



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MEETING** : Monday, 5th December 2022

**PRESENT** : Cllrs. Field (Chair), Pullen (Vice-Chair), Ackroyd, Campbell, Dee, Evans, Gravells MBE, Hilton, Hudson, O'Donnell, Wilson, Zaman, Conder and Morgan.

### **Others in Attendance**

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

Cabinet Member for Communities, Councillor Raymond Padilla.

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Andrew Lewis.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy, Councillor S. Chambers.

Director of Communities.

Director of Policy and Resources.

Head of Culture.

Head of Place.

Accountancy Manager.

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer.

**APOLOGIES** : Cllrs. Castle, Kubaszczyk, Norman and Sawyer

### **67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **68. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING**

There were no declarations of party whipping.

### **69. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)**

There were no public questions.

### **70. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)**

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There were no petitions nor deputations.

**71. DRAFT MONEY PLAN 2023-28 AND BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2023-24**

- 71.1 The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report and provided an overview of the Draft Money Plan from 2023/24 to 2027/28. He confirmed that there were many unknowns in terms of the future income and expenditure of the council, and that the year-end position was still uncertain. The Leader of the Council advised Members that the Covid-19 pandemic and the cyber incident the council experienced back in December 2021 had brought further uncertainty.
- 71.2 The Leader of the Council confirmed that the council had identified savings, however these savings were unlikely to have any significant impact on staffing numbers. In relation to capital financing, he confirmed that the Kings Square regeneration had been completed earlier in the year, and informed Members that the regeneration of the Kings Quarter area had commenced on site. The Leader of the Council added that the council had managed to see some income growth through recycling income, and that part of the Budget Savings programme included a small increase in Garden Waste and Parking charges. He advised Members that the administration was open to cross-party input on the Draft Money Plan and Budget proposals, and that there would be an opportunity for residents to share their views. He encouraged Members to raise awareness of this opportunity within their communities and thanked the Finance Team for their efforts in preparing the Draft Money Plan report.
- 71.3 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources had given her apologies for the meeting and advised that she would be adding comments on the report on her behalf. She informed Members that the financial outlook for Local Government continued to be difficult and noted that the current high inflation and cost of living crisis were placing significant pressure on the council's revenue budgets. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy explained that the Draft Money Plan had made the best estimates on the ongoing implications for the council.
- 71.4 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy advised Members that it was likely that the Government would stick to the Spending Review 2021 allocations which meant that there was unlikely to be new funding for Local Government. This in turn meant that there would be real-term cuts in funding for the sector and the Draft Money Plan had been produced on this basis. She confirmed that the council planned to draw down on its Business Rates reserve and make a small increase to Council Tax. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy paid tribute to the Finance Team and the council's Section 151 Officer for preparing the Draft Money Plan report under the difficult circumstances posed by the cyber incident, and thanked all staff for finding creative work arounds to ensure the council continued to deliver services despite the cyber incident.

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- 71.5 The Chair asked for an explanation as to why the full detailed breakdown of each Cabinet Member's portfolio had not been included within the Draft Money Plan report. The Leader of the Council confirmed that each Cabinet Member would be presenting their respective portfolios during the course of the meeting, and would be addressing points including the financial pressures, proposed savings and new income streams.
- 71.6 In response to a follow-up question from the Chair as to why the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not received the breakdown in writing, the Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that the savings targets for the Cabinet Portfolios were outlined in Appendices 2 and 3. He explained that the Budget Book document that the Chair was referring to was in the process of being produced as the Finance Team had prioritised restoring the Finance system following the cyber incident. The Director of Policy and Resources further noted that no new savings would be included in the final Budget Book.
- 71.7 Councillor Pullen also expressed disappointment that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not received the detailed breakdown on the pressures faced in each Cabinet portfolio area. The Director of Policy and Resources reiterated that the detailed changes to the current budget were set out in the appendices to the report. He confirmed that when the Local Government Finance Settlement was published later in December, the Finance Team would adjust the plan accordingly. The Director of Policy and Resources noted that when the Budget Book was available, it would not contain any information which was not already included in the report and appendices. Councillor Pullen reiterated his concerns about the lack of detailed breakdown in writing and stated that he would not want this to set a precedent for Budget scrutiny in future years.
- 71.8 In response to a request from Councillor Wilson for clarification on what was meant by the Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement for the benefit of Members, the Director of Policy and Resources explained that the Spending Review was based on the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and that Treasury advisors had agreed that there should be a two-year roll-over of this review. He advised that the Local Government Finance Statement published in December would clarify some additional matters, such as whether Gloucester would retain the New Homes Bonus. It was the Director of Policy and Performance's view that no fundamental changes were expected.
- 71.9 Councillor Wilson queried whether the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might benefit from moving the Budget scrutiny meeting to the month of January in future years, so as to give Members the opportunity to scrutinise the Draft Money Plan with any amendments following the Local Government Finance Settlement. The Chair agreed that this suggestion would be taken on board and acknowledged that this might make Budget scrutiny more effective.
- 71.10 In response to a further query from Councillor Wilson in relation to the Spending Review, the Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that

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Councillor Wilson was correct in his understanding that when the fixed spending numbers in the Spending Review were agreed, they did not take into account the rising rate of inflation.

- 71.11 Councillor Hilton asked whether the administration had committed to increasing Council Tax to the Government limit of 2.99%, which the Leader of the Council confirmed was the present plan.
- 71.12 Councillor Hilton referred to the expected reduction of the New Homes Bonus in 2023/24, and asked for clarification as to what the Tier Grant System was, and why the estimates had not increased with inflation. The Director of Policy and Resources explained that the Tier Grant system was brought in to ensure that no local authority areas were worse off after the spending settlement. He noted that the Lower Tier Grant was expected to drop out towards the end of 2024/25. The Director of Policy and Resources further explained that it was expected that the 2022/23 Services Grant of £225k would also drop out after 2024/25, and that the Revenue Support Grant of £272k would replace these from 2025 onwards. He advised Members that the assumption at this stage was a reduction in funding.
- 71.13 Councillor Hilton referred to the list of additional identified risks outlined at 18.3 in the report and the high-risk evaluation that income from fees and charges will not be as high as planned. He asked whether the council was being too optimistic on its income estimations. The Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that that was not his view. He expected that income from car parking would return to pre-Covid-19 levels, and that the Arbor Crematorium was now functioning as it was pre-pandemic.
- 71.14 In response to a further query from Councillor Hilton as to whether the council was placing too little into its reserves, the Director of Resources explained that in terms of money which was issued to the council during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as Business Rates grants, the council had to place this funding into reserves so as to return to central Government the following year. He commented that although he would like more money in reserve, the council had significantly increased its reserves over the past few years. The Director of Policy and Resources expressed the view that the council should be using its money to deliver services rather than prioritising its reserves.
- 71.15 Councillor Hilton referred to the Forum development project and noted that although it had received cross party support, it was an ambitious development which could have financially painful consequences for the council if there were issues with the project. He asked whether the council had costed and prepared to mitigate this risk. The Director of Policy and Resources noted that the Draft Money Plan highlighted that the key risks were increased revenue and interest rate pressures, however forecasts from the Treasury expected borrowing costs to return to more sustainable levels in 2024. He confirmed that Officers continued to work to ensure the Forum project was as secure as possible, and had acted quickly to secure the development contract in December 2021 which had protected the council from further developer cost increases. The Leader of the Council pointed out that Councillors had collectively taken the decision to move ahead with the

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Forum project and provided assurances that Officers were doing all they could to mitigate any risks and constantly monitor interest rate rises.

- 71.16 In response to a question from the Chair regarding the proposed savings of £85k from the review of parking charges, the Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that a report setting out the detail of the proposed charge increases would be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in January.
- 71.17 Councillor Pullen queried whether all car parks in Gloucester City Centre would be subject to this review. The Director of Policy and Resources and Accountancy Manager both confirmed that the review would include all council owned car parks in the city.
- 71.18 In response to a question from Councillor Hilton concerning the improvements to Gloucester Railway Station and the responsibility of Great Western Railway (GWR) for the scheme, the Head of Place clarified that the City Council was passporting funding to GRW rather than funding the project directly. He provided assurances that the scheme was being delivered by GRW and was not a City Council project.

### **Performance and Resources Portfolio.**

- 71.19 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy presented this portfolio on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources.
- 71.20 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy advised that the current staffing levels within the Performance and Resources portfolio were 109.9 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) in post with 11 vacancies. She noted that these figures also included the 9 apprentices recorded against HR but used across the portfolios, confirming therefore that the total FTE staffing was 120.9.
- 71.21 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy informed Members that the financial pressures in the Performance and Resources portfolio included IT Hosting Costs of £120k to cover additional costs of creating future resilience of the council's operations by updating and moving IT infrastructure to cloud hosted versions of various software packages. She advised that there was a further cost pressure of £300k as a result of the increase in utilities prices across the council's operations. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy noted that the initial impacts of these price rises had been mitigated by contracts the council had put in place with energy providers, but the fixed elements of these contracts would end during 2023/24. She stated that the council would continue to work to reduce its energy usage and subsequent costs, in line with the council's net zero climate change aspirations, and that the increase in energy costs would be spread across the service portfolio budgets.
- 71.22 In terms of proposed budget savings for the Performance and Resources portfolio area, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy noted that the council had brought both the Revenues and Benefits and IT services

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back in-house. She advised Members that insourcing the Revenues and Benefits service had created the opportunity to streamline some of the service costs which was expecting to provide a cost saving of £240k in 2023/24. The insourcing of the IT service was expected to provide a cost saving of £135k in 2023/24. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy also highlighted that the relocation of the City Council's office space to the Eastgate Shopping Centre and an associated part-year saving of £130k was included in the 2022/23 Money Plan, and the remaining rent saving of £50k was recognised in the 2023/24 budget savings. She informed Members that other savings were expected on the conclusion of the car parking provision review, including consideration of bringing the enforcement team in-house and proposing changes to the tariffs were expected to generate savings of £110k.

- 71.23 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that the Food Dock regeneration on Commercial Road had been identified as a new income stream. She advised that the project would be completed in 2023 and would introduce an income stream of £50k.
- 71.24 With regard to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources' priorities for her portfolio, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that no changes to the portfolio were expected as a result of the budget proposals for 2023/24. She noted that as the Performance and Resources portfolio had an enabling function, it would support the broader priorities of the Council Plan. She confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources would be prioritising value for money for residents and only spending what the council could afford.
- 71.25 The Chair asked for an explanation as to the delay behind the Food Dock regeneration. He also asked whether the £50k income stream would be an annual income. The Head of Place explained that the unexpected Food Dock delays were down to issues with underground utilities, labour and provision of materials. The Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that it was expected that the £50k income stream would be an ongoing annual income.
- 71.26 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson as to whether the £300k budget increase in Utilities was expected to decrease to former levels over the coming years, the Director of Resources responded that at present it was unknown when energy prices were likely to reduce but assured Councillor Wilson that the council would continue to be prudent.
- 71.27 Councillor Wilson asked whether the council's contracts with utility companies were renewed annually. The Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that the council's utility contract was with West Mercier Energy and that this was due for renewal in September 2023.
- 71.28 The Chair requested clarification as to the £70k budget increase in Democratic and Electoral Services. The Director of Policy and Resources explained that financial years where no elections take place resulted in savings, and where an election took place, it would be recorded as a cost pressure as outlined in Appendix 2 and the 2024/25 budget pressures.

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**Culture and Leisure Portfolio**

- 71.29 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure advised Members that current staffing levels within the Culture and Leisure portfolio were 38.3 FTE in post with 3.9 vacancies, totalling 42.2 FTEs. He noted that the Culture and Leisure portfolio also had some zero hours workers when required.
- 71.30 Referring to the anticipated financial pressures for the next year, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure explained that 2022 had continued to be challenging for the culture and leisure sector following the lengthy Covid-19 restrictions and the current high rate of inflation, which had in turn impacted on the spending patterns of the public. He noted that during 2022/23, the Culture team had continued to be innovative in their thinking and development of opportunities to organise and run events. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure highlighted that the completion of the Kings Square redevelopment had led to a new events space and had already seen a number of new events and projects, such as the Kings Square opening ceremony and Luminarium.
- 71.31 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure advised that his team continued to monitor and apply for various Arts Sector funding sources. He referred to the Guildhall Galvanised grant which had seen the refurbishment of the Guildhall facilities during the summer of 2022 and his hope that the refurbishment works would enhance income generation possibilities. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that the significant increase in utilities costs and inflationary pressures whilst the leisure sector had been recovering from the impact of Covid-19 had resulted in the council facing an increase of £360k in the management fee to the Aspire Culture and Leisure Trust. He confirmed that there were no new proposed budget savings in the Culture and Leisure portfolio for the next year.
- 71.32 In relation to potential new income streams, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure noted that his team had been successful in obtaining Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation status for the Guildhall which would provide an uplift of £250k in 2023/24, with a further £500k over the following two years. He confirmed that there would be capital investment into the Museum of Gloucester through the £470k Arts Council's Museum, Estate and Development fund (MEND) project which would result in improvements to the museum's heating, lighting and drainage. He provided further assurances that the Culture team would continue to identify and implement ways of increasing the profitability of the Council's commercial activities to support their cultural ambitions and the council's budget.
- 71.33 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure informed Members that his priorities for this portfolio had not changed as a result of the Draft Money Plan. He referred to the agreed vision when the Cultural Strategy was adopted was to 'Put Culture at the Heart of Gloucester for the Good of All' to make Gloucester a better place to live and work. He expressed hope that Gloucester will be known for its distinctive culture which would innovative,

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quirky and edgy, diverse and community-based with a strong focus on young people.

- 71.34 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure outlined that his priorities for the coming year included plans to grow the programme, presence and audiences for the Guildhall, to deliver a revamped Guildhall cinema and to continue to deliver the Museums Development Plan. He also confirmed that the Culture team would continue delivery of the MEND capital investment project at the Museum of Gloucester, an exciting festivals and events calendar, and to continue to make use of new and innovative venue spaces.
- 71.35 The Chair referred to the planned capital investment for the Museum of Gloucester and asked the Cabinet Member to clarify whether he was committed to the museum remaining in the current building. He also asked whether there were any plans to introduce charges for visitors to the museum. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the museum would remain in the current building but there would be some transformation works through the MEND fund. He also confirmed that he had no plans to introduce visitor charges.
- 71.36 In response to a query from the Chair as to whether the relationship between the City Council and Gloucester Culture Trust was a healthy one, the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure informed Members that the Culture Trust had five new trustees which were well known within the sector. He advised that a new Chief Executive would be appointed in due course and expressed that he was confident that the organisation was on the right track.
- 71.37 Councillor Pullen referred to the £360k Aspire Management fee outlined in the base budget increases. He noted that it was his understanding that this figure was predicted back in the Spring and didn't account for the subsequent inflationary rises and national minimum wage increase. He asked whether this could have an impact on the delivery of services. The Director of Policy and Resources confirmed that the £360k figure was based on regular meetings with the Aspire Leisure Trust accountants, who were of the view that this figure was the appropriate level of support. He stated that although there were pressures with utility costs, the City Council was not aware of risk to service delivery.
- 71.38 In response to a follow-up question from Councillor Pullen as to the potential pressures caused by inflationary rises, the Accountancy Manager confirmed that he held monthly meetings with the Aspire Leisure Trust, and it was his understanding that they were on track for this year. The Director of Policy and Resources further confirmed that the City Council procured utility services on behalf of the trust and it was his view that the council was providing the correct level of support.
- 71.39 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure thanked Officers in the Culture team for their hard work.

#### **Leader and Environment Portfolio**

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- 71.40 The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment advised that the current staffing levels for his portfolio were 30.9 FTEs in post with no vacancies.
- 71.41 In respect of financial pressures for the next year, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the budget for the Waste service included an additional £150k added to address inflationary increases in relation to fuel and utilities costs and forecast pressures arising from driving staff costs. He stated that the council remained committed to tackling the climate crisis and achieving its net zero carbon targets. The Leader of the Council informed Members that the City Council would continue to work with a County-wide group involving the other Gloucestershire district councils, Gloucestershire County Council, the OPCC and the NHS, and the commitment to maintain the County Climate Co-ordinator role would require a further £11k contribution from the City Council in 2023/24.
- 71.42 The Leader of the Council advised that the council had engaged with the company 'Plan B' for the management and sale of recycling commodities, and that as a result of this contract and current commodity price levels, the income levels during 2022/23 were performing well. He stated that based on the current market forecast from Plan B, the income target in the budget for 2023/24 had been increased by £350k to £870k.
- 71.43 Referring to possible new income streams, the Leader of the Council noted that in line with the council's budget decision in February 2022, the garden waste charges would be increased from February 2023 to cover the increasing costs of service provision, which would generate an additional income of £40k. He confirmed that there were no other new income streams for the Leader and Environment portfolio for the next year, however Officers would continue to consider opportunities to raise additional income. He also highlighted that all income streams within this portfolio continued to meet targets, including discretionary services such as bulky waste collection.
- 71.44 In terms of his priorities, the Leader of the Council confirmed that he would continue to ensure that the City of Gloucester continued its positive regeneration and to appropriately manage the city environment whilst taking steps to address climate change.
- 71.45 In response to a query from the Chair in respect of concerns raised by residents regarding the increased garden waste charges, the Leader of the Council advised that the City Council had notified residents of the increased charge on their renewal notice. He noted that in terms of the reduced service from November, the price had remained at £44 to compensate residents. He explained that the increase was being put in place as a result of an expected significant increase in fuel and driver costs and noted that in his view, the increase of £2 was a modest one and considerably lower than the rate of inflation.
- 71.46 The Chair asked whether the council planned to review the collection charges for bulky waste. The Leader of the Council advised that the council had decided to continue to apply bulky waste charges, however the council

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offered reduced rates for low-income households in receipt of benefits. In response to a follow-up query from the Chair, the Leader of the Council confirmed that he did not believe that the bulky waste charges would increase fly-tipping.

- 71.47 Councillor Pullen asked whether there was a risk of residents not renewing their garden waste collections as a result of the charge increases and households having less disposable income during the cost-of-living crisis. The Leader of the Council stated that he did not believe a 4% increase was unfair and noted the council had not seen a reduction in renewals in previous years. He accepted that the cost-of-living crisis was putting pressure on residents but reiterated that there were discounts available for low-income households and it was his hope that most garden waste service users would continue with their arrangement.

### **Communities and Neighbourhoods Portfolio**

- 71.48 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that the current staffing levels for this portfolio were 21.0 FTE in post with 0.3 vacancies. He noted that the total FTE was 21.3.
- 71.49 Referring to the financial pressures for next year, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods informed Members that the story of 2022/23 continued to focus on responses to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis on the council's service delivery. He confirmed that the Community Wellbeing team had been managing numerous grants from the Government, County Council and other partners, which had supported the delivery of additional service provisions to address the longer-term impacts of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living challenges. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods advised that the grants had allowed the council to ensure the continuation of the positive aspects of various services and noted that Officers would continue to monitor requirements and explore affordable responses throughout 2023/24.
- 71.50 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that there were no specific savings identified for the Communities and Neighbourhoods portfolio for 2023/24.
- 71.51 In respect of new income streams, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that the council had received several new grant income streams through Gloucestershire County Council, the Integrated Locality Partnership and the OPCC to deliver community support projects over the next two years. He noted that these grants would enable partnership working with local charitable agencies, such as Citizens Advice and GARAS, and employ additional support to help with projects covering food equality, youth engagement and serious youth violence prevention.
- 71.52 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods highlighted that his future priorities included investment in community building, further development of the work of Nightsafe and Daysafe, supporting Solace and

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other charitable partner agencies and delivering on Council motions on knife crime, warm spaces and making Gloucester a City of Sanctuary.

- 71.53 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson regarding grant provision for charitable partner agencies, the Director of Communities explained that under the Service Level Agreement (SLA), grants had been frozen for the last two years. However, the City Council was supporting organisations by working with its networks to draw additional funding through external means.
- 71.54 In response to an additional question from Councillor Wilson as to whether the City Council was supporting partner organisations in actual terms, the Director of Communities explained that the Annual report on the Grant Funding provided to the Voluntary and Community Sector was shortly due to be considered by Cabinet which provided further detail as to how the City Council was distributing grant funding to charitable partner organisations.

### **Planning and Housing Strategy Portfolio**

- 71.55 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy advised that the current staffing levels for her portfolio were 43.0 FTEs in post with 10 vacancies. She noted that the total FTE was 53.0
- 71.56 In respect of financial pressures for the next year, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy explained that the statutory nature of many of the fees which the Planning Service charged created consequential financial pressures when prices and salaries were rising at a faster rate. She confirmed that a forecast for planning income was in the process of being finalised, however it was important to be mindful that the council was not in control of the timing of planning submissions and therefore, the figure would be kept under continuous review.
- 71.57 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that during 2023/24, the continuation of major development projects planned within the city would hopefully boost income, however in some cases the statutory fees were not expected to cover the cost, as was the case with the University of Gloucestershire's redevelopment of the former Debenhams building. She informed Members that the current cost-of-living crisis, alongside the increased pressure on the housing market caused by international settlement, including the migration from Ukraine, may result in an increase in homelessness presentations and increased lengths of stay in temporary accommodation. She further noted that during 2021/22, the council's Discretionary Housing Payment budget was significantly reduced from previous years, and this was likely to place pressure on existing budgets to support homelessness households.
- 71.58 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy informed Members that there were no further savings proposed for either the Planning or Housing Service. She stated that the council continued to work with city partners to identify opportunities to improve access to temporary and permanent accommodation through repurposing existing properties and land in the city. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy also

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advised that the council continued to bid for Government funding and had received various grants to help deliver additional housing services. She thanked Officers for their efforts. She also confirmed that no new income streams had been identified for this portfolio for coming year but noted that Officers would continue to promote the use of Planning Performance Agreements and be innovative in their approach.

- 71.59 With regard to future priorities, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that her main priorities over 2023/24 would be embedding the adopted City Plan pending Council approval, reviewing the Joint Strategic Plan Review of the Community Infrastructure Levy, and the assessment of major planning applications including the St Oswalds Housing development and Podsmead regeneration sites. She also confirmed that she would be prioritising an Accessibility Project to increase the provision of and promote better design of accessible housing, a Private Sector Engagement Project to help secure private rented sector accommodation options for vulnerable residents and working in partnership with registered housing providers to reduce rough sleeping and the number of people in emergency temporary accommodation.
- 71.60 The Chair asked whether the cyber incident had had financial consequences for the Planning Service due to the planning portal being inaccessible. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that all residents who could not make a planning application whilst the council was impacted by the cyber incident were given the opportunity to resubmit. She and the Head of Place further advised that the additional backlog work was taken on by Officers, making use of an existing resource.
- 71.61 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson regarding inflation pressures, the Director of Policy and Resources clarified that the Draft Money Plan included inflation pressures on contractual sums such as the £320k increase in Price Increases outlined in Appendix 1. He noted that as a result, the council would see a benefit to bringing the Revenues and Benefits and IT services in-house.
- 71.62 Councillor Hilton asked why the new Enforcement Officer role was being advertised as 'City Centre Improvement Officer' rather than a Development Control team role. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that this advert was for a separate role in the City Centre Improvement team. She further noted that planning enforcement responsibilities were still being undertaken by Officers in the Planning service. Councillor Hilton expressed the view that the City Council needed a designated Enforcement Officer as it was a robust and challenging role which required particular skills.
- 71.63 In response to a follow-up question from Councillor Hilton concerning the employment of an Urban Designer, which had been discussed during recent Planning Policy Members Working Group meetings, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy confirmed that there had been discussions however the matter needed consideration within the Planning team.

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71.64 Councillor Hilton requested an update on the commitment to live stream Council meetings. The Leader of the Council referred to the answer he had provided to Members during the previous full Council meeting. He reiterated that the City Council planned to introduce live streaming in the future, however this had been delayed as a result of the cyber incident.

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

**72. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

**Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours**

**Time of conclusion: 8.02 pm hours**

**Chair**