

BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 28 MARCH 2019 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Birks (Chairman), Councillors Allison, Mrs Bowman, Carrigan (as substitute for Councillor Alcroft), Ellis, Mrs Mallinson, McDonald and McNulty.

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

OFFICERS: Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
Customer Services Manager
Chief Executive's Office Manager
Regeneration Manager
Policy and Performance Officer

BTSP.24/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Alcroft.

BTSP.25/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

BTSP.26/19 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.27/19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – 1) That it be noted that Council, at its meeting on 8 March 2019, received and adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2019. The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

2) That the minutes of the special meeting held on 22 February 2019 be agreed.

BTSP.28/19 CALL – IN OF DECISIONS

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

BTSP.29/19 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted report OS.07/19 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel.

The report detailed the most recent Notice of Executive Key Decisions, copies of which had been circulated to all Members, which had been published on 8 February 2019. There was only one item within the Panel's remit and it had not been included in the Panel's Work Programme:

KD.05/19 – 2018/19 Provisional Outturn Reports

The Policy and Performance Officer reported that the special meeting of the Panel which had been scheduled for 26 March had been cancelled and the Sands Centre Redevelopment report would be kept in the Panel's Work Programme.

The Panel asked for an update on the position with regard to the Sands Centre Redevelopment decision and the Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that the decision would take place following the Elections in May. The purdah period had begun and the Council scheduled for April was the same week as the election, it was the view of officers that given purdah and the potential political sensitivities, it was not fair to bring the matter before Members in advance of the meeting.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive added that officers did not want Members to feel they were being pushed into making a decision quickly because it coincided with the elections rather than making well-informed balanced judgments based on all the information that they should have. It was in the Council's interest to move forward with the redevelopment sooner rather than later but it was not in the Council's interest to make decisions without all the relevant information.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder agreed that the redevelopment was a big decision for the Council and, until officers were satisfied with the information received, he was sure that the public would want the Council to consider the matter properly rather than hastily.

In response to a question the Town Clerk and Chief Executive confirmed that the redevelopment was part of the contractual arrangements with GLL which linked to the reduction and abolition of the subsidy. All of the financial implications would be detailed in the report submitted to Council.

The Panel's work programme for 2018/19 had been attached to the report for consideration and Members were asked to agree the proposed items for the 2019/20 work programme.

A Member noted that the Bitts Park Lodge had been removed from the work programme and asked the Deputy Chief Executive for an update. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Bitts Park Lodge had been out to tender and the tenders had been higher than the allocated budget. Following a redesign, the project would go back out to tender and further consideration was being given to other capital options such as the Tennis Facilities monies. The matter would come back to the Panel and would go back into the Work Programme.

The Panel asked that the outstanding resolutions from previous meetings be submitted to the Panel as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel scrutinised the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel (OS.03/19);

2) The Panel asked that the outstanding resolutions from previous meetings be submitted to the Panel as soon as possible.

3) That the items detailed in the work programme for 2019/20 be noted

4) That the Bitts Park Lodge be added to the 2019/20 work programme

The Policy and Performance Officer submitted the draft Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel sections for the Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19 (OS.10/19).

The Constitution required that Overview and Scrutiny Committees report annually to Council the requirement to produce an Annual Scrutiny. The report before Members had contained the draft sections of the 2018/19 Annual report for consideration before recommending it to full Council.

RESOLVED – That the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel had scrutinised the draft sections of the Scrutiny Annual Report (OS.10/19) and had agreed them for inclusion in the final report to full Council.

BTSP.31/19 CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE

The Customer Services Manager submitted an update on the ongoing work within Customer Services including performance, improvements and actions (CE.03/19).

The report set out the changes to working patterns and the increase to front line advisors which had taken place. The consultation period for the proposed 8am opening hours of the telephony service had finished, and the new start time would be introduced when staff were fully trained.

The report detailed the introduction of Sharepoint and the proposed new performance management structure along with the changes that would be happening in the next year which included investigations of an upgraded contact centre telephone system and a review of the Emergency Planning processes for Customer Services.

The Customer Services Manager informed the Panel that the Riverside customer officer would be closed and from April 2019, Customer Services would be providing a signposting service for Riverside tenants to access the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) service and wider Riverside services. The income from the new service was welcomed following Universal Credit Support services move to the Citizens Advice from April 2019.

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

- A Member commented that he felt that there had been a backward step in Customer Services following the flood in 2015 and that the qmatic system or a cloud-based system should be reintroduced for query management.

The Customer Services Manager acknowledged that it had been considered too costly to install the qmatic system into the temporary customer contact centre and then remove it and reinstall it when the ground floor work had been completed. The ground floor work had taken longer than anticipated and as a result work was being undertaken to bring in the new query management system earlier.

- The Panel felt that the report lacked any performance data or Key Performance Indicators and they requested that work be carried out with the Policy and Performance Officer to determine which performance information should be presented to the Panel in future as part of the Performance Monitoring reports.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reminded the Panel that the Customer Services Manager had submitted a report to the Panel 31 May 2018 which had detailed the proposed changes to the Customer Contact Service. The Panel had requested that an update on those changes be brought back to the Panel.

The Customer Services Manager assured the Panel that the performance information data was being captured and a snap shot of the information had been included as the appendix to the report. In addition, the Customer Service Charter included performance measures with a goal to capture performance information for all customer interaction throughout the Council.

- The Panel asked for an update on the ground floor reinstatement works.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed the Panel that the tender for the ground floor was due to be sent out and a revised programme for the works would be prepared.

- The Panel asked if the Council charged for the service it provided on behalf of Riverside and commented that it was disappointing that Riverside were closing the customer facing office in Carlisle. Riverside had 8,000 tenants in the City and it was unfortunate that they would have an absentee landlord.

The Customer Services Manager confirmed that the Council would receive an income of £9,000 plus VAT for the signposting service and the amount had been based on reception costs and the projected footfall information provided from Riverside. He felt that it was important that the Council worked with Riverside as the Council shared many customers and were best placed to help. In addition, it was a step closer to the Council becoming a one stop shop and it was hoped that the work with Riverside would lead to further collaboration work.

- When would the training be completed and the 8am telephony service begin?

The Customer Services Manager responded that it was anticipated that the 8am telephony service would begin in September following completion of the training and a review of how successful the new structure had been.

RESOVLED – 1) That the Customer Services Update (CE.03/19) be welcomed;

2) That a further update on the changes to Customer Services be brought to the Panel in six months time;

3) That the Customer Services Manager and the Policy and Performance Officer discuss the performance data which was being collected in Customer Services and add Key Performance Information relevant to the remit of the Panel to future Performance Monitoring reports.

BTSP.32/19 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Chief Executive's Officer Manager submitted an update on the management of the Council's Corporate Risk register (CS.16/19).

The report included the revised Corporate Risk Register which contained additional corporate risks around ICT Security.

The Corporate Risk Register was last reviewed by the Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) on 11 March 2019, since then the control strategy narrative and the dates had been updated and had been included as appendix one. The Risk Management Assurance Framework had been approved by the Executive in January 2019 and was available on the City Council's intranet. In addition, Managers would be briefed on the Framework at the Management Briefing in April in a bid to raise awareness.

Operational risk registers were being reviewed and were stored, updated and monitored through Project Server. Work was underway to develop a Sharepoint solution which would be user friendly and provide greater functionality. It would be able to manipulate data to feed into the Council's reporting requirements as well as a dashboard which would show at a glance the number of risks with a red rating; those risk registers which required updating and the risks which had escalated in the last quarter which may require attention.

Member raised the external audit concerns regarding the MTFP and asked how this had been factored into the control strategy. The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources clarified that it was not a significant risk, external audit identified the MTFP as a standard risk on all Councils to ensure that authorities were resilient and would be reviewing financial assumptions as part of their annual VFM conclusion

The Panel were pleased to see the inclusion of IT in the Corporate Risk Register.

RESOLVED – That the Panel had scrutinised and commented on the current Corporate Risk Register (CS.16/19).

BTSP.33/19 FLOOD RECOVERY LESSONS LEARNT REPORT

A summary of the lessons learnt from the Storm Desmond Flood Event 2015 (ED.13/19) was submitted.

The report detailed the strength and scale of Storm Desmond in 2015 and the recovery challenges which faced Cumbria had been unprecedented. The Cumbria Resilience Forum Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) led on the acute phase response which had been thoroughly debriefed and the improvement plan continued to drive the work of the partnership.

In addition, a countywide Impact Assessment and a recovery debrief had been completed. The Cumbria Resilience Forum had recently recruited a manager to continue the development of the partnership. The role would add more capacity to deliver on the existing Improvement Plan and the recommendations from the recovery debrief.

Recovery and reinstatement projects had been reported to the Panel over the last three work programmes. Key Services areas based on Panel remits had been selected as a focus and in each case the service manager had been asked to respond to three questions as detailed in section 2.2 of the report.

The Service Managers from Human Resources, Property/Estates and Facilities Management, ICT, Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits and Homelessness Service responded to the questions and a summary of the responses was set out in section 2 of the report.

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

- There was some concern regarding the resilience of the proposed material for the walls in the proposed ground floor design.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed the Panel that the design for the ground floor had taken three areas into consideration when being developed:

- Materials which were resistant being used in the most appropriate areas
- Less substantive materials used in some areas because it was more efficient to rip out the materials and replace
- The removal of all unnecessary walls and partitions.

- Insurance had become an issue for residents and businesses following the flood, what lessons had been learned regarding insurance for Council properties?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources responded that there had been concern that the Council would be unable to procure insurance however there had been three responses to the tender process. The tender responses had been slightly lower than the budget figure however the excess for buildings, for flood perils, had remained at the increased levels following Storm Desmond.

- Would the City Council be making a financial contribution towards the Cumbria Resilience Forum manager and how would Members receive information from the Forum?

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive responded that he would provide Members with a written answer, however, he thought any contribution would be minimal given the partners involved in the Forum. He added that the minutes from the Forum meetings were publicly available, but he would ask the Policy and Communications Manager to provide the Panel with an update on the work of the Forum.

- Had the issue of contacting staff through an SMS text service been resolved?

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources explained that the SMS text service had not been suitable for contacting staff due to GDPR regulations. Staff were encouraged to keep their iTrent details up to date, this information was downloaded and kept on two fobs securely off site so that staff could be contacted in an emergency.

The Panel thanked the Policy and Communications Manager for his report and the helpful hyperlinks included which allowed Members to access background information.

RESOLVED – The Panel scrutinised and made comments on the Flood recovery Lessons learnt report (ED.13/19);

2) That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive provide Members with a written response regarding any financial contribution that the City Council makes towards the Cumbria resilience Forum;

3) That the Policy and Communications Manager provide the Panel with an update on the work of the Cumbria Resilience Forum.

The Panel adjourned for a short break at 10.47am and reconvened at 10.50am.

BTSP.34/19 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the minute) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

BTSP.35/19 BIC PROJECT, PATERNOSTER ROW, CARLISLE (Public and Press excluded by virtue of paragraph 3)

The Regeneration Manager submitted an overview of options for the Business Interaction Centre Project, Paternoster Row, Carlisle.

The Regeneration Manager explained that the building was owned by the City Council and comprised of over 700m² of office space arranged over three floors. Located within the Historic Quarter, the buildings were Grade II Listed and were located within the City Centre Conservation Area.

The building had been comprehensively refurbished and leased to the University of Northumbria in 1992 to provide a satellite campus in Carlisle and subsequently to the University of Central Lancashire. The buildings were passed to the University of Cumbria at its formation in 2007 and were used latterly as the Carlisle Business Interaction Centre.

The University of Cumbria withdrew from the building and transitional arrangements covering ICT and security were implemented to keep the building operational. This enabled the businesses sub-leasing office space from the University to remain and allowed the Council to explore other options for the building.

Two options had been identified for the future of the building and the Regeneration Team had been successful in securing European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding which would contribute to option1. Section two of the report detailed the two options and the key considerations.

The Panel scrutinised the two options in detail and sought clarity from officers on the terms for the ERDF funding, how existing tenants would be supported, ownership of the building under both options, the impact on other businesses in the area and support which could be offered to them by the City Council.

RESOLVED – That the Panel had scrutinised the two options for the Business Interaction Centre (ED.12/19) and recommended to the Executive a preference for Option 2 for the future use of the Business Interaction Centre.

BTSP.36/19 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The Chairman thanked Members for their valued work and input over the last twelve months and she thanked officers for their hard work and Governance for their continued guidance.

(The meeting ended at 11.21am)