

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 10th January, 2022

Present:- Councillors Karen Warrington (Chair), Winston Duguid (Vice-Chair), Mark Elliott, Andrew Furse, Lucy Hodge, Shaun Hughes, Hal MacFie, Alastair Singleton and Sally Davis

Also in attendance: Andy Rothery (Chief Finance Officer (S151)) and Mandy Bishop (Chief Operating Officer)

55 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

58 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

David Redgewell made a statement to the Panel on the subject of Bus Services. A copy of the statement can be found as an online appendix to these minutes and a summary is set out below.

He said that it was vital to keep regional transport links in place and for the services to be used to attempt to improve air quality.

He called for the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps to fully fund the bus and coach network with Covid-19 bus operators recovery grant. He added that bus and rail services passenger numbers were at 50 % to 60 % of pre Covid-19 levels.

He asked for funding to be made available for Supported Bus Services.

He stated that it was vital to keep bus shelters in good condition and for the Police to pursue any acts of vandalism against them.

He said that talks with bus and coach passengers, stakeholders and transport unions must be held to protect public transport interchanges, bus lanes and priority measures.

He asked who could lead from the Council on a discussion regarding an information point within Bath Bus Station as he believed this was a key element that could improve visitor experience and tourism in the City.

The Chair thanked David Redgewell for his statement and asked for it to be circulated to the relevant Cabinet Members.

David Redgewell 10.1.22 Statement to Corporate PDS Panel

60 MINUTES: 29TH NOVEMBER 2021

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

61 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Richard Samuel, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Resources addressed the Panel, a summary is set out below.

Milsom Quarter – Master Plan: Proposals to be shared towards the end of January followed by an all Councillors briefing. Public consultation will take place prior to proposed adoption in early Summer 2022.

City Region – Sustainable Transport Settlement: £200m available over five years, but would require 15-20% matched funding. Report to be discussed at a future Cabinet meeting.

Business Grant Schemes: Guidance from Government has now been received and a local scheme has been put in place.

Budget 2022/23: Public engagement underway with Seminars and Forums having been held. In response to the statement from David Redgewell he said that within the budget there were no changes to the level of funding in respect of Supported Bus Services.

The Chair thanked him for his update on behalf of the Panel.

62 DRAFT BUDGET

Councillor Richard Samuel, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Resources introduced this item to the Panel.

He said that the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27 Cabinet report and supporting detailed appendices had been reviewed and discussed at the Corporate Panel on the 27th September 2021.

He stated that the high level message is that the Council faces a difficult financial scenario in 2022/23 and into 2023/24 with a lower income expected into Heritage Services.

He said that the budget funding assumptions had been reviewed and updated following the figures in relation to the Local Government Settlement. He informed the Panel that the Chancellor has ruled out a reform of Local Government funding until after the next election and reminded them that this settlement would be for one year only.

He explained that work has been done with regard to rebasing the income and expenditure 2022/23 budgets, taking account Covid and the demand on services. He added that currently there was a high volume of waste and recycling being collected across the Council.

He said that the Council were seeing additional demand from new placement and market pressures in Adult & Children Social Care. The Chief Finance Officer (S151) addressed the Panel and sought to initially remind them that the figures for the budget are still draft. He stated that significant growth was required as Council needs £18m to provide its core services. He added that it was likely that income levels would not return to those seen pre-pandemic until 2024/25.

He said that further information regarding the budget would be available when the Panel meets again on Monday 31st January 2022.

Councillor Winston Duguid asked if the use of £3m corporate & £2.22m service reserves was temporary and would be replaced in future years.

The Chief Finance Officer (S151) replied that it was to be a temporary use and be drawn from Financial Planning Reserves into the revenue budget 2022/23.

The Chair asked if this was an action because of the pandemic.

The Chief Finance Officer (S151) replied that it was.

Councillor Hal MacFie asked if enough consideration had been given towards Climate Change within this proposed budget.

Councillor Samuel replied that there were no reductions planned within the budget in terms of the Climate Change agenda. He added that the Sustainable Communities service had been restructured to work more effectively. He said that the intention is to maintain the current Capital Programme.

He stated that two main subjects to tackle within this area were Transport and Energy Loss from Homes and said that the Council was working hard locally on new transport measures, but that additional resources from Government were required to address energy loss.

Councillor MacFie asked if the redevelopment of the Pixash Lane site would be considered as a positive factor within the Climate Change agenda.

Councillor Samuel replied that it would and that it was good to see it coming to fruition after being in the pipeline for around a decade. He added that it was set to be a modern purpose built recycling centre that would be able to handle higher volumes of recycling.

Councillor Andrew Furse asked how the Council would deliver a significant number of e-charging points by 2030 given that there is currently no real infrastructure in place and a relatively low number of properties across the area with access to a garage or driveway.

Councillor Samuel replied that the local electrical grid was overseen by Western Power Distribution and that improvements to the grid would be required to facilitate this work. He added that he believed that this particular issue was under consideration by them and that they have a five year Capital Funding Programme that was next due to be approved in 2023.

He added that this was also a difficult practical scenario as space would be required for charging points across the city. He said that the charging points that would be installed would need to be fast charging.

Councillor Furse asked if the figure of 2% in terms of inflation was being underestimated.

Councillor Samuel replied that this figure was being held across all services and that a contingency of £2m was in place in respect of contract inflation.

Councillor Alastair Singleton asked if the proposed increase to Council Tax had been considered alongside the fact that many household budgets were also likely to increase in the coming years.

The Chief Finance Officer (S151) replied that a contingency was due to be held with regard to the Council Tax Support Scheme as officers are aware that this may be used more in the future.

Councillor Lucy Hodge asked how the CIL was to be proportioned this year.

Councillor Samuel replied that the Developer CIL had been oversubscribed and that a programme had been needed to be formed. He said that the programme was likely to be available towards the end of January.

Councillor Hodge commented that it was good to see future figures in respect of the Draft Emerging Capital Schemes.

Councillor Hodge asked why the Transport Delivery Programme was not mentioned within this budget.

The Chief Finance Officer (S151) replied that large elements of transport delivery were now involved within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

Councillor Hodge asked how the savings of £300,000 within the Adult Services budget rebase would be achieved.

The Chief Operating Officer replied that activity had dropped within the budget for Physical Disability & Sensory Impairment which has led to it being able to be rebased.

Councillor Shaun Hughes referred to Appendix 1 and in particular the proposal to introduce hourly based parking charges in Midsomer Norton and Radstock. He said that he felt the timing was not appropriate as local retail had already been hit fairly hard over the past 18 months.

Councillor Samuel replied that a review in this respect had not taken place for around eight years. He added that if the Council was not able to raise as much income it would have to consider what, if any, services could be cut.

Councillor Hughes asked when did the review take place.

Councillor Samuel replied that there had been a public consultation in 2021 and said that Parking Services had been working extensively on this matter. He added that he recognised that this would not necessarily be a popular decision.

The Chair commented that this proposal would affect the wider rural community as there are either no direct bus services or the services provided are very infrequent to these areas.

Councillor Mark Elliott asked why there was a red risk assigned to the Income - Sale of Recyclates.

The Chief Finance Officer (S151) replied that this was due to potential volatility and fluctuation in the market place.

Councillor Sally Davis said that she hoped that the proposed redesign of the CCTV service would not jeopardise the issues raised at Council in the Cross-Party Motion on Safety for Women and Girls in Public Places.

The Chief Operating Officer replied that they were mindful of the motion to Council and that this proposal would see a minor adjustment to salaries within the service and was also potentially a capital investment opportunity.

The Chair commented that she hoped that as part of the redesign of the Dog Warden Service they would be given enough authority to respond / intervene with dangerous dogs and to work with the Police.

She concluded the debate by saying that the Panel looked forward to receiving further information at the end of January.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy budget assumptions.

63 COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION FUND PROGRESS REPORT

The Chief Finance Officer (S151) introduced this report to the Panel. He explained that the Community Contribution Fund was launched in March 2021 to enable residents to donate funds to support local causes. He said that the fund had now reached a sufficient level (£25,128.00) where grants could be awarded.

He said that over 300 people have now donated to the fund and that 73% of the donations received were valued between £5 - £50.

He stated that during October, applications were opened to any charitable, voluntary or community organisations that supported residents within Bath and North East Somerset. He said that organisations were able to apply for funding between £500 and £2,000 and that the deadline for applications was the 30th November 2021.

He informed the Panel that 29 applications have been received with a total funding request of £51,715. He explained that the projects vary from: supporting people's mental health; providing emergency medical supplies; investing in refurbishments of community facilities; mentoring; support for families; training; group therapy and youth provision.

He stated that the applications are now currently being assessed against the criteria and further information is being obtained. He said that the funding decisions will be made by an assessment panel and that this has been arranged for the end of January and that the panel is made up of Elected Members.

He said that questions regarding the future of the scheme had been received and would need to be considered as part of the review. He added that the main issue raised related to individuals being able to claim gift aid / tax relief and said that this would only be available if the fund was managed by a charitable organisation.

Councillor Alastair Singleton commented that the work undertaken during the pilot had been interesting and felt it would have garnered more support if gift aid had been an available option. He suggested whether the Quartet Community Foundation could become involved in the work of the Fund.

He asked if the Fund continued could it be tweaked at all and how could it be further publicised.

The Chief Finance Officer (S151) replied that to include gift aid the Fund would need to have a charitable status and that the costs associated with that move would need to be considered. He asked for comments to be fed back to Sara Dixon, Locality Manager.

The Chair suggested the Fund could be promoted through the Local Forums.

The Chief Finance Officer (S151) asked that any further comments be given by the end of January to enable any possible associated budget discussions.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the update on the Community Contribution Fund.

64 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced this item to the Panel.

The Panel confirmed in principle the items listed for the meetings on 31st January and 28th March.

Councillor Winston Duguid proposed that the Panel receives a report in due course regarding the ADL Business Plan.

Councillor Shaun Hughes suggested the Panel be part of a review into the Public Consultation process.

The Chair replied that she has asked for a review of the decision making process to take place during this year and would look to include this proposal within that review.

Councillor Lucy Hodge commented with regard to the Preparing for the Future report that she would like to see information relating to Recruitment & Retention and Routes to Work included within the report.

The Chair thanked the Panel members for their comments.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the workplan.

The meeting ended at 5.25 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services