

CORPORATE, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 21 January 2020
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Lisa Smart (Chair) in the chair; Councillor John McGahan (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Lou Ankers, Will Dawson, Carole McCann, Tom Morrison, Charlie Stewart,
John Taylor and Wendy Wild.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 17 December 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interests were declared:-

Personal Interests

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Interest</u>
John Taylor	Agenda Item 6 – ‘Advance Payment of Employers Pension Contributions’ as a recipient of pensions through the Greater Manchester Pension Fund. Agenda Item 6 – ‘Advance Payment of Employers Pension Contributions’ as a member of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund Management Panel.
Wendy Wild	Agenda Item 6 – ‘Advance Payment of Employers Pension Contributions’ as a future recipient of a pension through the Greater Manchester Pension Fund.
<u>Officer</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Michael Cullen	Agenda Item 6 – ‘Advance Payment of Employers Pension Contributions’ as the Greater Manchester Treasurers representative on the board of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - THIRD QUARTER UPDATE REPORT 2019/20

The Borough Treasurer submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing the Third Quarter Update Portfolio Performance and Resource Reports for the 'Citizen Focus & Engagement' and 'Resources, Commissioning & Governance' Portfolios. The report focussed on highlights and exceptions in delivering the portfolio priorities, reform programmes and other key projects since the Mid-Year Report and included the latest forecast performance and financial data for the Portfolios, along with an update on the portfolio savings programmes.

The Cabinet Member for Citizen Focus & Engagement (Councillor Kate Butler) and Resources, Commissioning and Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

Resources, Commissioning and Governance

- It was noted that this Scrutiny Committee had previously expressed its view that it would not support the Council's participation in any future voter identification trials, however the government was continuing in its pursuit of this approach which may have implications for Stockport in the future.
- A discussion took place in relation to the reduction in performance in the Council Tax collection rates which was as a result of staff being recruited to posts elsewhere in Greater Manchester. It was stated that there was a continuous recruitment exercise to ensure that the team remained appropriately staffed, and work was taking place to incentivise staff retention through the provision of formal professional training.
- With regard to the OPE6 Rail Project funding, it was suggested that consideration should be given to investigating the introduction of a new railway chord at Gatley that would provide for a direct line between Stockport and Manchester Airport. It was stated that such a link would also provide a diversionary route between Manchester and the airport, and would ease pressures caused by conflicting movements at the approach to Manchester Piccadilly caused by trains using the existing corridor.
- In response to a question about the roll-out of web-based portfolio dashboards, it was stated that the intention was to have this in place for the Quarter 4 reporting cycle, and that drop-in sessions would be provided in advance of the next cycle of scrutiny committees for councillors to test the new system.
- It was stated that there was a significant investment package for the Council's leisure centres as it was making preparations for the end of the current leases and the requirement to tender for new operators and that this programme was being directed and influenced by the results of condition surveys.
- It was suggested that consideration should be given to the submission of an item to a future meeting of the relevant scrutiny committee in relation to the progress towards place-based integration working in Stockport.
- In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Council would accept a single one-off payment of Council Tax, however this would benefit from any additional discount.

Citizen Focus & Engagement

- It was noted that the target for the number of community organisations recruited to the DigiKnow network was showing as 'red', however it was stated that this was due to the target being revised from 30 to 45 which reflected the fact that the Council's partner (the Good Things Foundation) had proposed that each of Stockport's 16 libraries should be counted individually as each was a member of the Online Centres Network in their own right.
- The increase in the number of participants in the autism friendly sessions at Cheadle and Bredbury Libraries was welcomed and it was suggested that consideration should be given to running the sessions at other libraries in the borough.
- It was noted that the Council's artificially intelligent chat bot 'Ami' had now been rolled out to almost all services across the Council's website. However, further clarity was requested in relation to how service-users needed to complete their journey with Ami rather than ending the conversation with matters only part-resolved. It was suggested that a metric on the number of completed journeys should be included in future reports as a means of monitoring this.
- In response to a statement made in relation to targets being achievable, it was queried whether that meant the Council considered that it was acceptable that one in five calls to the Contact Centre were not answered.
- It was stated that residents in Bramhall when calling the Contact Centre were being directed to use the Council's website to update their contact details, however as Bramhall Library was currently closed for refurbishment, for a number of elderly residents without access to their own computer equipment were finding it difficult to complete this task.
- It was noted that the conversion rate of prospective foster carers had increased, and it was queried whether this was as a result of an improvement in the quality of prospective candidates and whether this was partially attributable to the work being undertaken to make improvements to the online recruitment resources.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. STOCKPORT COUNCIL PLAN 2020/21

The Borough Treasurer submitted the Stockport Council Plan 2020.21 (copies of which had been circulated) that accompanies the budget and sets a high-level framework for decision making throughout the financial year. The plan is developed by Cabinet, supported by officers, and is an opportunity to reflect on performance to date and policy priorities for the future. Priorities in the plan are included by exception. The plan doesn't attempt to describe everything the council does; only those things that are of crucial importance in a specific year.

The 2020/21 Council Plan keeps the existing framework of Stockport's Borough Plan Shared Outcomes and the five Medium Term Strategy themes as well as aligning with the Greater Manchester Strategy Priorities.

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning and Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

It was commented that consideration needed to be given to the consistency of the tone throughout the Plan and whether this was always appropriate to the statutory status of the document.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. ADVANCE PAYMENT OF EMPLOYERS PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS

The Borough Treasurer submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the details of a further advance payment of employer pension contributions covering the period 2020/21 to 2022/23. An actuarial review of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF) has been completed and the recommended employer pension contribution rates have been advised by the Actuary in order to maintain the Council's pension liability funding position over the next 3 years 2020/21 to 2022/23.

Following discussions with GMPF, a further advance payment of employer pension contributions over the next three years is available to the Council. Making an advance payment will result in a discount being applied to the employer pension contribution rates and would generate savings (depending on the length of the advance payment made) compared to the MTFP forecasts for employer pension contribution costs over the next three years (included in the MTFP Update presented to the Cabinet meeting on 6 January 2020).

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning and Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the approach outlined in Section 5 of the report be endorsed.

7. AGENDA PLANNING

A representative of the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out planned agenda items for the next meeting and relevant entries in the Cabinet Forward Plan.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.57 pm