

BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 15 JULY 2021 AT 4.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Bainbridge (Chair), Councillors Alcroft, Allison, Mrs Bowman, Mitchelson, Mrs Mitchell, Sunter and Dr Tickner.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Ellis, Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

OFFICERS: Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
Lead ICT Officer
Policy and Communications Manager
Policy and Performance Officer

BTSP.46/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence submitted.

BTSP.47/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted.

BTSP.48/21 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.49/21 MINUTES IF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

BTSP.50/21 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

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

BTSP.51/21 BUSINESS RATES OUTTURN

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources submitted the 2020/21 provisional outturn and performance position for Business Rates and the impact it would have on the overall General Fund Balance (RD.13/21).

The matter was considered by the Executive at their meeting on 5 July 2021 (EX.57/21 refers) and resolved:

“That the Executive noted the provisional outturn position for Business Rates at 31 March 2021 and approved the creation and transfer of a new earmarked reserve as outlined in paragraph 2.6.1 of report RD.13/21.”

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources reported that the deadline for the submission of the NNDR 3 returns was 30 June, it was hoped that the final Business Rates Pooling figure would be updated before the final Statement of Accounts was published.

The Panel felt assured by the report and thanked the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources and her team for their ongoing hard work especially during the pandemic.

RESOLVED – That the Panel had scrutinised the Business Rates Outturn 2020/21 and supported the recommendation to create and transfer a new earmarked reserve as outlined in paragraph 2.6.1 of report RD.13/21.

BTSP.52/21 CARLISLE PLAN 2021-2023

The Policy and Communications Manager submitted an update on the new Carlisle Plan 2021-2023 (PC.24/21). Following the previous scrutiny of the Plan it had been possible to arrange public consultation between 2 and 6 August, consultation was online and physically in the Tourist Information Centre and Bitts Park.

The Policy and Communications Manager had circulated the design draft of the Plan and reported that an illustrated map had been designed to showcase the developments in both the urban and rural areas.

In considering the report Members made the following comments and suggestions in relation to the contents of the Carlisle Plan:

- There should be a stronger message regarding transport and improved connectivity;
- The Plan should be clearer about the work being undertaken in rural areas;
- There should be a stronger message about tourism as an economic driver in Carlisle;
- The Plan was more accessible but still required some further work to ensure the whole document was in plain English;
- The Plan referred to 'economic growth' and 'sustainable growth', it was felt that this was a mixed message in terms of the Council's climate change strategy and should be changed to sustainable growth only;
- The climate emergency was more apparent in the Plan, however, Members wanted to see this underpinned in all of the strategies and vision for Carlisle;
- The consultation questions did not prompt individuals to share their vision for Carlisle and it was suggested that they be changed and more open questions be included to engage with people;
- Could examples of the viable options for the Central Plaza site be included in the Plan and could the consultation include a question which allowed the public to put forward their suggestions for the site;
- Add information explaining how the Market Square would be reimagined to become a focal point;

In response the Policy and Communications Manager clarified the following:

- The Carlisle Plan gave a commitment to the preparation of a Rural Strategy
- Transport improvements work may be better placed within the Economic Strategy work

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive informed the Panel that Officers had received a clear directive to develop a Rural Strategy as a priority and the Corporate Director of Economic Development was progressing with the work.

The Panel asked that the Carlisle Plan refer to the Rural Strategy as part of the vision of the Carlisle Plan and make it clear what this meant for urban and rural residents.

A Member asked how the progress on the programmes which underpinned the Carlisle Plan would be reported within the quarterly performance report?

The Policy and Communications Manager explained that the Panel would have the opportunity to consider how the performance would be monitored when the performance report was submitted to the next meeting.

The Panel urged officers to engage with local rural communities outside of the Parish Councils as part of the consultation process.

RESOLVED – That the Panel had scrutinised the draft Carlisle Plan 2021-20523 (PC.24/21) and asked the Executive to consider their comments and suggestions as set out above as part of the consultation process.

BTSP.53/21 FUTURE SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The Deputy Chief Executive presented an overview of recent discussions by the Scrutiny Chairs Group with regard to the future scrutiny arrangements at Carlisle City Council. (OS.18/21).

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the Scrutiny Chairs Group had met on 29 June 2021 and requested that the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel consider establishing a Task and Finish Group to consider whether any changes should be made.

The Panel discussed the suggestion and the potential impact of the Local Government Reform and agreed to progress with the task and finish group. Councillor Bainbridge and Allison were nominated as the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel's representatives.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Future Scrutiny Arrangements report (OS.18/21) be noted.

2) That a Future Scrutiny Arrangements Task and Finish Group be established.

3) That Councillor Bainbridge and Councillor Allison be appointed to the Future Scrutiny Arrangements Task and Finish Group on behalf of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel.

BTSP.54/21 OVERVIEW REPORT

The Policy and Performance Officer presented report OS.17/21 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel and the Panel's Work Programme.

RESOLVED – That the Overview Report incorporating the Key Decision items relevant to the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel be noted (OS.17/21).

BTSP.55/21 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.55/21 ICT SERVICES PROJECT STATUS PROJECT
(Public and Press excluded by virtue of paragraph 3)

The Lead ICT Officer submitted an update on the ICT Services Project Status (CE.09/21). The report had been updated to offer the Panel an up to date snapshot of the current status of the ICT Services projects along with recent project activity; RAG rating; issues and emerging risks; key activities for the next period and requests for change.

The Lead ICT Officer responded to the Panel's questions, assuring them of the work that was being undertaken and he set out the resources required to undertake the work detailed within the project report. He explained that recruitment in IT was an issue across the country, however, the current vacant posts had been re-evaluated and it was hoped this would help the process.

During the discussion the Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that the IT projects needed to continue to ensure the Council was protected regardless of the outcome of the Local Government Reform. He added that the matters within the report had been considered by the Audit Committee who had made a recommendation to the Panel.

The Lead ICT Officer set out the priorities for the projects and service and gave details of external support that was provided to the Council.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel had scrutinised the ICT Services Project Status report (CE.09/21).

2) That an updated ICT Services Project Status report be submitted to the Panel in three months time.

(The meeting ended at 5.25pm)