

**CORPORATE, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

Meeting: 22 September 2020  
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Lisa Smart (Chair) in the chair; Councillor John McGahan (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Malcolm Allan, Lou Ankers, Carole McCann, Iain Roberts, Charlie Stewart,  
Wendy Wild and Matt Wynne.

**1. MINUTES**

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 14 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

The Chair highlighted Minute 8(2) on the 'Quarter 4 2019-20 Complaints Report' regarding the request made for the Cabinet to examine the level of staff resources allocated to the complaints service.

**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 interest were declared:-

Personal Interests

Councillors

Interest

Malcolm Allan, Lisa Smart and Matt Wynne	Agenda item 10 'Active Communities: Sustaining Council) Owned Leisure Centres Post Covid-19' as members of Life Leisure.
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**3. CALL-IN**

There were no call-in items to consider.

**4. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST**

RESOLVED – That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority), the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the exempt information in the 'not for publication' report for agenda Item 11 "Active Communities: Sustaining Council Owned Leisure Centres Post Covid 19".

## **5. 2020/21 QUARTER 1 BUDGET MONITORING UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning and Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a summary of the Quarter 1 revenue forecast outturn incorporating the business as usual forecast with an update on the financial impact of Covid-19 reported previously in the Covid-19 Financial Impact and Response Update report which was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee on 14 July 2020. The report also provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Collection Fund and updates to the Capital Programme.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- It was reported that as part of the Covid-19 support, the Government had allowed Collection Fund deficits to be spread over three financial years to smooth the impact on the General Fund rather than incurring the full deficit in 2021/22.
- The alignments presented in the section on 'Virements Presented for Approval by Cabinet' were alignments from one Cabinet portfolio to another.
- A Member requested that the non-cash limit forecast be broken down by items. The forecast deficit was due to Covid-19 and mainly consisted of an assumption that no dividend would be received from the Manchester Airport Group, additional insurance costs and additional costs relating to Highways.
- The resources held in reserves were earmarked to support the funding of specific investments and projects which aligned to the Council's longer term ambitions and priorities. Redirecting these resources would impact significantly in the achievement of these.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **6. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - DRAFT PORTFOLIO AGREEMENTS 2020/21**

The Corporate Director, Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) presenting the draft 2020/21 Agreements for the Resources, Commissioning & Governance and Citizen Focus & Engagement Portfolios for consideration and comment by the Committee.

The policy priorities, re-shaped to take account of One Stockport and Building Back Better (building on Covid-19), were articulated within the Portfolio Agreements which formed the basis for regular in-year reporting. Portfolio and Corporate Performance and Resource Reports (PPRRs and CPRRs) would assess progress against key objectives, priorities, outcomes and budgets, enabling Scrutiny Committees to hold the Cabinet to account and for the Cabinet to identify current and future risks to delivery.

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

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

### Resources, Commissioning and Governance Portfolio

- Officers and Cabinet Members were thanked for their consideration of the targets and measures and the description of the schemes in light of comments previously made by the Scrutiny Committee.
- Currently the impact remained unclear of the end of transition period, on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, following the UK's departure from the European Union in January 2020 as negotiations were ongoing on a trade deal between the UK and the EU and on a range of other post-Brexit arrangements.
- A Member requested more information on the package of works needed to allow the relocation of services from Ashley House.
- The review of the webcasting figures at the end of each committee meeting cycle was useful information, but not necessarily as a performance measure.
- The commissioning of schools places was important and the information needed to be reported on a regular basis.

### Citizen Focus and Engagement Portfolio

- Concern was expressed that the target for Stage 2 complaints was only 73%. It was felt that there needed to be a note which explained that in most cases when the 20 days' time period was exceeded it was with the agreement of the complainant. A Member felt that there should be a greater emphasis on the expectations of residents.
- Clarification was sought on performance measure CFE1.8 on the Number and % of Digital Contacts and what the 75% was a percentage of, what the five digital skills were and how they were measured. Members requested that this information be circulated to them via email and that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.
- With regard to performance measure CFE2.2 on the Number of community groups to join the DigiKnow network (cumulative), it was suggested that libraries should be omitted from the measure especially as they had been closed during the Covid-19 pandemic. It would be a more useful performance measure to look at the number of individuals trained. Greater publicity of the scheme was supported.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

### **7. 2020/21 RESERVES POLICY**

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning and Governance submitted a report of the Corporate Director, Corporate and Support Services (copies of which had been circulated) providing the outcome of the annual review of the Council's Reserves Policy following the reporting of the Council's 2019/20 outturn position.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- The information on the earmarked reserves as a percentage of total expenditure from the other local authorities in Greater Manchester was welcomed.

- The Scrutiny Committee needed to review the Cabinet One-Off Investments /Medium Term Financial Plan Reserve on a regular basis and Members requested more detail on the use of these resources.
- The Capital Investment Reserves outlined in paragraph 4.2 of the report on Strategic Priority Reserves did include resources set aside to meet the expected capital costs linked to the Town Centre and District Centre regeneration projects.
- The inclusion of the governance of the Approvals Process outlined in paragraph 5 of the report was useful information.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **8. CREATION OF A ONE STOCKPORT HUB IN STOCKPORT TOWN CENTRE**

A representative of the Corporate Director, Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the proposal to develop a new cultural and social hub in Stockport town centre, provisionally titled 'One Stockport Hub'. The idea was that the One Stockport Hub would attract more service users into the library and locate the hub in a high profile location with good accessibility by public transport. It was a pre-cursor to the Future High Streets Fund bid which aimed to bring together a number of community uses and support Merseyway by driving footfall.

The Cabinet Member for Citizen Focus and Engagement (Councillor Kate Butler) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- Although the perception may be that there were the same number of members of staff working in a particular library, there were a lot more staff working in the back office.
- Whilst supporting the principle of a One Stockport Hub in Stockport Town Centre was supported a Member felt that there needed to be more work carried out on how the Central Library building would be used in the future.
- The total occupation cost of both the Central Library and the vacant former Argos unit should the proposal for One Stockport Hub not go forward was in the region of £250,000. This was because the Council would continue to have a liability for the former Argos unit for service charge, insurance and business rates until such time as an occupier was found. The report highlighted that in the current retail market the unit was unlikely to be let in the near future and attracted significant void costs.
- A Member highlighted that the budget figure for the One Stockport Hub did not cover the refurbishment of the first floor for public use.
- Concern was expressed that there had been a central library in Stockport for 107 years and that other local authorities had either improved the facilities at the existing library or moved to another library and that this Council was proposing to establish a new local library. The report should contain a process and timeline on the Council's plans for the future use of the Central Library building.
- Concern was expressed that there was no specific reference in the consultation to closing the Central Library and therefore residents were not afforded the opportunity to express whether or not they wished to retain the Central Library. It was suggested that there should be a second round of consultation on this aspect and the outcome reported back to this Scrutiny Committee.

- A Member felt that although the Central Library was in a good location when it was built it was no longer located in the middle of the town centre. There was a lack of space for pupils wishing to study at the Central Library. The increase in the number of young people living in the town centre in the future would place greater pressure on the amount of space available for study at the Central Library.

It was then

#### MOVED AND SECONDED

(1) That the Cabinet be recommended to undertake further work on the future of the Central Library building and subsequently undertake a further round of consultation on the proposal to develop a 'One Stockport Hub' making clear what the Council's plans are for the Central Library building.

(2) That the outcome of the further round of consultation be reported back to this Scrutiny Committee.

For the motion 6, against 1, abstentions 2

#### MOTION CARRIED

It was then

RESOLVED – (1) That the Cabinet be recommended to undertake further work on the future of the Central Library building and subsequently undertake a further round of consultation on the proposal to develop a 'One Stockport Hub' making clear what the Council's plans are for the Central Library building.

(2) That the outcome of the further round of consultation be reported back to this Scrutiny Committee.

### **9. SICKNESS ABSENCE YEAR END REPORT**

A representative of the Corporate Director, Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which highlighted the Council's (excluding schools) sickness absence performance at the year-end point (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020) and outlined actions that were being taken to support colleagues and address sickness absence, and provided an overview of future plans.

The Cabinet Member for 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:-

- The main reason for sickness absence in Stockport continued to be mental health reasons (stress, depression, anxiety). Concern was expressed at the level of management support offered to those colleagues who were absent from work for these reasons.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **10. AGENDA PLANNING**

A representative of the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal & Democratic Governance) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the planned agenda items for the Scrutiny Committee's next meeting and any Forward Plan items.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That, as requested under item 6 on the agenda on Portfolio Performance and Resources Draft Portfolio Agreements 2020/21, a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on the five digital skills and how they were measured.

Item 'Not for Publication'

## **11. ACTIVE COMMUNITIES: SUSTAINING COUNCIL OWNED LEISURE CENTRES POST COVID-19**

A representative of the Corporate Director for Place Management and Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) in connection with sustaining Council-owned leisure centres post Covid-19.

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

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That update reports be submitted to future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee, as appropriate.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm