

BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2017 AT 10.05AM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Riddle (Chairman), Councillors Allison, Bainbridge (as substitute for Councillor Robson), Mrs Bowman, McDonald (as substitute for Councillor Mrs Birks), McNulty (as substitute for Councillor Mrs Glendinning), Shepherd (as substitute for Councillor J Mallinson).

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Dr Tickner – Deputy Leader, and Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

OFFICERS: Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Chief Finance Officer
Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Policy and Performance Officer x2
Policy and Communications Manager

BTSP.36/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Birks, Mrs Glendinning, J Mallinson, Robson and Watson.

BTSP.37/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted at the meeting.

BTSP.38/17 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED - It was agreed that the items of business in Part A be dealt with in public and Part B be dealt with in private.

BTSP.39/17 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – 1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2017, which had been approved by Council on 7 November 2017, be signed by the Chairman.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2017 be approved.

BTSP.40/17 CALL - IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been the subject of call-in.

BTSP.41/17 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Policy and Communications Manager presented report OS.24/17 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel.

The Notice of Executive Key Decisions had been published on 17 November 2017. The following items included in the Notice fell within the Panel's remit:

Items which had been included in the Panel's Work Programme:
KD.23/17 – Budget Process 2018/19

KD.33/17 – Sands Centre Redevelopment (January 2018)

Items which had not been included in the Panel's Work Programme:

KD.28/17 – Polling Station Review 2017/18

The Chairman reminded the Panel a special joint Scrutiny Panel with Health and Wellbeing, would take place on Monday 29 January 2018 to scrutinise the Sands centre Redevelopment.

The Policy and Communications Manager reported that the Scrutiny Chairs Group had agreed that the Overview Reports for all Panels would include tracking information on Scrutiny resolutions. Section 3 of the report set out the Business and Transformation Panel's resolutions and status. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive noted that the first action stated pending, this was no longer a pending action as it would be normal practice to bring such reports to the Panel.

The Panel's Work Programme had been attached as appendix 1 to the report for the Panel's consideration.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel (OS.24/17) be noted.

2) That the status for action 1, in section 3 of the report, be changed to ongoing.

BTSP.42/17 BUDGET 2018/19

(a) Minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel and Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel

The excerpts of the minutes of the meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel and Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel held on 23 November 2017 and 30 November 2017 respectively were submitted for consideration.

(b) Budget Update - Revenue Estimates 2017/18 to 2021/22

The Chief Finance Officer submitted report RD.31/17 providing a summary of the Council's revised revenue base estimates for 2017/18, together with base estimates for 2018/19 and forecasts up to 2022/23 for illustrative purposes. The base estimates had been prepared in accordance with the guiding principles for the formulation of the budget over the next five year planning period as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Charging Policy; Capital Strategy; and Asset Management Plan approved by Council on 12 September 2017.

The report set out known revisions to the MTFP projections, although there were a number of significant factors affecting the budget that were currently unresolved, details of which were recorded at Section 1.3. A summary of the outstanding key issues, together with the resource assumptions was also provided at Section 4.

Turning to the issue of savings and additional income proposals, the Chief Finance Officer added that the current MTFP included a savings requirement to be found by 2018/19 of £3.475 million. Further savings / additional income had already been identified in the budget process for 2018/19, details of which were set out at Section 6 of the report.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.117/17) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the revised base estimates for 2017/18 and base estimates for 2018/19.
2. Noted the current Medium Term Financial Plan projections, which would continue to be updated throughout the budget process as key issues became clearer and decisions were taken.
3. Noted the initial budget pressures / savings needing to be taken into account as part of the 2018/19 budget process.
4. Noted the review of the earmarked reserves as outlined in paragraph 9 and Appendix G to Report RD.31/17”

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member asked for further information regarding the Apprenticeship Levy and the £60,000 recurring pressure.

The Chief Finance Officer explained that the Council paid a percentage of its payroll into the Apprenticeship Levy and could then access the Levy for the training of apprenticeships. The £60,000 recurring pressure supported the recruitment for apprenticeships to fund salary costs.

- The Land Charges income showed a recurring £30,000 pressure, would it be possible to review the charges to make the service more competitive against other providers?

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services confirmed that the charges were reviewed but there were regulations that had to be considered regarding the provision of the service. It was difficult to be competitive as the Council were obligated to provide free access to the databases which the authority maintained; this meant that the Council carried the cost of competitors business. In addition, in 2021, the Land Charges function would transfer to the Land Registry and it was unclear at this point what services, if any, would remain with the Council.

- A Member highlighted the proposed Leisure Contract Subsidy and asked how the new facility would be funded.

The Chief Finance Officer explained that the borrowing figures were indicative figures of the likely cost and were for illustrative purposes. She reminded the Panel that the decision process for the Sands Centre Redevelopment had not yet been made.

- The report had detailed a potential £300,000 savings to the subsidy the Council gave to the Tullie House Trust, what scope would the Council have for achieving this saving if the service came back in house?

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported that the Tullie House Productivity Review had been commissioned jointly by the City Council and Tullie House and had identified potential savings. Discussions were ongoing with the Tullie House regarding the potential savings and there was no indication that the Board no longer wanted to run the Trust.

- Who monitored how the grant for the Sexual Assault Referral Service was used?

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive informed the Panel that he and the Leader had received a letter from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) asking if the City Council would be prepared to continue their contribution to support the Service. The Chief Executive had responded by requesting details on how the grant was used. The budget was allocated in principle subject to the details from the PCC.

The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel had requested details of the Service for scrutiny and the Chief Executive agreed to circulate the information to the Business and Transformation Panel for information.

- How would the proposed changes to Universal Credit arrangements affect the Council's budget?

The Chief Finance Officer explained that recent guidance had delayed the roll out date for the City Council to July 2018. There was no information on the Housing Benefit Admin Grant at this stage. In response to a further question she reported that due to the uncertainty of TUPE arrangements as a result of the introduction of the Universal Credit, a Welfare Reform reserve had been retained within the budget.

- Why would the Project Reserve, as detailed in appendix F, increase so significantly by 2021?

The Chief Finance Officer responded that the information had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan which had been approved by Council in September. Appendix F showed the current position before the consideration of any 2018/19 pressures but was based upon making the transformation savings highlighted in the report.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Budget Update – Revenue Estimates 2018/19 to 2022/23 (RD.37/17) be received.

2) That information on the use of the grant to the Sexual Assault Referral Service be circulated to the Panel Members for information.

(c) Review of Charges

The Chief Finance Officer presented the Review of Charges reports informing the Panel that there was a 3% increase on the overall level of income in line with the Corporate Charging Policy.

Community Services

Report CS.33/17 was submitted setting out the proposed fees and charges for 2018/19 relating to those services falling within the Community Services Directorate.

The charges highlighted within the report would result in an anticipated income level of £2,903,300 against the MTFP target of £2,903,300 which represented the income target being met. The Panel were asked to consider the areas which were in their remit as set out on the agenda.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.113/17) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the changes, as set out in the body of Report CS.33/17 and relevant appendices with effect from 1 April 2018; noting the impact those would have on income generation within the report”.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member asked if it would be possible to increase the charges to reduce the cost of supporting the Old Fire Station.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive responded that the proposed charges had been detailed in appendix 1 of the report and reflected the use of the building. The Panel were free to scrutinise the commercial running of the Old Fire Station if they so wished.

A Member felt uncomfortable that the budget proposed a reduction to charges for the Old Fire Station and proposed an increase in the charges for Bereavement Service. She felt it would be useful for the Panel to receive information on the commercial use of the Old Fire Station which had informed the Executive's decision.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder assured Members that all of the charges were considered individually. It was hoped that the proposed reduction to some charges at the Old Fire Station would increase footfall to meet income targets.

- Why had the proposed charges against the Dog Fouling Order stated N/A for 2018/19?

The Corporate Director explained that the Dog Fouling Order would be subsumed by the new Public Space Protection Order and therefore would be charged in a different way in 2018/19.

- The Chairman asked officers to consider providing charging reports on an exception approach in future to enable Panels to only scrutinise the charges which were above or below the 3% increase.

The Chief Finance Officer reminded the Panel that formerly a summary report was circulated as part of the budget process and she would reconsider this going forward.

- The Panel had considered the minutes of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel and supported the recommendation to remove the proposed reduction in the level of charge levied for the 4 – 9.5 hour period in the Civic Centre Car Park.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Review of Charges 2018/19 – Community Services (CS.33/17) be received.

2) That the Panel support the recommendation made to the Executive by the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel and recommend to the Executive that the proposed reduction in the level of charge levied for the 4 – 9.5 hour period in the Civic Centre car Park be removed from the Executive Budget proposals.

3) That information on the commercial use of the Old Fire Station be circulated to Panel Members for information.

4) That the Panel recommend that the Chief Finance Officer consider changing the Charges Reports to an exception approach in future budget processes.

Economic Development

Report ED.38/17 was submitted setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Economic Development Directorate.

The proposed charges in relation to Planning Services included Development Control income; Building Control income; and Local Plan income.

Acceptance of the charges highlighted within the report, with the exception of Building Control which was self-financing, would result in an anticipated level of income of £705,500 against the Medium Term Financial Plan target of £682,500.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.114) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges, as set out in Report ED.38/17 and accompanying Appendices, with effect from 1 April 2018; noting the impact those would have on income generation as detailed within the report.”

A Member commented that, although she understood that the remits for Directorates had changed, she had missed the details in the reports on some areas such as the Enterprise Centre and Assembly Rooms.

RESOLVED – That Charges Review Report 2018/19 – Economic Development (ED.38/17) be noted.

Governance and Regulatory Services

Report GD.66/17 was submitted concerning the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Governance and Regulatory Services Directorate.

The report set out the proposed charges relative to Environmental Health and Housing; Homeless, Prevention and Accommodation Services; and Legal Services. The introduction of the proposed charges was forecast to generate income of £909,700 in 2018/19 as summarised in the table at Section 5.10 of the report.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.115/17) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive agreed for consultation the charges as detailed within Report GD.66/17 and accompanying appendices, with effect from 1 April 2018; and noted the impact thereof on income generation as detailed within the report.”

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Why had the Homelife charge for key safes and the Homelife hourly rate risen?

The Corporate Director explained that the changes to the Homelife charges brought all charges for minor measures in line. The service was discretionary and the Council had to cover its costs to retain the service. He assured Members that applicants did not receive a reduction in their grant as a result of the changes. With regard to the hourly rate he explained that some of the Homelife work was carried out by different teams within the same department, the change to the rate meant that the same charge was being applied across the teams.

- How would the proposed changes to cap the rent for benefit claimants impact on the budget with regards to homeless accommodation?

The Chief Finance Officer responded that the Homeless Accommodation rental charges had been increased by 2.5% because any figure higher would not be covered by housing benefit as the charges would be above the Local Housing Allowance.

The Chief Executive informed the Panel that he had requested a piece of work be undertaken that analysed the impact of John Street Homeless Accommodation's closure for the two years following the flood. The matter was complicated and had to balance the social impact and the wish to provide the service against the business considerations for the Council. When the work had been completed it would be reported to Scrutiny.

- The Panel thanked the Corporate Director and all of the services involved for producing a well written and clear report.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Review of Charges 2018/19 – Governance and Regulatory Services (GD.66/17) be noted.

2) That a report detailing the impact of the closure of John Street Homeless Accommodation following the flood be added to the Panel's future Work Programme.

Governance and Regulatory Services - Licensing

Report GD.68/17 was submitted setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Licensing Section of the Governance and Regulatory Services Directorate. The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services advised Members that the Regulatory Panel had responsibility for determining the licence fees, with the exception of those under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, which fell to the Executive.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.116/17) received the report and agreed:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the charges which were considered by the Regulatory Panel on 15 November 2017.
2. Noted that the fees under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 had been determined by the Executive for a three year period on 1 August 2016.”

RESOLVED – That the Governance and Regulatory Services - Licensing Review of Charges 2018/19 report (GD.58/17) be noted.

(d) Revised Capital Programme 2017/18 and Provisional Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23

The Chief Finance Officer submitted report RD.32/17 detailing the revised Capital Programme for 2017/18, now totalling £9,010,700, together with the proposed method of financing. The report summarised the proposed programme for 2018/19 to 2022/23 in light of the new capital proposals identified, together with the estimated capital resources available to fund the programme.

Section 4 provided details of the current commitments and new spending proposals. Any capital scheme for which funding had been approved by Council may only proceed after a full report, including business case and financial appraisal, had been approved.

A summary of the estimated resources compared to the proposed programme year on year was also provided.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.117/17) received the report and resolved:

“That the Executive:

- (i) Noted the revised capital programme and relevant financing for 2017/18 as set out in Appendices A and B to Report RD.32/17;
- (ii) Had given initial consideration and views on the proposed capital spending for 2018/19 to 2022/23 given in the report in the light of the estimated available resources;
- (ii) Noted that any capital scheme for which funding had been approved by Council may only proceed after a full report, including business case and financial appraisal, had been approved.”

In considering the report the Panel raised the following comments and questions:

- How would the Business Interaction Centre proposed capital spending be used?

The Chief Finance Officer responded that the capital would be used for the refurbishment and development of the building following the expiry of the lease to the University of Cumbria. The expenditure would be partly funded from an application to the European Regional Development Fund and dilapidation settlement.

In response to a Member's question the Corporate Director reminded the Panel that the Enterprise Centre was no longer a business incubation facility and had been moved into the Council's property portfolio as a commercial asset.

- A number of the capital scheme projects were reliant on external funding, how would the projects and budget be impacted if the applications were not successful?

The Chief Finance Officer responded that projects would be reviewed should applications for external grants be unsuccessful and most cases the projects would not progress.

Members asked for a list of grant/funding applications which the Council had submitted and information on their success.

- In response to a question the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the capital scheme for the work at Fairy Beck within Carlisle Cemetery was in addition to other budget pressures within the budget pack.
- The Panel discussed the wording in section 6.2 of the report which suggested that no new major one-off schemes unless fully funded from grants or external funding be considered as part of the budget process. The Panel felt that this line should be removed as any additional expenditure outside of the budget framework would have to go to full Council for a decision.
- The Disabled Facilities Grants had been underspent, was there any flexibility as to how the money could be spent?

The Corporate Director reminded the Panel that the Disabled Facilities grant allocation was awarded via the County Council's Better Care Fund and the City Council had an obligation to work with partners to produce a programme of work for the grant. Full Council had approved a discretionary policy which afforded the Council some flexibility. In addition Central Government had circulated information regarding the availability of an additional grant which would not be covered by Better Care Funding; the additional grant could only be accepted if the Council could spend it before March 2018.

The Panel noted that the Disabled Facilities Action Plan had been completed and requested that it be added to their work programme.

- The available Capital Resources indicated a deficit for 2017/18, how would this be addressed?

The Chief Finance Officer responded that the level of deficit was manageable and could be funded from internal borrowing from cash resources with minimum impact on the level of investment income.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Revised Capital Programme 2017/18 and Provisional Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23 (RD.32/17) be noted.

2) That an update on grant/funding applications which the Council had submitted and information on their success be circulated to Members of the Panel;

3) That the Disabled Facilities Action Plan be added to the Panel's work programme.

4) The Panel recommend that the following line be removed from Section 6.2 of the Revised Capital Programme 2017/18 and Provisional Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23:

No major one-off schemes unless fully funded from grants or external funding

(e) Corporate Assets – 3 Year Repair and Maintenance Programme 2018/19 – 2020/21

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services presented report GD.72/17 setting out the repair and maintenance programme budget proposals for the Council's corporate property assets for the three year period 2018/19 -2020/21, required to ensure that the legal responsibilities of the City Council were met.

The Corporate Director reminded Members that local authorities had a duty to manage their property assets, particularly operational assets, in a safe and efficient manner which contributed to the quality of service delivery. The maintenance strategy was fully integrated with the Asset Management Plan and environmental policy. In addition, the Council followed good practice by, where practical, allocating its budget 70% planned maintenance and 30% reactive maintenance.

He added that the maintenance budgets for the year and those for the next 3 years (as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan) were included as Appendix A. Whilst that allocation was necessary for budget purposes the Building Maintenance and Projects Manager (authorised by the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services) could re-distribute those funds to meet specific or emergency needs. That flexibility was essential to avoid any service disruption.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.118) received the report and resolved:

"That the Executive approved:

1. The three year revenue maintenance programme set out in Appendix A to Report GD.72/17 as part of the budget process.
2. The 2018/19 capital budget of £150,000 as part of the budget process.
3. The list of capital projects selected to meet the allocated capital budget of £150,000."

RESOLVED – That the Corporate Assets – 3 Year Repair and Maintenance Programme 2018/19 – 2020/21 be noted.

(f) Treasury Management Quarter 2 2017 and Forecasts for 2018/19 to 2022/23

The Chief Finance Officer submitted report RD.30/17 providing the regular quarterly report on Treasury Transactions, together with an interim report on Treasury Management as required under the Financial Procedure Rules. The report also discussed the City Council's Treasury Management estimates for 2018/19 with projections to 2022/23, and set out information regarding the requirements of the Prudential Code on local authority capital finance.

The base Treasury Management estimates for 2018/19 with projections for 2022/23 were set out at Appendix C.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.119/17) received the report and resolved that Report RD.30/17 be received and the projections for 2018/19 to 2022/23 be incorporated into the Budget reports considered elsewhere on the Agenda.

A Member commented that the figures set out in a previous report would take the Council above the Authorised Borrowing Limit as set out in Appendix B2 of the report. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the limit in Appendix B2 was the 2017/18 limit and the revised figure 2018/19 would be submitted to the Panel for scrutiny in January.

RESOLVED – That the Treasury Management Quarter 2 2017 and Forecasts for 2018/19 to 2022/23 (RD.30/17) be noted.

(g) Local Taxation 2018/19 – 2022/23

The Chief Finance Officer submitted report RD.33/17 considering aspects of Local Taxation decisions which needed to be made as part of the Budget process for 2018/19 onwards.

The Chief Finance Officer outlined the various considerations, including the levels of Council Tax for the City Council (including Parish Precepts), Council Tax Surplus calculations, Council Tax Base calculations, Local Support for Council Tax (LSCT), and Business Rate Retention (including Pooling arrangements). A summary of the assumptions made was also provided at Section 4.

The Executive had on 20 November 2017 (EX.120/17) received the report and resolved:

“ That the Executive:

- (i) Noted the contents of Report RD.33/17 including the current assumptions built into the MTFP with regard to local taxation issues;
- (ii) Approved, for recommendation to Council as part of the budget process, the 2018/19 Local Support for Council tax Scheme as set out in paragraph 2.4.
- (iii) Approved the continuation of involvement in the Cumbria Business Rate Pool arrangements for 2018/19, subject to the continuing involvement of the other partners which would be formally agreed in January 2018 with the final decision on participation being delegated to the Chief Finance Officer; that being subject to the outcome of the Business Rate Retention pilot bid for 100% retention in 2018/19.”

A Member asked when the care leavers discretion would be considered by the Executive and Chief Finance Officer responded that it was hoped to be ready for consideration in January.

RESOLVED – That the Local Taxation 2018/19 – 2022/23 report (RD.33/17) be noted.

The Panel adjourned for a short break at 11.25am and reconvened at 11.30am.

(h) Budget Monitoring Reports

The following reports had been circulated to the Panel by way of background information:

- RD.28/17 – Revenue Budget Overview and Monitoring Report: April to September 2017
- RD.29/17 – Capital Budget Overview and Monitoring Report: April to September 2017

In considering the reports Members raised the following comments and questions:

Revenue Budget Overview and Monitoring Report: April to September 2017

- Was the shortfall in income from the Lanes set against the reduced estimate?

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the shortfall had been set against the reduced estimate and reminded the Panel that the report was up to September and the figures could change as part of the outturn position.

- Had the improved levels of income for car parking been taken into account when the car parking charges were being reviewed?

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder confirmed that the increase had been considered as part of the charges review adding that previously car park charges only changed once a year, now with the aid of new technology, the Council was able to be reactive to trends when setting the charges.

- The ICT Strategy regularly showed an overspend, why was this and could the Panel see the ICT Strategy?

The Chief Executive reported that the overspend was a re-profiling issue rather than a forecast of overspend. A new ICT Strategy was being drafted along with a review of the mobile technology within the Council. The Strategy would be submitted for scrutiny when it had been drafted.

- Why did the Rethinking Waste have such a large shortfall in savings?

The Chief Executive reminded the Panel that the proposals for charging for Garden Waste Collections had been removed and had resulted in the £400,000 shortfall.

RESOLVED –That the Revenue Budget Overview and Monitoring Report, RD.28/17, be received;

2) That the new ICT Strategy be added to the Panel's Work Programme.

Capital Budget Overview and Monitoring report: April to September 2017

A Member sought assurance that the Harraby Cycle Track was at the end of the project and no further issues would arise. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive responded that there were still outstanding issues with the contractor and therefore he was unable to give such assurances until the project was signed off and completed. He agreed to provide the Panel with an update on the project.

A Member asked for information on the use of the additional contributions to the Public Realm Scheme and Chief Finance Officer agreed to circulate information to the Panel.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Capital Budget Overview and Monitoring report, RD.29/17, be received;

2) That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive provide the Panel with an update on the Harraby Cycle Track project.

3) That the Chief Finance Officer provide Panel Members with information on the use of additional contributions to the Public Realm Scheme

BTSP.43/17 COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted report OS.21/17 which presented the work of the Community Asset Transfer Task Group.

The Policy and Performance Officer reminded the Panel that a task and finish group had been established to support officers in shaping and developing the Community Asset Transfer Policy. The Group was comprised of Councillor Mrs Riddle, Councillor Mrs Bowman and Councillor Allison.

The Policy and Performance Officer informed the Panel that Community Asset Transfer (CAT) was the transfer of management and/or ownership of public land and buildings from its owner to a community organisation for less than market value to achieve a local social, economic or environmental benefit. The report detailed the current position at the City Council including the Asset Management Plan which was supportive of the potential for development in this area.

The Task Group had developed a draft Community Asset Transfer Policy and supporting documents to enable the Council to implement the Policy. The documents were based on research and consultation undertaken by the Task Group. Members identified that that a CAT Policy should be clear and concise and flexible. They also recognised the need for a clear process for asset transfers to be considered within the Council, to ensure that an officer had responsibility for each stage of the process, Members were informed and decision making was transparent.

Members felt that an application form would assist groups in applying and would provide clarity in their understanding of what was required of them. The assessment matrix aligned to the application form enabled an initial assessment of an application to determine if it should proceed to be considered further. The CAT Policy and processes provided a clear framework for asset transfers, helped identify the resources required to implement the process and who would lead on each stage.

The Task Group had identified further work regarding the Council's asset list and opened up the Task Group to the other Scrutiny Panels.

The Chairman commented that there had been no clear process and the new policy clarified the whole process and provided a clear framework and criteria.

The Panel asked how CAT opportunities would be promoted to stakeholders in particular Parish Councils. The Policy and Performance Officer responded that opportunities would be advertised to all groups equally if the Policy was approved. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive added that the Deputy Chief Executive would be attending an Annual General Meeting of the Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) in February and it would be a good opportunity to promote the Policy.

RESOLVED – That the Panel recommend to the Executive the approval and adoption of the Community Asset Transfer Policy (OS.21/17).

BTSP.44/17 CORPORATE PROJECT STATUS REPORT

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented report CE.15/17 which provided an update on the work of the Transformation Board and projects being undertaken in the Council.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reminded the Panel that the Transformation Board had subsumed the work of the Corporate Programme Board. The role of the Transformation board

was to ensure that there were effective governance arrangements in place for the projects that the Council undertook. A refresh of the Council's Project Managers' Handbook was also being carried out, the Handbook set out the corporate standards and methodology for project management in the Council. The Handbook had been attached to the report and Members were asked for their comments and input before it was finalised.

The report set out the status of current projects within the Council and the key achievements and achievements per project in the last six months.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member was concerned that the Local Plan no longer reflected the changes to retail trading and asked if there was a process for reviewing parts of the Plan.

The Town Clerk and Chief executive responded that the Local Plan had been adopted and suggested that the Member discuss the matter with the Corporate Director of Economic Development.

- There was some concern that e-purchasing would be a barrier to local smaller businesses.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive agreed that there should a risk identified in the register which included the implications of e-purchasing on local suppliers and how the risk could be mitigated along with evidence of how the risk had been addressed.

- Where would the new public realm signage be placed?

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained that the signage would replace existing finger posts and include more detail on attractions within the City.

- A Member commented that the Castle Way crossing had been very successful.
- The Panel asked for an update on the Community Infrastructure Levy and the Town Clerk and Chief Executive agreed to circulate a response to Members.
- Why had the Asset Recovery Programme not included details on John Street Homeless Accommodation and Adriano's?

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported that the physical work had been completed at the Homeless Accommodation and would re-open following staff recruitment and training. Adriano's had issues with the kitchen and a new contractor had to be appointed. Both projects had been delayed due to the contractors and both buildings were on their way to being completed.

With regard to the cost implications to the authority due to the closure of Adriano's the Chief Executive agreed to circulate a written response.

- The Panel thanked the Chief Executive for the Handbook and requested that Portfolio Holders were added to the progress reports for the management of projects.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Corporate Project Status report (CE.15/17) be welcomed;

2) That an update on the Community Infrastructure Levy be circulated to the Panel.

3) That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive provide the Panel with information on the cost implications to the authority due to the closure of Adriano's.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted the authority's sickness absence levels for the period April 2017 to September 2017 and other sickness absence information (CE.16/17).

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported that the 2016/17 levels of sickness absence decreased by approximately 14% to 7.4 days lost per full time equivalent (FTE) employee compared to 2015/16. 2015/16 had also decreased by 29% so there had been an overall reduction of 39% over the last years. The percentage of sickness which was long term also decreased as HR continued to work with managers to ensure support for their staff was available and accessible.

The table in appendix 1 provided sickness absence levels split by the new directorates. Authority wide, compared to quarter 2 of 2016/17, 2017/18 levels had increased by nearly 9% to 3.7 days lost per FTE employee. The last four consecutive months had been higher than the corresponding months in the previous year mainly due to an increase in long term absences.

The report set out the sickness absence reasons split by directorate; it also reported that "Other musculo-skeletal problems" was the highest reason for absence. Quarter 2 also showed that 99% of return to work interviews had been completed.

He added that the sickness absence figures for the authority had become volatile as the Council size reduced, a small number of long term absences had a significant impact on the sickness absence figures.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member noted the initiatives and training which was provided to improve health and wellbeing and asked if any of the initiatives could be targeted to address the top reasons for sickness absence.

The Chief Executive reminded the Panel that the health and wellbeing initiatives were funded in part from staff purchasing extra annual leave. The initiatives were deliberately mixed to ensure staff engagement. There was a training programme in place which targeted directorates; however, the Chief Executive would welcome any suggestions in this area.

- A Member asked what type of absences were covered by "Other" and if it had to remain in the reasons for absence.

The Policy and Performance Officer explained that the categories were defined by the Health and Safety Executive and 'Other' covered a variety of illnesses which included cancer.

- The second highest absence was caused by stress, depression, mental health and fatigue syndromes and it was noted that Doncaster Council had managed to reduce their absences in this category. Had the Council investigated how this had been achieved?

The Chief Executive had been aware of the reduction; however, their programme was similar to Carlisle's. He reminded the Panel that the City Council had recently signed the Time to Change pledge which was a commitment to change how the Council thought and acted about mental health at every level of the Council.

- How did the City Council benchmark against other authorities?

The Policy and Performance Officer responded that the most up to date benchmarking figures had not been received, however, previously the City Council had been better than the County

Council and half way compared to the other North West District Councils. There had been a vast improvement on sickness absence figures.

RESOLVED – That the 2017/18 Sickness Absence Quarter 2 report (CE.16/17) be noted.

BTSP.46/17 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/18

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted the 2nd quarter performance against the current Service Standards and a summary of the Carlisle Plan 2015-18 actions as defined in the 'plan on a page'. The new Service Standards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were also included (PC.18/17).

Details of the standards were set out in section 1 and section 2 contained the Council's delivery of the Carlisle Plan within the Panel's remit. A new dashboard showing performance against the new KPIs (also within the Panel's remit) was appended.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive informed the Panel that work had been undertaken with regard to Land Charges service standard and the next report would include details of the Land Charges performance.

RESOLVED – That the Quarter 2 Performance Report 2017/18 (PC.20/17) be welcomed.

(The meeting ended at 12.30pm)