

## **BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL**

**THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 2.00PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Riddle (Chairman), Councillors Allison, Mrs Birks, Mrs Bowman, Mrs Glendinning, Mallinson J, Shepherd (as substitute for Councillor Robson), and Sidgwick S (as substitute for Councillor Watson).

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

**OFFICERS:** Town Clerk and Chief Executive  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Deputy Chief Finance Officer  
Strategic Asset Investment Services Manager  
Policy and Communications Manager  
Policy and Performance Officer

### **BTSP.18/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Robson and Councillor Watson.

### **BTSP.19/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **BTSP.20/17 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.21/17 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2017, which had been approved by Council on 11 September 2017, be signed by the Chairman.

### **BTSP.22/17 CALL - IN OF DECISIONS**

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

### **BTSP.23/17 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME**

The Policy and Communications Manager presented report OS.20/17 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 25 August 2017 and the item which fell within the Panel's remit had been included on the agenda (KD.21/17 – Bitts Park Lodge Flood Reinstatement).

The Panel's work programme was attached to the report as appendix 1 and the Chairman asked for a brief update on the work being undertaken on the Community Asset Transfer Policy.

The Policy and Performance Officer reported that development work for the Policy had begun and included comparison work with other authorities and consideration of the requests that the City Council had received to date.

The Chairman proposed that the Panel undertake a small task and Finish Group comprised of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Councillor Allison to support officers in shaping and developing the Community Asset Transfer Policy with a view to providing the Panel with an update on their work in October.

In reviewing the work programme the Chairman asked that a report from the Transformation and Business Management Development SMT Sub Groups, which gave an overview of their work, be submitted to the October meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel (OS.20/17) be noted.

2) That a Community Asset Transfer Policy Task and Finish Group be established comprising of the chairman and Vice Chairman of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel and Councillor Allison That the Task and Finish Group provide an update on their work to the Panel in October.

3) That a report from the Transformation and Business Management Development SMT Sub Groups, which gave an overview of their work, be submitted to the October meeting of the Panel.

#### **BTSP.24/17            REVENUE BUDGET OVERVIEW AND MONITORING REPORT – APRIL TO JUNE 2017**

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer presented report RD.18/17 which provided an overview of the Council's overall budgetary position for the period April to June 2017 for revenue schemes only. The revenue report included details of balance sheet management issues, bad debts written off in the period and progress against the transformation savings was also provided.

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer drew the Panel's attention to section 3 of the report which summarised the budgetary position as at June 2017 and highlighted the main income and expenditure variances as summarised at Section 3.3 of the report.

The matter had been considered by the Executive on 29 August 2017 (EX.86/17 refers) and they decided:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the budgetary performance position of the Council to June 2017.
2. Noted the action by the Chief Finance Officer to write-off bad debts as detailed in paragraph 6 of Report RD.18/17.
3. Noted the virements and release of reserves as set out in paragraph 2.1 and Appendix A.”

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

- How confident were officers that the £1million additional income from the Council's assets would be achieved from 2018/19?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer explained that the £1million additional income would be in the budget from 1 April 2018 and almost half of the additional income had been already been achieved.

The Panel asked that an update on the progress being made with rent reviews be circulated to the Members.

- How would Chancerygate be paid and what affect would it have on the income from rent reviews?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer explained that Chancerygate were paid on a fee basis which had been covered from the reserves this year but it was anticipated that the future fee would be covered from the increase in income as a result of their work.

- Had the backdating of shortfall in the Lanes income been dealt with and had the budget for the Lanes income been reduced to reflect the reduction in income?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the backdating of the shortfall in the Lanes income had been completed and the budget had been reduced to take account of the lower level of income received, however, the income was still not achieving the lower target.

- What were the implications of the ICT Strategy and the reported overspend?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer explained that work was being undertaken to realign the profiles of expenditure budgets for the implementation of the ICT Strategy and it was not envisaged that there would be an overspend by the end of the year.

- Had the increase in Garden Waste income come from the expansion of the service?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer responded that the increase had been the result of additional recycling credits from Cumbria County Council.

- What were the contractual arrangements for the garden waste service and when were the rates last agreed?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer agreed to circulate a written response to Members.

- A Member had concerns that the debtors balance was very high and asked how this would be reduced and monitored.

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer reported that the majority of the figure was made up of overpayments to housing benefits and officers would look to recover the monies as part of their ongoing work. He added that the debtors figure remained constant throughout the year. Some of the amount would be written off but the debt was not forgotten and could be written back on.

- What was the reason for the reduction in the investment balance?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer reminded the Panel that the Council had made the decision to pay the pension costs up front as a one off payment and the investment balance would be back up by the end of the three years.

- Was the Council looking to recover all of the shortfall in income from the closure of John Street Accommodation from the insurers?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the Council was looking to recover all of the lost income and the final settlement would not be agreed until the final accounts had been received.

- The Panel congratulated officers for the work that had been undertaken to receive the “write on” credits.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel note the overall budgetary position for the period April to June 2017 (RD.18/17).

2) That an update on the progress being made with rent reviews be circulated to all Members of the Panel.

3) That details of contractual arrangements for the garden waste service be circulated to all Members of the Panel.

## **BTSP.25/17            CAPITAL BUDGET OVERVIEW AND MONITORING REPORT – APRIL TO JUNE 2017**

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer presented report RD.19/17 which provided an overview of the budgetary position of the City Council's capital programme for the period April to June 2017.

Members' attention was drawn to the Capital Budget Overview and details of the budget monitoring position as set out in sections 2 and 3 of the report.

The matter had been considered by the Executive on 29 August 2017 (EX.87/17 refers) and they decided:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the budgetary position and performance aspects of the capital programme for the period April to June 2017.
2. Noted adjustments to the 2017/18 capital programme for ICT Strategy (£49,600), Harraby Cycle Track (£41,500) and Public Realm (£25,000) to account for all external funding available towards the projects as detailed in paragraph 2.1 of Report RD.19/17.”

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

- What was the reason for the underspend on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)?

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer reminded the Panel that the City Council received a higher grant allocation from the Better Care Fund and as a result there was more money available to the authority. A discretionary scheme had been introduced to allow some of the additional monies to be spent in different ways and work was being undertaken to look at County wide schemes.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive added that the City Council had approved the Discretionary Policy which gave the Council the discretion to pay additional money above the statutory limit for DFGs. If the money allocated was not spent it would be carried over to future years.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported that he was leading on collaborative work across the six districts for better use of the monies beyond DFGs. Senior officers were keen to work together but there were issues with different processes on how DFGs were awarded across the districts. It would be a continuing piece of work but there was other work being carried out using the funding in the meantime.

In response to a Member's question the Chief Executive confirmed that one option being looked at was the employment of Occupation Health officers to speed the DFG process up. The Regulatory Services Manager had a timetable of work that would use the funding which would

be circulated to Members to enable them to determine if any of the projects required further scrutiny.

RESOLVED – 1) To note the overall budgetary position for the period April to June 2017 (RD.19/17)

2) That the timetable of works using the Better Care Funding be circulated to Members of the Panel to enable them to identify any potential areas for Scrutiny.

#### **BTSP.26/17            QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/18**

The Policy and Communications Manager presented the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter performance by exception list against the current Services Standards and a summary of the Carlisle Plan 2015-18 actions as defined in the 'plan on a page'. Proposed new Service Standards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were also included (PC.16/17).

Details of the current standards were set out in section 1 of the report and a set of proposed new Service Standards and KPIs were presented in section 2 of the report. Section 3 detailed updates against actions in the Carlisle Plan.

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

- The Panel supported the new report layout, new services standards and agreed that they would have service standards reported to them on an exception only basis.
- In response to a Member's request the Deputy Chief Executive agreed to circulate the proposed timeframe for the new leisure contract to Members of the Panel.
- Would the cycle track at Harraby be operational by October 2017 as originally planned?

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the track would not be operational by October, a revised timescale for the track was being developed.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel supported the new layout of the Performance report (PC.16/17) and the proposed new service standards and agreed that services standards would be reported to the Panel on an exception only basis.

2) That the Deputy Chief Executive circulate the timescales for the new leisure contract to Members of the Panel.

#### **BTSP.27/17            BITTS PARK – FLOOD REINSTATEMENT**

The Strategic Asset Investment Services Manager presented report GD.54/17 which outlined proposals for the reinstatement of flood affected assets in Bitts Park.

The Strategic Asset Investment Services Manager played a short flythrough of the proposals for Bitts Park and reminded the Panel of the damage which had occurred to Councils buildings in Bitts Park during the 2015 flood. He explained that officers had worked closely with WYG to review all flood affected assets in the park and it was established that the Pavilion was beyond repair. The depot and public toilets had suffered substantial damage and the park keepers lodge had escaped with only minor flooding to the basement areas.

It became clear that the flood presented an opportunity to redevelop the park facilities to provide an enhanced offer. Consultations with service users allowed plan and proposals to be developed and they were presented in section 2 of the report.

The Strategic Asset Investment Services Manager reported that having considered the location and user requirements of the previous Pavilion and the former lodge plans were devised to redevelop the lodge into a new pavilion facility. The plans included a new single storey addition, enhanced café area with decked area and integrated toilet facility.

The new pavilion would deal with all bookings for the tennis courts and provide basic changing rooms with back office accommodation and storage. Flood resilience measures would be incorporated into the design along with security measures.

In addition to the pavilion the Strategic Asset Investment Services Manager reported that a basic reinstatement of the ground floor of the depot was proposed to reflect the current use of the facility.

The report detailed the proposed timescales along with the financing proposals and the Panel was asked to consider the proposals and provide observations and comments for consideration by the Executive on 25 September. The Strategic Asset Investment Services Manager added that further reports would be considered by Members to gain approvals as necessary throughout the project.

The Chairman commended officers for using the unfortunate circumstances as an opportunity to rebuild in an imaginative way.

The Panel had a detailed and in depth discussion with regard to the security arrangements for the building and, in particular, the toilet facilities. They were concerned that the toilet facilities would only have limited opening hours and leave the Park without facilities early evening or when other activities were taking place. The old toilets had suffered from anti-social behaviour and there were concerns that the Lodge would not be secure at night.

The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that there had been issues with the previous toilets and the Lodge would be designed with flood resilience and security included. He added that the proposals were the first step in the process and the final design and details would go back through the Executive process. There were many details that needed to be addressed in more detail and these included the toilet facilities, who would run the proposed facilities, opening hours, access to the toilets and changing rooms and the final design of the building.

Members highlighted issues with opening hours at the facilities at Talkin Tarn and Hammonds Pond and were concerned that similar issues would arise in Bitts Park especially during the winter months. They wanted to see the income from the facilities maximised and suggested that officers investigate the facilities other authorities offered in their parks and consider evening corporate events.

The Chairman asked who the stakeholders were with regard to consultation and whether the final design would be available for the Panel to scrutinise. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the stakeholders included the Parks and Greenspaces Team, the Leisure Contract provider and Planning Services. The final design and request for release of monies would go through the Executive process.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel note report GD.54/17 Bitts Park Flood Reinstatement;

2) That the Panel support the proposed design in particular the re-use of the Lodge and look forward to see the final designs at a future meeting;

3) That the comments and concerns of the Panel as detailed above be forwarded to the Executive.

(The meeting ended at 3.25pm)