



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 5th September 2022

PRESENT : Cllrs. Field (Chair), Pullen (Vice-Chair), Ackroyd, Castle, Dee, Evans, Hilton, Kubaszczyk, Sawyer, Wilson, Zaman, Melvin, Taylor and Tracey

Others in Attendance

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Richard Cook.

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor Hannah Norman.

Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, Councillor Raymond Padilla.

Director of Communities.

Director of Policy and Resources.

City Growth and Delivery Manager.

Community Wellbeing Team Leader.

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer.

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. O'Donnell, Gravells MBE, Hudson and O'Donnell.

Ahead of the substantive agenda items, the Chair paid tribute to the late Councillor Colin Organ for his service as a Gloucester City Councillor, his contribution as a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and as former Mayor of Gloucester. A period of silence was held to allow Members to reflect and pay their respects to Councillor Organ.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

25. MINUTES

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RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

26. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

27. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or depositions.

28. ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

28.1 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson as to when it was likely that the IDOX application would be restored, the Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that it was hoped that the application would be available towards the end of the week.

28.2 The Chair requested clarification as to how many of the City Council IT applications had been restored. The Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that the Xpress, Modern Gov and Civica Financial applications were live again, and that the Revenues and Benefits team were working to catch up on the Open Revenues backlog. He reiterated that the IT team were close to restoring IDOX and that document management would follow shortly after. He noted that officers had caught up with around 90% of the land charges backlog.

28.3 The Chair asked whether the distribution of Council Tax rebate payments was in hand, referring to the ongoing cost of living crisis. The Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that the payments to residents who paid their Council Tax via direct debit were distributed very quickly, and that an application process for non-direct debit holders had been undertaken with two separate reminders issued to those residents. He explained that residents who had not already applied for the rebate would receive the relief through credit on their council tax bill.

28.4 In relation to the update relating to the notice of motion item, Councillor Pullen requested that an additional update be brought before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee later in the year to update Members on progress in creating a Covid Memorial in Gloucester. In particular, he requested that officers provide further details on the monument design, the partnership and how the monument will be funded across the relevant organisations, and the involvement of local people. It was agreed that follow-up enquiries would be made with officers to ascertain the timeline and that this item would be added to the agenda of a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. A discussion ensued as to whether Members might wish to make a donation towards the memorial through their respective allowances or via online crowd funding.

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28.5 Councillor Wilson requested that the full wording of notice of motions be provided in the agenda papers going forward.

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

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

29.1 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. Councillor Hilton asked whether the Committee could consider the City Council Energy Costs and Reduction Projects Annual Report and it was agreed that this item be added to the agenda for Monday 3rd October. The Chair wondered whether it would be possible to invite a representative from Gloucestershire County Council to this meeting to provide an update on the position of facilities such as libraries. It was agreed that enquiries would be made with Gloucestershire County Council officers to ascertain their availability.

29.2 A discussion ensued and it was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be amended to move the Task and Finish Group Report and Levelling Up Fund update to the agenda for the meeting on 31st October 2022. Councillor Hilton suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider the Parking Review and it was agreed that this item would also be added to the agenda for this meeting.

29.3 Councillor Sawyer asked whether the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could request the upcoming Climate Change Strategy and City Centre Commission reports. It was noted that these items had not yet been allocated a date on the Forward Plan and it was agreed that these items would be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme under 'date to be confirmed'. The City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that the City Centre Commission were due to meet for final deliberations on 10th October 2022.

RESOLVED –

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

30. PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 REPORT 2022/23

30.1 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources introduced the report and explained that its purpose was to set out the council's performance against a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) in the first quarter of

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2022/23. She explained that the performance data was set out in Appendix 1, and where targets exist, they had been included along with narrative to explain the data. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources further noted that as a result of the cyber incident experienced by the council in December 2021, Quarter 1 data for 5 of the 28 KPIs was not available due to some systems still being inaccessible. She informed Members that areas seeing an improvement included the percentage of customers satisfied with the service received from the council, the footfall at the Museum of Gloucester and TIC and the number of unique visitors to the Visit Gloucester website. Areas seeing a declining trend included the percentage of total waste recycled.

- 30.2 The Chair referred to KPI CCM-2 and asked whether the decreasing number of enviro-crime fixed penalty notices (FPNs) being issued was a positive or concerning trend. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources referred to the statement in the narrative confirming that the levels of FPNs issued have increased and exceeded the target. She therefore expressed her view that this was a positive trend. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment noted that he was aware of periods where there were lower numbers of officers in the team which could account for the reduction of FPNs being issued, however the number had now been restored and the number of FPNs may well rise in due course. He also confirmed that officers had been asked to pay particular attention to issues which often need more time to investigate, such as fly tipping. The Leader of the Council confirmed that he was happy with their performance, and he had personally seen an improvement in the city centre which he felt was testament to the hard work of the enviro-crime officers.
- 30.3 The Chair agreed that he had also seen a positive impact in his own ward where persistent fly tipping offenders had recently been prosecuted. He asked whether any consideration had been given to lowering the £24 bulky waste collection fee in light of difficulties some residents might experience with the increased cost of living. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the council had not increased the charges, however as this was a discretionary service rather than a statutory one, the council would continue to charge for this service as it had a responsibility to cover operating costs.
- 30.4 Councillor Wilson referred to H-25 and the narrative confirming that 22 affordable homes had been delivered during Quarter 1 with 199 affordable homes scheduled to be delivered in total during 2022/23. Noting that there were ongoing supply chain issues in the construction industry, he asked whether there was a realistic chance of delivering the rest of the promised affordable homes in the remaining quarters. The Director of Communities explained that this was an area of peaks and troughs, and data measuring historically had shown that affordable home delivery tended to vary across the quarters. She confirmed that if there were any concerns around this target, adjustments would be made accordingly.
- 30.5 Councillor Pullen also referred to H-25 and stated that he would like the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy to attend an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to answer questions from Members

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regarding the alert KPI status and proposals for how the target would be met. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources stated that she would encourage Members to invite the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy to the meeting when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report.

- 30.6 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson as to whether the council was legally compliant with undertaking food premises inspections, the Director of Communities explained that the data is recorded through the Food Standards Agency. She reassured Councillor Wilson that she was confident that officers are robust in upholding standards of compliance and had not changed their assessments or how the assessments were recorded. She further noted that retrospective figures would be provided once the data was available.

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

31. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP AND ACTIVITY UPDATE

- 31.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods introduced the report and paid tribute to the Communities Team for their hard work. He explained that there was statutory provision in place for the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the City Council regularly attended meetings of the Stronger Safer Gloucester Partnership (SSGP). It was noted that one Community Safety Officer was responsible for coordinating community safety work on behalf of the council, and worked in accordance with the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner's priorities. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods informed Members that some of the previous work of the SSGP included work on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) which had been integrated into partnership work, the establishment of the Bluelight Group which provided outreach work with entrenched drinkers, and NightSafe and Street Aware projects.
- 31.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that in 2021, the council had helped deliver a number of SSGP priorities, including an initiative to tackle health inequalities, promoting equality and diversity in Gloucester and had worked to increase awareness of support services specialising in domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV). He advised that the council had also helped implement Safer Streets funding, working alongside Solace, and had undertaken reviews and renewals of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Gloucester.
- 31.3 In terms of future work in 2022, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that priorities included tackling violence against women and girls, safeguarding and making public spaces safer. He also confirmed that the SSGP had been awarded funding to employ a dedicated lead officer to look at tackling youth violence.
- 31.4 The Chair expressed the view that the report was comprehensive and an interesting read. He referred to the work undertaken by the council to tackle food poverty at 4.1.3 in the report and commented that this was an issue of

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pertinence due to cost of living challenges. He asked for the Cabinet Members' comments as to whether any progress had been made in this area and whether ongoing work was planned to tackle food poverty in the city. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that the programme was delivered over the summer holiday period and the Community Wellbeing Team Leader advised that the programme had been a success and would also be delivered during the Christmas school holidays. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader explained that a Community Wellbeing Officer was now leading on work to tackle food poverty and that the Communities team would backfill her routine work so that she could focus on this area. It was noted that the City Council would be progressing a food strategy towards the end of the year, and the Chair expressed an interest in requesting the strategy to come before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when available.

- 31.5 Councillor Hilton referred to the Area Action Plan for Kingsholm and noted that he was pleased with the efforts of officers in tackling street drinking and that he had seen an improvement. He raised concerns about unauthorised camping in Hillfield Gardens and referred to the potential expansion of the alcohol free PSPO into the ward, noting that consideration should be given to amending the PSPO to allow members of the public to gather outside local pubs during sporting events. Councillor Hilton also raised concerns about the project to transform the Wellington Parade Garden or 'Rose Garden'. He asked for an update on how the project was progressing, and whether works on the Rose Garden would be completed in October 2022. The Director of Communities reassured Councillor Hilton that the Rose Garden would be complete and open in October. She acknowledged that there were some challenges with the extreme heat weather over the summer, however officers had put lots of effort into the project and the council want to make sure it was a success to reflect this work. Councillor Tracey suggested that consideration be given to gating the area.
- 31.6 Councillor Pullen referred to the narrative regarding knife crime at 4.6.2 and the statement that the council had secured match funding for an engagement role. He asked for clarification on what community led action would look like, and what the purpose of the role would be. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader advised that the additional funding would enable the council to advertise an 18-month fixed-term role which would be advertised towards the end of October 2022. She explained that the appointed officer would be responsible for analysing serious youth violence in the city, and would be asked to engage with communities to understand the current landscape and identify future trends which would inform the CSP what needed to be done to tackle the issue. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader further noted that the hope would be to engage with young people with lived experience and the ultimate aim would be to develop a strategy and work plan to use as a basis for decision making, such as where to direct resources. The Director of Communities added that the feedback from local residents was clear that tackling issues around youth violence was important to them. Councillor Pullen was pleased to note that the role would engage with young people in Gloucester directly.

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- 31.7 In response to a further query from Councillor Pullen, the Community Wellbeing Team Leader confirmed that the Community Wellbeing Team had met with Young Gloucestershire and were keen to work with them as a research partner.
- 31.8 Councillor Wilson expressed the view that the report was a good one, providing useful information and clearly setting out the work of the CSP. He asked whether the bid for Safer Streets funding was successful or still in the pipeline. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader confirmed that the team had been assured some funding. She further noted that the creation of a new Street Aware lead officer role would bolster the efforts of officers to engage with rough sleepers and understand the underlying reasons behind the issue. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader advised that they hoped to start advertising for the role within the next few days, and that Gloucestershire Constabulary had confirmed that they were happy to support a secondment should one of their staff be an ideal candidate for the role.
- 31.9 In response to queries from Councillor Sawyer regarding the Flare App and whether the CSP worked with planning developers regarding the location of public transport stop sites, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that the CSP had received positive feedback about the Flare App and that there had been around 2000 app downloads in early 2022. This said, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods noted that there was a need to raise further awareness of the app. The Community Wellbeing Team Leader further noted that although initial app downloads were high, ongoing usage was something that the Police were exploring. She also noted that data from the Flare App would be explored further in the Safer Spaces Strategy, particularly in relation to hotspot areas. The Director of Communities further noted that the aim would be for the CSP to be a statutory consultee on planning applications, and the Community Wellbeing Team Leader confirmed that the option to work with the University of Gloucestershire on issues such as night buses would be kept open for when additional funding was made available.

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

32. REPORT OF THE HISTORIC PLACES PANEL FOLLOWING ITS VISIT TO GLOUCESTER

- 32.1 The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report, and informed Members that back in October 2021, the Historic Places Panel (HPP) visited Gloucester and had provided a copy of a report of its visit which summarised its findings, conclusions, and recommendations. He informed Members that the HPP had a broad spectrum of independent expertise within the built environment and heritage sectors across the UK. The Leader of the Council referred to the conclusion outlined at 3.4 and noted that the report was broadly favourable.

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- 32.2 The City Growth and Delivery Manager referred to Appendix 1, which included the Recommendations of the HPP and the City Council's response to acknowledge and address the recommendations. He provided an overview of each of the 18 recommendations and the proposed actions.
- 33.3 In response to a request from the Chair as to what was meant by 'Design Coding' in recommendation 18, the City Growth and Delivery Manager explained that design codes were similar to a miniature local plan. He further explained that such codes were created to design guided development and helped to identify key design issues.
- 33.4 Councillor Hilton expressed surprise that the City Council did not employ an in-house urban designer and noted that this was a matter which had also previously been raised during a Planning Policy Members Working Group meeting. He asked for clarification as to the estimated cost of employing a full-time urban designer. The City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that it was likely to be a Principal Officer grade post in the region of £60k per year.
- 33.5 Councillor Hilton noted that the City Council's previous arrangement with Tewkesbury Borough Council costed around £15k a year and therefore noted that an in-house urban designer would bring an additional cost of £45k. He asked whether the City Council would benefit from this expertise and whether it was likely that an in-house urban designer would have a positive impact on the quality of developments in the city. The Leader of the Council acknowledged that the city could benefit from directly employing an urban designer and that it was worthwhile discussing the provision with the Planning Service. He noted that the Council would still have to find £45k to fund the role.
- 33.6 Councillor Melvin expressed the view that the City Council would very much benefit from having a dedicated in-house urban designer and raised concerns about some recent building developments in the city. It was her view that this role would be better off kept in-house and a local connection was important.
- 33.7 Councillor Tracey suggested that the council might want to consider undertaking a project to ascertain a breakdown of the population in the city. She suggested that this might identify pockets of the city where young people were living, which might help with looking at how to bring residents into the city centre. She expressed the view that Gloucester had much to offer as a city.
- 33.8 Councillor Sawyer referred to the recommendation concerning design codes and agreed that a city-wide design code was a challenge due to Gloucester's varied buildings. She wondered whether consideration could be given to selecting a small number of designs to help bring the city together, and expressed a particular interest in the regency style of some Gloucester buildings. She noted that an in-house urban designer might well be able to help with this. The City Growth and Delivery Manager noted that a range of

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design codes might be needed, and that form and function of buildings was also important.

33.9 Councillor Taylor referred to the recommendation to employ an in-house urban designer and commented that an input from an urban designer would be very helpful for Planning Committee Members when considering development applications. A discussion ensued amongst Members regarding the potential of Alney Island.

33.10 Councillor Pullen referred to recommendation 5 concerning the involvement of young people and communities. He asked whether consideration might be given to requesting that the City Archaeologist visit schools to engage with young people directly. The City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that the City Archaeologist already undertook lots of networking and was due to engage with the community during the upcoming History Festival. He was also mindful that a significant element of his role was to advise on planning applications from an archaeology point of view. The Leader of the Council pointed out that the City Council already had actions in hand to address many of the recommendations of the HPP.

RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMENDS** that:

- (1) Cabinet accepts the recommendation of the Historic Places Panel to consider employing an in-house urban designer to augment the council's capacity in offering development advice.
- (2) Cabinet revisits the proposal for design coding to be progressed on a site by site basis, and accepts the recommendation of the Historic Places Panel to produce design codes at a more strategic level.

33. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 3rd October 2022.

Time of commencement: 6.30pm

Time of conclusion: 8.32pm

Chair