



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 25th AUGUST 2020

PRESENT: Councillor T Jay (Chair), Councillors R Bilcliff, S Goodall, M Oates, Dr S Peple, P Standen, M Summers and P Thurgood

CABINET Councillor Daniel Cook

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), John Day (Knowledge, Performance and Insight Co-ordinator), Tracey Pointon (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) B Price

19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the following meetings were approved as a correct record:

- 31st January 2020
- 15th July 2020; and
- 28th July 2020.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peple and seconded by Councillor M Summers)

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

21 CHAIR'S UPDATE

There was no Chair's update beyond that to be provided at the next agenda item.

22 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair reported that following the previous two committee meetings on 15th and 28th July 2020, the Committee's recommendations on the following matters

considered were brought to the Cabinet meeting on 30th July 2020 and Cabinet responded as follows:

1. Capital Outturn Report

Cabinet agreed that a review of property funds is undertaken and such review be scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee, before any further investments under existing delegations are made and the review be taken to Council in December.

2. Member Training Update

Cabinet agreed that it and officers would go through the recommendations in the report and feedback to Corporate Scrutiny at the first opportunity.

3. Progress Report on Tamworth Assembly Rooms

Cabinet approved the recommendations made by this Committee as follows:

- 3.1 Cabinet agreed that Corporate Scrutiny (or the equivalent committee if there are name changes) have a formal role in the management process for all projects worth over 1 million pounds and any other projects deemed to be of importance to the reputation of the council;
- 3.2 Cabinet agreed to create a minimum governance structure and create project guidelines for any future projects and;
- 3.3 Cabinet thanked officers for the efforts to deliver the Assembly rooms project through to completion which was a difficult project and for providing a thorough report to the committee.

The Chair further reported that he would be taking this Committee's recommendations on the Initial Impact of the Pandemic on the Council's Business Aims to the 10th September 2020 Cabinet meeting.

23 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee sought and received clarification that the Release of the Mobile Phone Capital Contingency Funding item on the Forward Plan for consideration at Cabinet on 10th September 2020 would include coverage for all known impacts of the pandemic in this area.

No further items were identified from the Forward Plan at this time for consideration by this Committee.

24 QUARTER ONE 2020/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Report of the Leader of the Council which provided the Committee with a performance update and financial healthcheck was received.

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, and the Executive Director Finance and the Knowledge Performance and Insight Co-ordinator to the meeting.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and reported that in light of the projected impact of Covid-19 on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), an immediate suspension of all non-essential spending had been approved by Cabinet on 9th July 2020 and that managers were to review their budgets and identify all non-essential spending for 2020/21 as part of the quarter one projections at 30 June 2020.

The Leader reported that the budget review had identified savings of £1.2m towards the projected lost income anticipated from the impact of Covid-19 of £1.8m. Cabinet would be asked to approve that the budget be revised to reflect the forecast overspend at Quarter 1 of £134k, to be financed from a contribution from the transformation reserve.

Councillor Bilcliff joined the meeting at 6.24pm.

The Committee sought clarification in the following areas:

1. Noting that non-essential spending of £1.2million had been identified, the committee sought clarification on whether the organisation still retained the capacity to deliver all services and corporate projects in light of the ongoing pandemic and on how staff were being supported to deliver within the existing staffing structure. The Chief Executive reported that the reorganisation two years ago had brought the organisation down to a level which could deliver the aspirations of the corporate plan, but not beyond that.
2. The committee sought clarification on whether some of the corporate projects which showed as green and therefore on track remained capable of delivery on time or whether some review would be necessary to ensure the appropriate prioritisation of projects was established. In terms of the town centre programme, the background work remained on track, however, it was reported that further assessment would be required of the delivery mode and what would be delivered as the project progressed and as the impacts of the pandemic were more fully understood. However, whilst noting the constraints the council faced, it would be important to ensure that the projects were ready where possible to support regeneration and to ensure that where external sources of funding were available to assist in this that the projects were capable of capitalising on such funding.
3. The committee sought clarification on the welfare reform project which, as a corporate project, showed as on track, whilst the welfare and benefit reform was scored as red on the risk register. It was reported that these two indicators were completely separate.
4. The Committee sought clarification over the pay award process, and the budgeting for this and whether or not recent announcements from the government on bringing pay in line with the private sector could impact. It was confirmed that Tamworth followed the national bargaining process and

that the budgeting for this year's pay increase had been accurately forecast by the finance team.

5. The Committee discussed the implementation of the CCTV and it was noted that this remained a work plan item on the Infrastructure Safety & Growth Scrutiny committee which was anticipated to be reviewed in due course.
6. The Committee sought clarification on the Homelessness Strategy which was due to be considered by Cabinet in November 2020. It was reported that an item on Homelessness had been added to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's agenda for an upcoming meeting.

RESOLVED that the Quarter One 2020/21 Performance Report be endorsed.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peuple and seconded by Councillor S Goodall)

25 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION REPORT 2021/22 (SCRUTINY)

The Local Council Tax Reduction Report 2021/22 of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance was received by the Committee.

The Chair reported that this Committee considered an interim report on the proposals for 2021/22 at a meeting in November 2019 and requested that some further scenarios be considered and a further update be provided to this Committee. The Chair highlighted that following consideration by this Committee, the intention is that this report will be taken to Cabinet on 10th September 2020.

The Executive Director Finance highlighted that the original purpose of this report was to consider proposals for the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers for 2021/22. The proposal had been to replace the current 'traditional scheme' for working age claimants which was modelled in 2012 (and implemented in April 2013) based on the national Council Tax Benefit.

However, in light of the unprecedented situation following the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Executive Director Finance reported that it was now recommended that the review be postponed until 2021 when the impact for the scheme will be clearer. Consequently there were no proposed changes to the scheme for 2020/21 other than the usual alignment with housing benefit and therefore there would be no requirement for a formal consultation.

Full Council would be requested to approve this approach at its December 2020 meeting.

RESOLVED that the planned review for the introduction of a banding scheme for Council Tax Reduction be deferred until 2021 and that the current scheme for working age customers continues to be aligned to Applicable Amounts with those of Housing Benefit for 2021/22.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peuple and seconded by Councillor R Bilcliff)

26 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its work plan and it was agreed that an additional item would be added for the December 2020 meeting to provide an update on corporate prioritisation. The updated work plan is set out below:

Corporate Scrutiny Work Plan

Work Plan 2020 – 2021		
TARGET MEETING DATE	SUBJECT	MEETING WHEN ITEM ADDED TO WORK PLAN
10 th December 2020	Review of Legal Services (post implementation)	November 2019
10 th December 2020	Quarter 2 2020/21 Quarterly Performance Report	
10 th December 2020	Update on corporate prioritisation	August 2020
3 rd February 2021	Quarter 3 2020/21 Quarterly Performance Report	
Quarter 4 2020/21	Asset Management update	December 2019
Dates to be agreed		
TBC	Market tender progress Update	August 2019
TBC	Parking Toolkit review	October 2019
TBC	Housing Repairs & Investment Contract Review	November 2019
TBC	Solway Trading Company Update (2x per year)	December 2019
TBC	Gungate Masterplan	January 2020
TBC	Review of Cabinet decisions over previous 12 month period (<i>circulate to members post June meeting for comment</i>)	June 2020
TBC	Review of Write-Offs	July 2020

Upcoming Corporate Scrutiny Committee Meetings

8 October 2020

19 November 2020

10 December 2020

3 February 2021

11 March 2021

27 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That members of the press and public be now excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that the business involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

(Moved by Councillor M Summers and seconded by Councillor P Standen)

28 UPDATE ON SOLWAY (TAMWORTH) LIMITED

The Committee received the Update on Solway (Tamworth) Limited report of the Chief Executive.

The Committee considered and unanimously supported the proposals within the report.

Chair