

Meeting Date: 6 March 2018

Public/Private*: Public

Title: Business and Transformation Scrutiny Chairman's Report – Councillor
Jessica Riddle

Meeting Date: 4 January 2018

This first meeting in the New Year was primarily concerned with the Budget reports. Before we tackled these papers however, it was reported that the Task and Finish group that had been working on the Community Asset Transfer policy had been expanded by recruiting a member from both the Economic Growth and Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny panels. This Task and Finish group would be looking at how this draft policy, that has yet to be approved by the executive, would be implemented.

Executive response to scrutiny comments on the budget

The changes put forward by scrutiny had been received by the executive and built into the budget. It would be helpful if in the future a summary of the key changes could be prepared. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to this, although there was still some information that had to be added e.g. Revenue Support Grant.

The implications of the Sands Centre development would be discussed fully at a joint meeting of the Business and Transformation and Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny panels at the end of January.

Executive draft budget proposals

The panel members subjected the officers and portfolio holder to a wide variety of questions ranging from Council Tax increases, Tullie House funding, business rates, to the leisure development.

When the Treasury Management Strategy statement was discussed it was agreed that in order to fully understand this information a training session should be organised.

This was duly done on the 25th January 2018 and proved to be very useful when scrutinising the Sands Centre Redevelopment a few days later.

Final Flood Update

Two years after the flood in December 2015, there is still outstanding work to be completed and there are still homes being flooded. The Environment Agency will be asked to provide flood resilience grants to these properties and to tenants in flats with management companies.

Meanwhile, we continue to live with the devastation of the ground floor of the Civic Centre and look forward to its transformation.

The City Council continues to work in partnership with the Environment Agency, County Council and other partners hoping to manage future flood risks.

The Panel looks forward to the 'Lessons Learned' report currently being prepared.

Customer Services Update

Customer Services is the public face of Carlisle City Council and the Support Services manager updated the panel on the work being done in the Smarter Delivery Service that has been shortlisted for an award in the category of Innovative Access for Public Services. I am pleased to report the project came joint second.

Although people are being encouraged to sign up to an electronic account there was still help available to people who do not want to engage with the council electronically and preferred either telephone or face to face contact.

Information was given on the partnerships formed with the Police, D.W.P and the Passport Office.

The customer service staff are to be commended for continuing to provide excellent service while working in difficult circumstances.

Cllr Jessica Riddle

Chair – Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel

Meeting Date: 6 March 2018

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Title: Business and Transformation Scrutiny Chairman's Report – Councillor Jessica Riddle

Meeting Date: 15 February 2018

The Overview Report and Work Programme

It was gratifying to note that many of the actions from previous meetings had been completed. Having this progress table on the work programme ensures resolutions do not slip by unnoticed and unanswered.

The Task and Finish group have met and once the draft policy has been approved a test case could be processed.

The Executive gave very prompt responses to the resolutions raised at the joint meeting on the 29th January 2018.

Quarter 3 Performance Report

This is an exception report and the sickness absence was the only target not being met. However, it was explained that this was because of the recent flu epidemic. The next report will demonstrate whether this was a seasonable blip.

The other targets are being met on a regular basis and it was suggested that they might be stretched. However, these are national targets that the Council endeavours to meet and in many cases exceeds.

There were comments made on the 15 day corporate complaints procedure.

The panel was also interested in the city centre redevelopment plans and has requested the report.

Revenue Budget Overview Monitoring Report: April - December 2017

There were questions around the ICT project finances. The use of the term “temporary” for a virement was queried. It appears that this is the accounting term for a non-recurring virement.

There were queries around the revenue contribution to the tennis canopy and the GLL reserve.

These will all be addressed at the next scrutiny panel meeting.

Capital Budget Overview and Monitoring Report: April – December 2017

The Chief Financial Officer submitted this report.

There was a question on the considerable overspend against waste minimisation. Information on this will be circulated.

It was agreed that when Section 106 agreements were made, particularly in regards to cycle paths, that maintenance costs would be part of that agreement.

With regards to the Central Plaza Hotel, the Council has an obligation to keep it safe but has no obligation when it comes to road closures.

Part B

Parkhouse Business Park – Update on Progress

The Strategic Asset Investment Services Manager submitted an update on progress with implementation of the business plan for Kingstown Industrial Estate and Parkhouse Business Park.

This report was received by the panel.

Cllr Jessica Riddle

Chair – Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel

Report to:

Council

Agenda
Item

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Title: Joint Meeting of the Business and Transformation and Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panels. Scrutiny Chairman's Report – Councillor Jessica Riddle

This joint meeting was called to consider the Sands Centre Redevelopment.

Sands Centre Redevelopment

It was resolved that I be appointed Chair for this meeting, with Cllr Paton (Chair of Health and Wellbeing) putting forward any recommendations from the Health and Wellbeing scrutiny panel.

It was decided that although there was one issue to be discussed that after each presentation questions could be asked with resolutions made after the concluding report.

Initially confirmation was sought in the ownership of the land on which this development was to take place. This has subsequently been established that Carlisle City Council does indeed own the land.

The first presentation was given by GT3 Architects and was very detailed. This gave rise to many questions around car parking, flooding, archaeological investigations, NHS proposals and on-going scrutiny of the development.

Pick Everads, the employer's agent, presentation was concentrated on the plan of work, procurement and tender processes.

There was much discussion around contractors, local sub-contractors and using the CHEST (Computer System) framework. There were also questions around the increase in costs of the project to £19.4 million, governance and renewable energy systems.

Reassurances about access for existing services during the construction phase were given and concerns were expressed about any slippage in the timetable.

Financial Implications

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer gave an overview of the financial implications of the project.

This gave rise to a variety of questions not just on the financial detail but on future plans for the James Street site.

While there were questions on the funding of the project informed no doubt by the Treasury Management Training just received a few days prior to this meeting, it was agreed that to make a recommendation on the financing options at this early date would be premature.

Grant funding would be applied for when the project had been approved by council.

The Business and Transformation panel recommended to the Executive that:

- A transport strategy and travel plan be prepared.
- Apprentice training be implemented.
- Plans for James Street site be circulated when accessible.
- The panel is given regular updates on the project.

This joint meeting allowed the architects and employers agent to give a single presentation to both scrutiny panels and enable efficient feedback to the Executive

Some members felt that joint panel meetings could be useful in the future.

As Chair of this joint panel meeting it was an interesting experience. The dynamics of a joint panel are quite different from a single panel and, of course, there were twice as many questions and therefore it was a much longer meeting.

The jury is still out as far as I am concerned on joint panel meetings.

Cllr Jessica Riddle

Chair – Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel