

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy and Scrutiny Panel Thursday, 21 July 2022

New Council Chamber

Meeting Commenced: 2.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 4.55 pm

Councillors:

Geoffrey Richardson (Chairman)
Stuart McQuillan (Vice-Chairman)

Peter Bryant
John Cato
Robert Payne
Richard Tucker

Apologies: Councillors: Mark Crosby.

Absent: Councillors Gill Bute, James Clayton, John Ley-Morgan and Terry Porter.

Also in attendance: Councillor Bridget Petty

Officers in attendance: Amy Webb, Melanie Watts, Alex Hearn, Howard Potheary, Nicola O'Driscoll, Philippa Penney, Leo Taylor

PCO Election of the Vice Chairman for the 2022-23 Municipal Year

1

Resolved: that Councillor Stuart McQuillan be elected as Vice Chairman of the Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

PCO Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

2

None.

PCO Minutes

3

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 be approved as a correct record.

PCO Matters referred by Council, the Executive, other Committees and Panels (if any)

4

None.

PCO 5 Corporate Services Annual Directorate Statement 2022-23

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report outlining the Annual Directorate Statement (ADS). In accordance with the the Council's business planning process and within the wider framework of the Council's overarching Corporate Plan, the ADS sets out the Directorate's aligned aims, priorities and key commitments for the year ahead, informing service strategies, team plans and appraisals.

In response to Members comments, the Director said that she shared concerns about the scale of commitments set out in the statement and was currently reviewing this. She agreed that there would be an opportunity for the Panel to consider the commitments and associated metrics once this review was complete (in one to two months' time).

Concluded:

- (1) that the ADS be received and inform the Panel's work plan going forward; and
- (2) that the action point listed above be added to the Panel's Work Plan.

PCO 6 Accommodation Strategy

The Director of Corporate Services presented the report providing the Panel with an update on the delivery of the Accommodation Strategy (approved by Council on 23 February 2021) together with an update on the work of the Accommodation Strategy Scrutiny Steering Group, a summary of work to date, and the programme with key milestones.

Members sought and received clarification on the following aspects of the Strategy:

- the key high-level risks and how these were being addressed: including repair/maintenance backlog (Town Hall) and the programme overrunning into the election period;
- risks of a snap general election;
- the impact of inflation on maintenance procurement;
- plans for the post room at Castlewood;
- the outline budget;
- impacts of inflation on maintenance procurement; and
- risk management and opportunities for Panel Scrutiny. Members noted that officers were currently considering the potential for, and level of, Member access to this kind of information as a function of project "Plans on a Page" (POAPs).

Members noted that, following the Council's decision to remove Castlewood from the Council's office requirement and release it for development, the building and estate was no longer within the Accommodation Strategy's scope. Scrutiny around its on-going development would now fall within the Place Panel's remit.

Concluded: that the report be received and that Members' feedback be provided to officers in the form of the minutes.

PCO 7 Corporate Services Finance Update

This item was taken out of sequence.

The Head of Finance presented the report, providing an overview of the annual revenue budgets for the Corporate Services Directorate for the 2022/23 financial year, taking Members through the core resources allocated to each of the service areas within the Directorate and the key drivers that could influence future levels of spending or income receipts during the year. The report also provided a high-level summary of the notable financial risks and pressures currently being monitored and reviewed in advance of the formal budget monitoring report due at the end of July

The Chairman thanked the officer for the report and proposed that the majority of content of the report be referred to the Panel's Financial Planning Working Group for more detailed consideration.

In focussing on the charts in the report summarising expenditure risk (para 3.2.1) and income related risk (para 3.2.2), Members received :

- further clarification around third party and contract payments
- further clarification on the different types of income budget and the relative scale of, and volatility around, risk that each represented

The Head of Finance confirmed that risk was updated monthly but it was agreed that officers would report back to the Panel on the data set out in these charts after the six month monitor by which time assessments of risk trends and profiles were likely to be more robust.

Members also sought further clarification on the following:

- pay award risk - negotiations were at an early stage and the likely baseline impact on next years' budget were probably seven months away; and
- the scope for rationalisation/savings under items listed in Appendix 7a (including entries on the Contact Centre).

Concluded:

- (1) that the report be received and that Members' feedback be provided to officers in the form of the minutes; and
- (2) that the action points listed above be added to the Panel's Work Plan.

PCO 8 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Update Report

This item was taken out of sequence.

The Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Engagement introduced the report which provided an update on a number of equality, diversity and inclusion matters that were of either a statutory nature or had been identified as key projects for the council including:

- a position on the diversity of our workforce;
- the Council's Gender Pay Gap;
- Disability and Well-being Report;
- engaging with Employee Groups;
- our statutory duty to publish Equality Objectives and Information;
- an update on our work following the adoption of an anti-racist Motion for the council; and
- our plans for our Inclusion Calendar of Events.

In commenting on the report, Members received the following responses:

(1) *how did North Somerset compare to other similar organisations?* - The approach was to compare the Council's ambition with the Authority's demographic. The Director of Corporate Services noted that there had been positive movement in the gender pay gap and referred to positive feedback from the Council's reverse mentoring scheme.

(2) *Addressing racism* – this was now embedded into the new Councillor induction programme and thought was being given to how this might be picked up a stage further eg when recruiting candidates.

(3) *Obstacles to addressing the pay gap faster* – the Council had a stable workforce and positive discrimination was not possible but the evidence was that many more women were now in more senior roles (as detailed in the published report)

In response to a question from the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services about what Members and the Panel could do more to assist, the Executive Member referred to opportunities around social media and ensuring a good understanding of the data and tools available.

Concluded: that the report be received.

PCO Castlewood Redevelopment Update

9

This item was taken out of sequence.

The Assistant Director of Placemaking and Growth presented the report which provided Members with an update on the options analysis and associated development and delivery strategy for the Castlewood site.

He said the next stage in the process would enable Members to decide on progressing a route to delivering development. Recommendations might include the procurement of a development partner and/or to submit outline planning application.

Members sought and received clarification on the following:

- quantifying and addressing social aspects and Biodiversity;
- the reasons for people opposing the development site in the survey; and
- scope/limitations around a change in use (eg to residential) at the site (prescribed in planning regulations) and opportunities to divide the land into different parcels with different uses;

In concluding discussions, the Chairman referred to the importance that, in line with the Council decision at the 15 February Meeting, Councillors be given a detailed options analysis to inform Members when it comes before them for decision. He also asked whether a feasibility study had been undertaken on immediate savings that could be made at the site.

In response to the first point, the Assistant Director confirmed that the options analysis would be provided but that, in line with the decision at the 10 May Council, a “preferred way forward” or single development scheme would be recommended. On the second point, there were a number of changes that could be made at the site eg reducing ventilation, hot water supply and some subdivision of floor space and work was underway to deliver this. He agreed to report back to the panel on this work.

Concluded:

- (1) that the report be received; and
- (2) that the action point listed above be added to the Panel’s Work Plan.

PCO 10 2022 North Somerset Crime and Disorder Strategic Assessment and Safer Communities Plan and Priorities

This item was taken out of sequence.

The Safer Communities Service Manager and the Principal Business Intelligence Lead, Corporate Services, presented the report outlining the Strategic Assessment of Crime and Disorder in the district undertaken by the Council’s Safer Communities Team in partnership with the Business Intelligence Service and in collaboration with Avon and Somerset Constabulary and other relevant stakeholders. This included explanation of the methodology used to develop the assessment, using risk management process to more objectively direct prioritisation and the allocation of resources. The report also outlined how this assessment was thereby used to generate a new Safer Communities Plan.

Members received the following responses to comments and queries on the report:

- (1) *the scale and range of issues identified and concern about capacity to address the ambition* - The assessment process focussed strategically on needs and prioritisation, including identifying capacity shortfalls where these needed to be addressed. At a more operational level, it was the role of the Community Safety Board, to assess what was realistically achievable on the ground, identify gaps and explore, for instance, where there might be partnership opportunities to address these.
- (2) *the potential for overlap between the risk themes set out in the Strategic Assessment Executive Summary* - this was acknowledged: consideration had

been given to this in the approach taken to risk scoring the themes.

(3) clarification on the approach taken to quantifying the percentage increase in night time economy incidents – the need to do this on a per capita basis in order to effectively assess comparative severity across the district – The value of this approach was acknowledged and more detailed analysis focussing on town centres in the district would be undertaken taking this into account.

In closing the discussion, the Chairman commented on the relatively low risk ascribed to cybercrime and the significant amount of correspondence he had received raising concerns about this. He reminded Members that the Panel's Community Safety Steering Group had been revived and would be considering many of the issues identified in the report in more detail going forward.

Concluded: that the report be received and Member feedback provided to officers in the form of the minutes.

PCO 11 The Panel's Work Plan

Members noted the work plan which included detail of informal scrutiny work undertaken since the last panel meeting held in March 2022 and planned work going forward. Members' attention was drawn to the following:

- The PCOM Community Safety Steering Group – Members noted that this steering group had been revived with the next meeting to be held on 12th September. Members were reminded to put themselves forward for membership of the steering group.
- Customers Service Strategy (PCOM) scrutiny engagement meeting to be held on 19th September
- Programme Management Office (PCOM-led All Councillor) briefing to be held on 22nd July.

Chairman
