

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

Meeting: 8 December 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 22 September 2020 were approved as a correct record.

**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>Councillors</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Malcolm Allan, Lisa Smart and Matt Wynne	Agenda item 21 'Active Communities: Sustaining Council) Owned Leisure Centres Post Covid-19' as members of Life Leisure.

**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RESOLVED – That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority), the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the exempt information in the 'not for publication' appendices to agenda item 20 'Former Ritz Cinema Car Park and former Greenhale House Disposal' and agenda Item 21 'Future Active Communities/Leisure Delivery arrangements'.

## **5. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - MID-YEAR REPORT 2020/21**

The Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out a summary of progress in delivering the Council's priority outcomes and budget in the first half of the financial year, with a particular focus on the second quarter of 2020/21 (July-September) and up to the end of October where possible.

The report was the first CPRR to be produced for 2020/21 reflecting the 2020/21 Council Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and new Portfolio priorities. It included additional priorities and delivery plans developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Elise Wilson attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- A Member highlighted that the forecasted prudential indicators (based on the updated programme) for the Council's 2020/21 Capital Programme were less than the original budgeted indicators for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. It was confirmed that this was not a cause for concern.
- An update was provided on the current situation with regard to Manchester Airport.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **6. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - MID-YEAR REPORTS 2020/21**

The Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) presenting the Mid-Year Portfolio Performance and Resource Reports (PPRRs) for the Citizen Focus & Engagement and Resources, Commissioning & Governance Portfolios for consideration by the Committee. The report provided a summary of progress in delivering the portfolio priorities, reform programmes and other key projects in the first half of the year, with a particular focus on the second quarter (July to September) and up to the end of October where possible. The report also included forecast performance and financial data (where this was available) for the portfolios, along with an update on the portfolio savings programmes.

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:-

### **Citizen Focus and Engagement**

- A Member enquired about the membership of the Accessibility Steering Group which had been set up by the Council to help create useable and accessible digital services. The work of the group was fed into the VCSE Forum which was in regular contact with access groups.

- New measures relating to the registration of births and deaths had been introduced for the first time, and Covid-19 had presented significant challenges across the country with registering these within nationally prescribed timescales. More information was requested about the changes to birth registrations due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A Member enquired whether contact centre calls that received a call back were counted as answered calls.
- A Member felt that, although the performance for Stage 1 complaints was on the right track, the target for Stage 2 complaints should be higher, and that agreed extensions to the timescale for a response should still be recorded as a complaint that had not been responded to on time.

#### Resources, Commissioning and Governance

- A request was made for the performance dashboards to be shared on screen next time the Committee was discussing the performance reports.
- The new performance measure RCG3.2 with regard to the percentage of children allocated their first choice school places for primary schools and secondary schools was welcomed.
- A Member highlighted the comment in the Portfolio Summary that referred to how the Council used its buildings and estate in the future to tailor solutions to meet the needs and ensure the wellbeing of staff. This included staff who continued to need to work in the Civic Complex during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

#### **7. RESPONDING TO OUR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - UPDATE FOLLOWING THE 2020 SPENDING REVIEW**

The Cabinet Member for Resourcing, Commissioning and Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) building on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update report presented to the Cabinet meeting in October to ensure the MTFP forecasts and assumptions continued to be robust and based on the latest information.

The report included an update on the financial impact of announcements made since October including the ongoing national and local response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government's 2020 Spending Review.

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- The Council's savings proposals for 2021/22 appeared manageable and concern was expressed that that more far reaching proposals would be put forward for 2022/23.
- The Cabinet would be considering its proposals for the Council Tax early in the New Year.
- Questions were raised and responded to regarding:-
  - The management of inflationary increases aligned to external contracts in the Adult Care & Health portfolio

- With regard to the Citizen Focus and Engagement portfolio, removing duplication across a number of areas in Information Advice and Guidance, and creating a simpler and more streamlined approach for service users
- Vacancy management and the deletion of long-term, vacant posts.
- With regard to the comment that the Greater Manchester 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot would continue in 2021/22, a Member enquired about the level of business rates it was envisaged that the Council would collect.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **8. ANNUAL INSURANCE REPORT 2019/20**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a summary of insurance performance for the financial year April 2019 to March 2020 and including comparisons with the previous four financial years in order to allow for a meaningful comparison of trends.

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 continued progress was welcomed by the Scrutiny Committee, including the reductions in Highways Claims.
- The continuing work to challenge claims more vigorously was welcomed.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **9. LIBRARY SERVICE RESTORATION PHASE 2 AND ONE STOCKPORT HUB**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) presenting an update on the plans for the restoration of Library Services whilst we continue to live with Covid-19, including an update on plans for the One Stockport Hub.

The approach was based on the guiding principles as set out in the report and considered the impact on customer journey, costs, resources needed and the level of risk.

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:-

- With regard to the guidance provided in the Libraries Connected Restoration Toolkit, a Member felt that the Council should be in (d) as set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report where, for example, there was an increased number of libraries open and the majority of staff were working in the libraries.
- The need for greater publicity when libraries were to re-open was highlighted.

- A Member felt that the staffing difficulties, as set out in paragraph 3 of the report, was the problem. The library buildings were not, and should never have been, the problem.
- Members would be advised when the Cheadle Hulme and Heald Green libraries would open in the new year, assuming that Stockport remained in Tier 3 or lower and that any restrictions did not affect library operations.
- As the move of the Central Library to the new One Stockport hub was only temporary, a Member enquired about the risk of fitting out the former Argos building for the hub.
- More detail was requested with regard to how the temporary move of the Central library to the new One Stockport Hub building was to be funded.
- It was proposed to move the full selection of books to the One Stockport Hub, although not all the books would be on display.
- The Central Library would move back to its current building once Government guidance permitted this to happen. The One Stockport community hub would remain, but it could move to a different building on Adlington Walk if the Council was successful in its bid to the Government's Future High Streets Fund.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

#### **10. DIGITAL INCLUSION - EVOLVING OUR OFFER TO MEET NEED**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which aimed to provide an update on the evolving demand and delivery of the Council's digital inclusion offer to enable further consideration of the next steps and feedback from Members on performance measures.

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:-

- The Council's work with national initiatives such as the Department for Education's 'Get help with tech' programme to get laptops into schools, to care leavers and to any child with a social worker was commended.
- A Member felt that, of the four performance indicators relating to digital inclusion, CFE2.1 and CFR2.2 should remain and CRE2.3 and CFE2.4 should be deleted. The number of hours trained by the digital champions would be a more appropriate performance indicator than the number of digital champions.
- An aide memoire advising Councillors who to signpost people to would be helpful or a standard email could be made available which Councillors could use.

RESOLVED – (1) That the next steps outlining the future direction of travel for Digital Inclusion work be noted.

(2) That support be given for a digital inclusion showcase for Members where DigiKnow training can be made available.

## **11. COMPLAINT HANDLING RESOURCING REVIEW**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the main procedures for complaints handling and legislation covering this and set out improvements identified as a result of the review which were now being progressed which had been developed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Citizen Focus and Engagement.

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

RESOLVED – That the steps being taken to improve the handling of complaints across the Council be noted.

## **12. CONSULTATION REPORT 2021/22 TREASURY STRATEGY**

The Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) seeking the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the development of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

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

With regard to the questions asked in Paragraph 9.16 'Borrowing Strategy', Paragraph 10.11 'Investment Strategy' and Paragraph 11.5 'Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP' Policy), the Scrutiny Committee responded in the affirmative to all the questions.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **13. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2020/21**

The Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out a mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2020/21, approved by the Council on 27 February 2020, and prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services.

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

The following comments were made/issues raised:-

- A Member enquired whether, at a time of very low interest rates, the Council was using gilt-edged securities.
- The requirements for borrowing during the financial year so far had been met by using short-term market loans from other Councils. The financial position of any lender was looked at closely.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

#### **14. BUSINESS RATES AND COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out an annual review of the local scheme of discounts and exemptions which were available in respect of business rates and Council Tax.

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:-

- In the light of complaints received following the withdrawal of empty property discounts, a Member suggested that it may be prudent to check how the Council communicated with those who had to pay Council Tax.
- The removal of empty property discounts had brought the Council in line with other local authorities.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

#### **15. STOCKPORT COUNCIL MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT REVIEW**

The Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the outcome of a review of the Council's Modern Slavery Statement and presenting the second iteration of the statement to cover the period up to 31 March 2022.

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 draft updated Stockport Modern Slavery Statement, which will run up 31 March 2022, be recommended for approval by the Cabinet.

#### **16. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/2022 - 2023/2024**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the 2020/21 Asset Management Plan Capital Programme, including a programme of work for inclusion in the 2021/22 financial year and the indicative programme up to 2023/24.

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 report be noted.

## **17. COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION REPORT IN RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION REQUIREMENT FOR REVIEW**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out a draft Council Size Submission Report for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's decision to undertake an electoral review of Stockport in 2020/21.

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

The following comment was made/issue raised:-

- The involvement of all the political groups in the proposed submission was welcomed.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Council Size submission report be submitted to the Cabinet and the Council Meeting for approval, subject to minor amendments.

## **18. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000: STOCKPORT COUNCIL'S USE OF DIRECTED SURVEILLANCE AND COVERT HUMAN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES (CHIS)**

The Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the outcome of the inspection report by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, subsequent changes to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) policy and the content of the RIPA monitoring report. The report also provided an update on the recent use of the powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and Investigatory Powers Act 2016.

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

Members asked to be provided with copies of the following documents:-

- The Code of Practice for carrying out surveillance under The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA); and
- The Inspection Report from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **19. PUBLIC MORTUARY AND AUTOPSY RELATED POST MORTEM SERVICES**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Corporate and Support Services) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) advising the Scrutiny Committee of the extension of the contract between the Council and Tameside



Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in relation to the provision of Public Mortuary and Autopsy Related post Mortem services.

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

The following comment was made/issue raised:-

- A request was made for more information on the details of the extension to the contract, given the significant increase in its total value.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **20. 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, given the number of items on the agenda for this meeting, the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee be requested to consider the Council's decision to reduce the number of meetings of each Scrutiny Committee in the Municipal Year and also the remit of each Scrutiny Committee, for example the inclusion of School Places in the remit for this Scrutiny Committee.

(3) That the Vice-Chairs of each Scrutiny Committee be invited to the appropriate meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee which considered (2) above.

### **Items 'Not For Publication'**

## **21. FORMER RITZ CINEMA CAR PARK AND FORMER GREENHALE HOUSE DISPOSAL**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out and summarising the marketing campaign that had recently concluded on two key town centre development sites at the former Ritz Cinema car park and the former Greenhale House site.

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

(NOTE: The report contained 'not for publication' appendices that had been circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **22. FUTURE ACTIVE COMMUNITIES/ LEISURE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS**

A representative of the Corporate Director (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copiers of which had been circulated) detailing proposals to move to new delivery arrangements for Council-owned leisure facilities and Active Communities programmes.

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

(NOTE: The report contained 'not for publication' appendices that had been circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a report on the business case be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.52 pm