Council's backups were still intact. However with the Uniform system used for planning applications, as all Councils' systems were configured differently, this application had needed to be rebuilt from scratch before the backups could be loaded. He noted that this could be a lesson for all Councils to learn from.
- 68.5 In response to a query from Councillor A. Chambers regarding whether the Council ought to have adopted the same IT as Gloucestershire County Council, Councillor Norman explained that lengthy discussions had taken place at the time of the Gloucestershire Council's ICT procurement, however the Council had decided that this was not the right approach for the City Council.
- 68.6 Councillor A. Chambers asked whether the Council would apologise to residents for the cyber-attack and data breach. Councillor Norman responded that the Council had already issued communications to residents regarding the cyber incident.
- 68.7 In response to a further query from Councillor A. Chambers as to whether residents ought to have been informed of the cyber-attack earlier, the Managing Director advised that the Council had immediately reported the

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incident to the relevant organisations and had worked with expert crime agencies to try and ascertain what data had been stolen. He noted that during the 18 months following the cyber incident, the Council had continued to provide services and that systems had now been repaired.

- 68.8 Councillor A. Chambers referred to the narrative at 18.2 of the report and asked whether there had been any claims from residents in respect of the data breach. Councillor Norman confirmed that the Council had received the lowest level of reprimand from the Information Commissioner's Office and had fully complied with their recommendations. The Managing Director advised that he was not aware that the Council had accepted any claims from members of the public. He noted that he shared the anger of the public regarding the cyber-attack, but the advice the Council had received from expert advice agencies confirmed that they did not believe any information taken had been published online, and that it was very unlikely that it would be in the future.
- 68.9 In response to a query from Councillor Dee regarding the action plan from the lessons learnt, the Head of Transformation and Commissioning confirmed that the Council had a new way of monitoring the action plan.
- 68.10 Councillor Wilson noted that residents had been informed of the breach more than a year later, and asked whether in hindsight the Council could have done a better job of keeping them informed. Councillor Norman confirmed that the Council had followed the expert guidance given at the time. The Managing Director reiterated that in the months that followed, efforts had been made to ascertain exactly what data had been taken so that individuals could be directly informed, however this had not proved possible. He noted that improved monitoring software had since been installed.
- 68.11 In response to further comments from Councillor Wilson as to whether consideration would be given to informing residents earlier in the process if a similar attack took place in the future, the Managing Director noted his point but reiterated that the Council had followed the advice from national advisory bodies advising against talking openly about the attack due to the potential to attract the interest of hostile organisations.

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

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

- 69.1 The Chair advised Members of the Committee that a revised Work Programme had previously been circulated. He also suggested that the Committee consider the Proposed Sale of Land at Podsmead for the Purpose of Commencing Regeneration report, and it was agreed that this item be added to the agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8th January 2024.

RESOLVED:

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

70. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 8th January 2024.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.40 pm hours

Chair