

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday, 2nd September, 2015

Present:- Councillors Sarah Bevan (Chair), Bob Goodman (Vice-Chair), Christopher Pearce, Jasper Becker, Colin Barrett and Andrew Furse

12 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

13 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Barrett declared an 'other' interest as a founder of Percy Boys Club (Percy Community Centre is mentioned in item 8).

16 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

17 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

18 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

19 COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER UPDATE

Richard Long, Head of Property and Project Delivery gave a verbal update on the progress made in relation to the Community Asset Transfer policy. The update included:

- A summary of the general approach to granting Community Asset Transfers;

- The duty of a Council to dispose of property at best consideration reasonably obtainable;
- Community Benefit;
- Measure of organisational sustainability;
- Flexible leases; and
- Update on current Community Asset Transfers (*there is a table attached to the agenda for this meeting which provides an update on the status of the Community Asset Transfers currently being progressed. This is also on the Council's minute book for this Panel*).

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Goodman asked why there had been no pre-application advice regarding the lease to Genesis. The officer explained that negotiations are ongoing on this lease. Councillor Goodman asked about Abbey Churchyard and if the Council pays for any repairs. The officer explained that the responsibility for repairs transfers with the lease. Councillor Goodman asked how much the Council would earn if it was receiving commercial rent for these properties. The officer explained that the purpose of individual reports for member decisions is to show the potential commercial value against other values and benefits to the community. Andrew Pate – Strategic Director for Resources explained that details of this are contained in the decision register. Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency Councillor Charles Gerrish explained that a report regarding Genesis would be coming to the Cabinet meeting on 9th September 2015 and that the key issue is the outcome of the planning application.

Councillor Barrett asked about public conveniences that have been disposed of and why they are not included on this list. The officer explained that these are sold on the open market and don't fall within Community Asset Transfer. Councillor Barrett asked about Weston public convenience – the Director advised Councillor Barrett to email the officer for the details on this. The Cabinet Member added that all properties under consideration for Community Asset Transfer were listed in the Budget papers in February 2014/15.

Councillor Furse asked if all organisations had been satisfied with the liability for maintenance that has been handed to them. The officer explained that he works closely with organisations to make sure they understand the liability they are taking on. Councillor Furse stated that he was pleased to hear that the Cabinet Member is taking an interest in Genesis. He also asked about Chapel Arts Centre and why the freehold was sold. The officer explained that freehold was the only next step and that there are some stringent restrictive covenants. Councillor Furse was satisfied that the community benefit would be maintained.

20 HOW COUNCIL CONNECT WORKS

Tracey Long – Group Manager for Customer Services gave a presentation (*a copy of the presentation slides are attached to the agenda for this meeting and held on the Council's minute book for this Panel*). The presentation covered the following:

- An overview of how Council Connect Works;
- The face and voice of the Council;
- Contact Centre; Online; One Stop Shops;
- Customer first points of contact;
- What happens to customer requests;
- We don't manage customer contacts for;
- What we do if customers for these services contact us;
- Service request flow;
- Managing customer contacts for internal or external partners;
- Areas for improvement;
- Overall customer satisfaction rates.

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Barrett queried the time scales involved in resolving customer requests, he gave examples of 3 contacts with Council Connect where no feedback was given. He asked to meet with the officer to discuss the issues. The officer agreed to this and explained that it is hard to show on a flow chart the different service areas response times as they vary. Andrew Pate, Strategic Director for Resources explained that the Council does have customer service standards regarding response times which should be consistent across the whole Council. He stated that it would be useful to know from members which service areas they have had problems with and this can be followed up.

Councillor Furse congratulated the team on the customer satisfaction levels. He explained that he used to find it hard to get feedback but recently had used Twitter regarding some fly tipping and he a good response from refuse teams. He stated that he has been pleasantly surprised with the feedback from Twitter and email.

Councillor Pearce asked if Councillors could see a breakdown of information on who has complained/what about/what has been done. Georgina Jackman – Programme Manager Customer Services explained that she is working on some ward based information. Councillor Bevan stated that she used to receive ward statistics regularly and asked if this could be provided again. The officer explained that it could not be provided on a ward basis. The Director explained that there is a new CRM system which is being worked on and will be ready in the next few months. Councillor Bevan asked if the system could work out what proportion of issues have been resolved, the officer confirmed that the new system could do this.

Councillor Bevan stated that she would like a report to come back to the Panel at their March 2016 meeting with information on how feedback is given and also the areas of service with the most issues.

21 COMMERCIALISATION - INTRODUCTION AND UPDATE

Tim Richens – Divisional Director for Business Support gave a presentation on 'How far can we commercialise public service?' (*A copy of the presentation slides are attached to the agenda for this meeting and held on the Council's minute book for this Panel*). The presentation covered the following:

- Our Organisational Focus;
- Where the Council spends money 2014/15 - £315.5m – gross spend before taking account of income;
- Where money comes from to pay for all the services 2014/15 - £315.5m
- Statutory Framework
- Income 2014/15
- West England City Region Deal-Growth Incentive
- West of England Local Enterprise Partnership
- Opportunities
- What we are doing

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Furse asked several questions, he asked about how managing completion with private enterprise would work; is the Council eligible for a percentage of income outside Bath Quays; a solution regarding visitor contribution and day trippers. He stated that he was pleased to see the £770k per annum from the Bath Spa. The officer responded to the questions – he explained that the Localism Act covered the issue in that the Council is required not to subsidise a business in competition with other businesses. Regarding the City Deal, the officer explained that outside the zone, the Council gets normal rates and a new Somerset Business Rates Pool helps the Council keep a bit more. Regarding visitor contribution, the officer explained that this issue is ongoing as the plan for a £1 donation for the Roman Baths would not work as the Government has outlawed pre-ticked boxes on forms.

Councillor Barrett asked if the income from Parking is ring fenced. The officer explained that this has to be spent on Transport and Highways. Councillor Barrett asked about solar panels, the officer explained that the Government are reducing the subsidy rates but that the historical tariff is protected.

Councillor Pearce stated that the concept of the Council running businesses is interesting, he asked what the boundaries would be for this. The officer explained that there is technically no boundary but the Council would have to look at the level of risk and that generally it would have to be something in synergy with Council Services. The Strategic Director stated that it is a balance between risk and return and each case would be a matter of judgement.

22 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency explained that the financial review is in progress, the review of the Capital Programme is complete and in the Cabinet papers for 9th September meeting.

23 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the workplan items. It was agreed that the Strategic Director and Chair would meet to discuss a potential list of future items and would bring the workplan to the next Panel meeting.

Councillor Barrett asked about the unscheduled item on the workplan 'Use of Consultants and Agency Staff' – he asked that a date be given for this item.

The Strategic Director stated that he would be happy to receive emails from Panel member if they have any further suggestions.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services