

Draft Notes

of the informal Meeting of the

Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 11 November 2021

held as a Virtual Meeting on MS TEAMS.

Meeting Commenced: 14:00 Meeting Concluded: 16:00

Councillors:

P Geoff Richardson (Chairman)

P Stuart McQuillan (Vice Chairman tbc)

A Gill Bute

P John Cato

James Clayton

P Peter Crew

P Mark Crosby

A John Ley-Morgan

A Robert Payne

P Terry Porter

P Richard Tucker

Vacancy

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

Other Members in attendance: Cllrs Steve Bridger, Mike Bell, Mark Canniford, Ash Cartman, Huw James, Bridget Petty, Mike Solomon, James Tonkin

Officers: Amy Webb, Mel Watts, Lorraine Bush, Howard Potheary, Hannah Gray, Michèle Chesterman, Philippa Penney, Leo Taylor

PCOM Election of the Vice-Chairman (Agenda item 1)

Recommendation of election of Vice Chairman, Cllr Stuart McQuillan at informal Panel meeting on 15 July 2021 (to be deferred for ratification at next formal panel meeting).

PCOM Minutes and Notes (Agenda item 3)

Formal Panel Meeting Minutes – 4 March 2021, recommended for approval as a correct record at Informal Panel meeting dated 15 July 2021 (to be deferred for ratification at next formal Panel meeting)

Informal Panel Meeting Notes – 15 July 2021 attached for information.

Minutes of Formal Panel Call-in Meeting 5 August 2021 attached for information – agreed as correct record for approval at next formal Panel meeting.

PCOM Provisional Dates for Panel meetings 2022/21 (Agenda item 5)

21 July 2022, 10 November 2022, 2 March 2023

Concluded: that the Panel note the provisional dates for Panel meetings in 2022/23

PCOM Accommodation Strategy (Agenda item 6)

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report which provided members with an update on delivering the Accommodation Strategy, which was approved by Council on 23 February 2021 and the progress in relation to:

- The Programme
- Phase 1: Concept Design (Space Planning)
- Castlewood Transition
- Policies and Strategies
- Consultation / Comms and Engagement
- Key decisions and timeline

Members were informed that the PCOM Accommodation Strategy Steering Group met informally on the 11 October 2021 and received an update on the activity which has been undertaken to support the delivery of the Accommodation Strategy (Appendix i)

The date for the business case for Castlewood would be presented to Council on 11 January 2022 and a scrutiny-led all-member briefing on the Accommodation Strategy was scheduled for 2 December 2021. (since re-scheduled to 9 December at 5.00 pm)

Members discussed the future requirements for group rooms and IT provision for members, including whether a common room with the option of booking rooms for private meetings would suffice. This would be addressed at a future stage of office accommodation provision, and Members noted there would be a clear decision point in terms of the design of members rooms and engagement with members and asked for a 'plan on a page' with regards to the Accommodation Strategy as a whole.

Concluded:

- (1) that the Panel received and commented on the Accommodation Strategy.
- (2) that the Director of Corporate Services liaise with Group leaders in relation to group rooms.
- (3) that the Director of Corporate Services provide the Panel with a 'Plan on a page' GANTT chart in relation to the Accommodation Strategy incorporating timelines etc.

PCOM Financial Management Report (Agenda item 7)

The Head of Finance presented the report, providing members with an opportunity to review the council's most recent forecasts for the current financial year and also an update in terms of the activities associated with the Medium-term financial planning.

Members commented and received clarification in relation to a number of issues including: the Dedicated Schools Grant; register of strategic opportunities; capital projects; and levels of debt in the council and the Winterstoke £3m overspend.

With regards to the risk section, it was suggested that the section be amended to a more conventional 5x5 format instead of 3x3 and that the risks be ranked to enable members to have clarification of where the issues were across the Council, what the mitigating actions were and the person responsible for each.

Capital budget allocation when considering project overspends – how are we controlling these

Members agreed that integrated reporting would be helpful to improve understanding in relation to how all the various elements interlinked and that planned sessions with scrutiny be set up in advance as part of the decision-making process. It was also agreed that simpler terminology would aid understanding.

Members were informed that an all-Member Scrutiny Budget Briefing was scheduled to take place on 21 December 2021 at 9.30 am via Teams.

Concluded:

- (1) that the Panel received and commented on the report
- (2) that the Head of Finance works with the Chairman to provide Panel members with process charts in relation to financial management and amend the format risk section as suggested.
- (3) that planned sessions on financial management be set up with the scrutiny steering group as a forward-looking part of the decision-making process.

PCOM Executive Members' Reporting to Scrutiny (Agenda item 8)

Cllr Petty – Carbon Emissions

Councillor Petty addressed the Panel on the issue of how the Council could improve its reporting on carbon emissions associated with decision making. It was noted that in the case of decisions based on capital projects such as new schools or roads, carbon emissions were easier to calculate than in relation to some other decisions such as foster homes where it became more complicated.

Members agreed capital projects were the right area to target and discussed how financial thresholds should be set given the additional financial costs to carbon accounting in terms of resources and officer time. Further consideration should be given to drafting a council policy stating that projects over a certain size must engage in carbon accounting. Standard carbon accounting methodology

The Director of Corporate Services informed members that a presentation had been given by Cornwall Council on environmental impact assessments and that carbon accounting was on the horizon with the development of International Financial Standards.

Members discussed house building, recognising the importance of positive action such as tree planting and developing projects that would reduce carbon emissions.

Concluded:

- (1) that the Panel received and considered the report.
- (2) that the Panel consider work around the policy development of carbon accounting and that this be incorporated into the Work Plan. The panel pursue development of carbon accounting and that this be incorporated across the council

Cllr Bridger – Metro West Project

Cllr Bridger provided an oral report updating members on the progress of the Metro West Project. Officers were assessing the impact of Department of Transport delay of up to six months with the concern that a delay beyond mid-January 2022 would have a significant impact on the project. The issue appeared to relate to carbon budgets.

Concluded:

- (1) that the Panel received and considered the oral report.
- (2) that Councillor Bridger provide the Panel with an update on the effectiveness of the Capital Programme Board at the next PCOM Panel meeting.

(3) Metro West – impacts of delay and tipping point for go/no go to be kept under review

(4) that a meeting be convened between Cllr Bridger, Alastair Shankland, Cllr Richardson and the Electoral Services and Scrutiny Manager to agree the approach scrutiny engagement with major projects

PCOM Domestic Abuse Report (Agenda item 9)

The Safer Communities Project Co-ordinator, Domestic Abuse, presented the report which provided an opportunity for the Panel to review the work led by North Somerset Council's Safer and Stronger Communities Team in partnership with other agencies to meet the statutory requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and on local service developments. The report provided an opportunity for the Panel to feed into the future priorities and planned actions for the development and future funding of the council's response to domestic abuse, sexual violence and violence against women and girls.

The Domestic Abuse Act was passed on 29 April 2021 and placed statutory duties on local authorities including: the formation of a Local Strategic Partnership Board; a full domestic abuse needs assessment to be undertaken; Domestic Abuse Strategy to be published by the end of October 2021; safer accommodation for those experiencing domestic abuse; and other support for survivors and children within the safe accommodation.

The work being carried out in response to the Act was being supported by partnership working with local agencies as well as Next Link, the Council's commissioned specialist support service.

The Safer Communities Project Co-ordinator, Domestic Abuse, extended an invitation to members to attend one of the 'lunch and learn' sessions on domestic abuse, and Members further agreed support by way of a scrutiny-led briefing for all councillors. This could include further information on how the need for support was being identified, the actions and projects being undertaken to address the perpetrators of domestic abuse, and work being undertaken in schools to tackle domestic abuse.

Concluded:

(1) that the Panel provided feedback on the report.

(2) that the Electoral Services and Scrutiny Manager liaise with Community Safety in relation to a scrutiny-led briefing on Domestic Abuse for all councillors.

(3) that the Panel receive a further report on domestic abuse in 12 months' time.

PCOM Winter Gardens Community Board Annual Report (Agenda item 10)

The Policy and Partnerships Development Officer presented the annual report which sought to update members on the continued work of the Winter Gardens Community Board. The report provided an overview of the work of the Community Board during the past year and detailed the Board's recommendations which reflected its commitment to continue to support the Winter Gardens in its recovery from the impact of COVID-19 and enable the valuable asset for WsM to thrive for the benefit of North Somerset communities.

Members thanked officers for the annual report and were reassured by the ongoing community commitment being shown at the Winter Gardens.

Concluded:

that the Panel considered the annual report of the Winter Gardens Community Board and provided feedback as above.

PCOM Panel's Work Plan (including Steering/Working Group updates)

The Electoral Services and Scrutiny Manager presented the Forward Plan providing updates on the panel's steering/working groups including:

- ICT Scrutiny Steering Group
- Financial Plan and MTFP
- Accommodation Strategy
- Major Projects Capital Projects – (Alex Fear, Alastair Shankland, Programme Management Office and how to co-ordinate the strategic approach to all major projects and capital projects)
- Procurement Strategy, both generally and specifically in relation to the Council's energy supply contracts
- Climate Emergency
- Social Value and Added Value and outcomes and measures
- Contract Management – risk matrix (updated quarterly) to be circulated to panel members to respond by exception.
- Living Wage (item 2) - Director of Corporate Services provided members with an update confirming that the living wage had been adopted across all local authorities and that the financial implications for this were now being considered.
- Confirmation provided that the legal crime and disorder responsibilities was within the remit of this Panel
- Section 3 of the Work Plan – Street cleansing, road obstructions, closures etc now sat with Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel remit

A discussion took place on informal panel meetings and the need to ensure the public were aware of the work being undertaken by scrutiny in the absence of formal meetings held in public.

Concluded:

- (1) that the Panel received and commented on the Panel's Work Plan and Steering/Working Groups
- (2) that the Chairman liaise with Cllr Petty regarding the engagement strategy
- (3) that Cllr Richardson discuss press release arrangements for Audit with Cllr Cato in view of undertaking something similar for this Panel.