



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 23rd JUNE 2021

PRESENT: Councillor T Jay (Chair), Councillors S Pritchard, J Chesworth, A Cooper, J Harper, Dr S Peale and R Rogers

CABINET Councillor Jeremy Oates

The following officers were present: Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), John Day (Knowledge, Performance and Insight Co-ordinator) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Goodall and R Ford.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the previous two meetings held on:

- 11 March 2021; and
- 24 March 2021,

were approved as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peale and seconded by Councillor T Jay)

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair welcomed the new members of the Committee to the meeting and thanked the retiring members, and additionally noted that Councillor Steven Pritchard had been appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee at the full Council meeting on 20th May 2021.

5 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair reported that following this Committee's consideration of the Gungate Consultation Feedback item at its meeting on 24 March 2021 the

recommendations of this Committee were received and noted at the Cabinet meeting on 8th April.

6 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET / COUNCIL

The Chair reported that there had been no matters referred to this Committee by Cabinet or Council, other than the request for this Committee to consider the State of Tamworth Debate discussion as part of its work plans going forwards, which was considered later on the agenda.

7 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted that a report on the investment in Town Hall resources to facilitate the delivery of on-line meetings had been added to the Forward Plan for consideration by Cabinet on 29 July and this could be an item for consideration by this Committee.

Clarification was sought on the Sculpture Trail item which was due for Cabinet consideration on 8 July 2021. The Leader responded that whilst we have the other town centre projects running this item is to progress public art in Tamworth.

Councillor S Pritchard joined the meeting at 6.10pm.

8 QUARTER FOUR 2020/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council, the Executive Director, Finance and the Knowledge, Performance and Insight Coordinator to the meeting for this item which was for the Committee to receive a performance update and financial health check for Quarter 4, prior to the Report of the Leader of the Council being presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 8th July 2021.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and highlighted that:

- This year would be a difficult year to compare to other years given the pandemic;
- Seen an increase in benefit claims and changes in circumstances;
- Council tax recovery had been strong at 97.4%;
- There had been a reduction in rent arrears;
- Detailed overview of Write Offs position and that there had been changes in how these had been managed during the pandemic;
- In terms of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) the finance team had regularly updated both Cabinet members and Government on predicted outturn over three and five years.

The Committee sought clarifications in the following areas:

- Corporate Capital Strategy and whether there was a further update to the timescales. It was reported that this had been affected by a delay in the Asset management Strategy, which was now expected to be completed in December 2021.

- The reasons for the difference between period 11 (£1.4m) and period 12 (£2.2m) in the final outturn figure. The Executive Director reported that there were two reasons for this; partly due to COVID related factors in terms of the uncertainty due to COVID in terms of appeals on business rates which increased the provision the council needed to make (c £500,000) and the second was due to the sales, fees and charges scheme and the claim in this regard was higher (c£200,000).
- Discretionary Housing payments and how these were assessed. The Executive Director Finance agreed to provide a written update to members on this;
- ICT Strategy. An update on the supplier issues was requested as well as clarification of the project due date. It was agreed that an update would be provided.
- Organisational Development Strategy. Clarification of the project due date was requested and it was agreed that this would be provided.
- It was confirmed that the retail unit at Tinkers Green / Kerria had been let.
- Town Centre Programme. The Committee sought further details on the position with regard to the Car Parking Strategy and the Market re-tender, particularly in light of the successful award of the Future High Streets Fund, and whether this would impact on any award. In particular the Committee sought assurances that if an award in any market re-tender was made it would still met the aspirations set out in the tender and would align with the wider strategy. It was agreed that full response would be provided.
- Gateway Development. Further details on whether this project could ahead before the wider Future High Street Fund development of the proposed new college site was requested and it was agreed that an update would be provided.
- Acquisitions. The positive benefits of the council acquiring properties to support people in suitable temporary accommodation was highlighted.
- Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG). The Committee questioned how the Tamworth DFG grant from Government was calculated. It was noted that the funds were passported via Staffordshire County Council and amounted to £546,000 which was less than half of that received by other District Councils in Staffordshire. It was noted reported that the allocation was based on an outdated historic allocation formula and that significant representations had been made by not only the Council but also by National bodies representing District Councils (District Council Network, Local Government Associations etc.) as well as representation to the MP. Members asked for a report setting out the position for consideration at the August meeting of the Committee (including details of representations made to date and any further information available on the basis of the historic allocation) – to inform their considerations in developing proposals for Cabinet.

9 CONSIDERATION OF STATE OF TAMWORTH DEBATE ITEMS

The Chair introduced this item and requested that members consider whether any of the discussion points at the State of Tamworth Debate should be developed further into work plan items for this Committee.

The Chair highlighted that most areas would be picked up through the Reset and Recovery programme and /or the regular Quarterly Performance Reports.;

One further area highlighted was ways of working and the longer term, organisational impact of this.

10 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its work plan and updated it as follows:

Corporate Scrutiny Work Plan

Work Plan 2021 – 2022		
TARGET MEETING DATE	SUBJECT	MEETING WHEN ITEM ADDED TO WORK PLAN
14 July 2021	Review of Cabinet decisions over previous 12 month period	December 2020
24 August 2021	Quarter One 2021/22 Performance Report	
24 August 2021	Disabled Facilities Grant report	June 2021
24 August 2021	Housing Repairs & Investment Contract Review	November 2019
7 October 2021	Solway Trading Company Update	
18 November 2021	Quarter Two 2021/22 Performance Report	
9 December 2021	Customer Portal - post implementation review	November 2020
9 Dec 2021 / 1 Feb 2022	Asset Management update	December 2019
1 February 2022	Quarter Three 2021/22 Performance Report	
10 March 2022	Solway Trading Company Update	
Dates to be agreed		
TBC	Update on corporate prioritisation	August 2020
TBC	Market tender progress Update	August 2019
TBC	Parking Toolkit review	October 2019
Bi-annual updates (March & September)	Solway Trading Company Update	December 2019
TBC	Gungate Masterplan	January 2020
TBC	Ways of working	June 2021
TBC	Joint Waste update	June 2021

Upcoming Corporate Scrutiny Committee Meetings

14 July 2021

24 August 2021 (Q1 QPR)

7 October 2021

18 November 2021 (Q2 QPR)

9 December 2021

1 February 2022 (Q3 QPR)

10 March 2022

Chair