

# **CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Friday 27 September 2019 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

**PRESENT:**

Cllr Robert Bird	Cllr Carole Allaway Martin
Cllr Iain Dobie	Cllr Brian Robinson
Cllr Kate Haigh	Cllr Ray Theodoulou
Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Cllr Lesley Williams MBE
Cllr Stephen Hirst	

**Substitutes:** Cllr Alan Preest (In place of Cllr Shaun Parsons)  
Cllr Brian Tipper (In place of Cllr Kevin Cromwell)  
Cllr Eva Ward (In place of Cllr Rachel Smith)

**Officers in attendance:** Steve Mawson, Director of Corporate Resources  
Rob Ayliffe, Head of Strategic Planning, Performance and Need  
Neil Corbett, Head of Property Services  
Simon Harper, Head of Democratic Services

**Apologies:** Cllr Kevin John Cromwell, Cllr Joe Harris, Cllr Shaun Parsons and Cllr Rachel Smith

## **1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

The Chair of the Committee, Cllr Shaun Parsons, and the Vice-chair, Cllr Joe Harris were not able to attend the meeting. Cllr Ray Theodoulou and Cllr Kate Haigh were nominated to be Chair for the meeting.

*On being put to the vote, Cllr Theodoulou was appointed as Chair.*

Cllr Theodoulou welcomed Steve Mawson, the new Director of Corporate Resources, to his first meeting of the committee.

## **2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **3. WORK PLAN**

- 3.1 A member enquired why the financial monitoring report for quarter 1 2019-20 was not included on the agenda. Officers advised that it was custom and practice for the report to be presented to Cabinet first but they undertook to raise it with Cabinet members.

**Action** – *Steve Mawson and Simon Harper*

- 3.2 The frequency of meetings had now been agreed with six meetings to be held each year including the budget scrutiny session which would be held on 9 January 2020. A lead member meeting would be organised during the next month.

**Action** – *Simon Harper*

- 3.3 The Council had passed a motion at its meeting on 11 September 2019 relating to equality and diversity requesting the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to continue its work in providing independent, cross-party scrutiny of this area. A context setting presentation providing information from annual reports published by the Council on the population of the county, staff and service users would be included as an item at the agenda for the next meeting. The proposer of the motion at Council, Cllr Kate Haigh, requested that the Leader of the Council as the lead member for equalities be invited to attend.

**Action** – *Rob Ayliffe and Simon Harper*

### **4. PROPERTY DISPOSAL PROGRAMME**

- 4.1 Following the One Public Estate item at the last meeting, Cllr Lynden Stowe, Cabinet Member for Finance and Change, whose portfolio included property, had been invited to attend the meeting. Committee members had requested information on how the Council could harness more social benefits as part of its property disposal programme.

- 4.2 Cllr Stowe explained that the Cabinet and officers worked to the Corporate Strategy which set out the Council's priorities including climate change. He said that every aspect of the Council's business was about delivering social benefit and was not limited to the property disposal programme. He noted that housing was the primary responsibility of District Councils through their local plans. The demand for social housing and market housing was assessed through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and these were kept under review by the District Councils through the local planning process. He acknowledged the importance of social housing but also noted that market housing was a key part of balanced communities. He was concerned that home ownership in the county has fallen from 70% to around 60%. One of the priority objectives for Vision 2050 was the

provision of good quality housing that encouraged young people to stay and attracted other people to move to the county for work.

- 4.3 The One Public Estate Programme had to work within the parameters of the housing needs identified by the Districts. One of the key areas was providing housing for adults in later stages of life and the Council always looked to work with partner agencies to meet that need. Cllr Stowe stated that the budget was tight with limited flexibility but if there were opportunities to harness more social benefits then the Council would look to do that.
- 4.4 A member noted the urgent need for good quality social housing and she believed that the Council should have a more planned approach with less emphasis on achieving the maximum capital receipt. They said it was difficult to bring forward social housing schemes without subsidy as there were challenges with the financial viability of sites. With the Council facing increasing demand for supported housing for vulnerable young people and adults, they suggested that the Council consider developing sites itself. They called for a more innovative approach that learnt from the Gloucester City Local Plan that included electric vehicle charging points, cycle lanes and carbon-neutral development.
- 4.5 Members expressed concern regarding the proposals for a Gloucester Health Hub at Quayside, including access, design, parking and cost cutting. Cllr Stowe believed that it was a sensible and pragmatic scheme which made the best use of the funds available and reduced carbon emissions by utilising the existing concrete footprint of the former Quayside building.
- 4.6 A member stated that the Property Team was very good in engaging with local communities on proposals for the disposal and reuse of sites. They recognised that this was a difficult process as local people often had different views. With the increasing focus on carbon-neutral development they enquired how the Council's approach was changing. Neil Corbett stated that following the Council motion declaring a climate change emergency, the Property Team were considering the best way forward. He said that it was important for officers to understand the impact on value and the resulting proceeds from capital receipts. He assured members that the Council enjoyed a good working relationship with the District Councils and other public agencies including the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group.
- 4.7 Another member noted that in some instances a significant proportion of the cost of running a service related to the maintenance of buildings rather than delivering the service itself. He believed that there was potential for using buildings in different ways to meet particular needs, for example providing support to people coming out of hospital.

- 4.8 Cllr Stowe noted that the Council had installed a new solar heating system at Shire Hall and was committed to reducing its carbon emissions. He acknowledged that financial viability could be an issue in delivering social housing and the Council looked to provide support where there were identified needs. In terms of social value, he referred to the new facility for young people being developed at Trevone House.
- 4.9 In developing sites to meet the needs of local people, a member noted that the Council could retain ownership and receive an income stream through rental payments.
- 4.10 Another member enquired about process that was followed when the Council became responsible for properties at short notice. They made particular mention of the two care homes that had closed in the Stroud area. Mr Corbett stated that such events were unexpected so the Council had to act more quickly. He said that the Council would be engaging with local residents and Stroud District Council in developing plans for future use of the sites.
- 4.11 Steve Mawson assured members that the local County Councillor would always be consulted when options appraisals were undertaken of sites within their area.
- 4.12 Cllr Theodoulou thanked Cllr Stowe and Mr Corbett for attending the meeting and answering questions.

## **5. STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT 1ST QUARTER 2019/20**

- 5.1 Rob Ayliffe explained that a group of 20 indicators had been identified for the corporate dashboard that covered overall Council performance and business critical areas. The main area of challenge remained Children and Young People. Where performance was falling behind, early action was taken to bring indicators back on track.
- 5.2 A number of key indicators were highlighted in Children's Services:
- Timeliness of children seen following referral
  - Children's services re-referrals within 12 months
  - Children becoming subject to a second or subsequent protection plan.
  - Percentage of children in care for more than 2.5 years in the same placement for at least 2 years.
  - Number of permanent exclusions

*Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting*

5.3 Other areas notable areas identified were:

- Adult Social Care - Delayed transfers of care
- Adult Social Care - Permanent admissions aged 65+ to residential and nursing homes per 100k population.
- Adult Social Care – single programme trajectory
- Public health – percentage of pregnant smokers accessing the service who achieve a 4 week quit.
- Savings programme – good progress but the main area that is off track is Children’s Services. Processes are in place to address concerns.

5.4 Requests for information:

- a) Public Health – Did ‘vaping’ count as quitting smoking? What follow-up action was taken when pregnant smokers failed to quit smoking?
- b) Public Health – To request information on the review and actions being taken relating to late HIV diagnosis.
- c) Schools – To find out if there was a carbon emission figure for schools in Gloucestershire.
- d) Schools – To inform the Cabinet Member for Economy, Education and Skills and Director of Education of the committee’s concern that the Council had failed to consider the use of renewable energy in the latest school developments, notably the new secondary school in Cheltenham and the extension to Leckhampton Primary School.
- e) Climate change – To request that Cllr Nigel Moor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, attend the next meeting to present a short paper on the generation of renewable energy on the county estate. This should set out the current position and what the plans were for the future, including capital investment.
- f) Community Infrastructure – To contact the Leader of the Forest of Dean District Council to enquire what plans the Council has to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Scheme.

**6. PERFORMANCE REPORT - STRATEGY AND CHALLENGE (1ST QUARTER 2019-20)**

Rob Ayliffe stated that compliance with GDPR was generally good and heightened awareness was leading to more information breaches being identified. He noted that a great deal of work was being undertaken to support the improvement programme for Children’s Services. This ensured that better data and information was available to assess performance. Preparations were now underway for the next Ofsted inspection. The number of legal cases was increasing as a result of activities in Children’s Services.

*Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting*

**7. PERFORMANCE REPORT - CORE COUNCIL (1ST QUARTER 2019-20)**

Steve Mawson explained that the Strategy and Challenge and Core Council performance reports would be brought together under Corporate Resources. He highlighted the increase in sickness absence, the action being taken to speed-up the payment of invoices and the number of P1 priority incidents of concern in ICT. He acknowledged concerns around ICT and said that action was being taken to improve the service and introduce the latest operating software. He said that it was important though to be realistic with an organisation the size of the Council and this could not be achieved overnight.

**CHAIR**