

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 7 October 2020

PRESENT:

Councillor Jordan, Chair
Councillor Vincent, Vice Chair
Councillors Corvid, Derrick, Hendy, Samantha Leaves, Mrs Pengelly, Tuffin

Also in attendance:

Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene), Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-operative Development), Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), John Hamblin (Shekinah), Paul Looby (Head of Financial Reporting and Planning), Andy Ralphs (Strategic Director for Customer and Corporate Services) and Jamie Sheldon (Democratic Advisor) Pete Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager), Philip Robinson (Service Director for Street Services, PCC) , Kathryn Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Katrina Houghton (Head of Service Street Service) , Andrew Hardingham (Service Director for Finance) and Mike Taylor.

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.30 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

94. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members in accordance with the Code of conduct.

95. **Minutes**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 22 January 2020

96. **Chair's Urgent Business**

Under this item the Chair proposed to change the order of the agenda and take The Way We Work (TWWW) Programme Update, before Capital & Revenue Monitoring Report 2020/21- Month 4 item to accommodate Cabinet Members diaries.

The committee agreed to change the order of business.

Alan Knott (Policy Advisor) gave the Committee an update on the latest Policy Briefing -

Two main elements, Government announcements and consultations where Government seeks views prior to changing policies. This brief set out changes relevant to this committee. To note this month -

- The changes to eviction notices had been extended for 6 months;
- Furlough scheme come to an end but support packages were in for place from funding to advice;
- Fundamental review of Business Rate Consultation in two parts, responded to part one and would respond to part two when that comes out;
- Responded to the Governments call for representation regarding the Comprehensive Spend review, in place late last month.

The Committee noted the update

97. **The Way We Work (TWWW) Programme Update**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Transformation and Skills) and Pete Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager) presented the The Way We Work (TWWW) Programme Update to the Committee –

The report provided an update on the work of the Transformation resources working to modernise the Council. It was the first time since the COVID lockdown in March that the panel would have had sight of the work of the team and the report described the work done during lockdown as well as the current priorities and status of the work being delivered under The Way We Work Programme.

In common with many other services during the Council's emergency response to Covid 19 starting in March this year, Transformation was mostly ceased at that time. The resources working on Transformation were redirected to projects across the business, helping departments respond to the new needs for public service in the City.

The accommodation rationalisation was focused initially on the potential for savings to be made by reducing the number of corporate office buildings required by the Council. The opportunity to reduce our corporate office estate had been created by the mass adoption of flexible working by staff during the period of lockdown. This had proved that home and flexible working could work to the benefit of many staff and for many roles – noting that where staff were either unable to perform their role from home or where their wellbeing was adversely impacted by working from home we would always want to offer these staff access to an office.

The need for a flexible and modern business support function was clear before the pandemic. During the emergency response business support resources were moved throughout the business to work to support our priorities as they changed. Having

seen how that worked, now is the right time to transform business support to be more innovative and modern.

Key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- where would the TWWW Programme be in 6 to 12 months' time;
- Thanked staff for their patience and support introducing the new remote working options to Councillors;
- Whether there was an increase in work life balance and increase in productivity;
- The Accommodation Strategy was not just in response to COVID crisis, some were long term issues. Could long term trajectories be shared such as environmental reductions, changes of the way we work with technology?

The Committee noted the update and agreed to schedule the Accommodation Framework at the next business meeting.

98. **Street Services**

Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene), Philip Robinson (Service Director for Street Services), Kathryn Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) and Katrina Houghton (Head of Service Street Services) presented this item -

Provided an update on current performance and finance information requested by Scrutiny on;

- Grass Cutting
- Garden Waste
- Wheelie bin charges
- Missed bin collections
- Performance data
- Fly-tipping

The report provided a brief overview of performance during these unprecedented times, which had presented myriad challenges. Street Scene and Waste (SSW) had been working to make sure critical services had been kept running whilst following government guidance, listening to concerns from residents and keeping the staff and public safe. This had meant that from the beginning of lockdown SSW had been prioritising services and working to bring services back on line as guidelines changed and lockdown eased.

SSW had seen increased demand in areas such as fly-tipping, street cleansing and household waste tonnages. There had also been unusual patterns of behaviour and footfall as well as public disorder to adjust and respond to. With all of the challenges presented by COVID19, there had been a huge effort to keep things going, but also opportunities to do things differently.

Key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- Whether grass cutting would be managed differently next year?
- Requested that the schedule for grass cutting for next year was shared to give time for questions to be asked around schedule;
- Bee Corridors, feedback on where communities would like to see them. This would allow more consultation and engagement before next year;
- Whether it was possible for Councillors to be given links to Social media information shared to help promote. Councillors were able to share information through personal platforms increasing communications and knowledge of what is going on;
- Positive increase in visible wild flowers and bees, commend teams, positive feedback from residents during all seasons;
- Customer reported missed household waste bins, increased in July to Aug – What happened to cause spike and what was the response to what happened;
- What analysis was completed on missed bins;
- Could data be separated so you could see data for not collected and bins not put out respectively;
- How are the public viewing changes to garden waste? Proactive stance on enforcement;
- Were brown bags going to be replaced? Introducing wheelie for garden waste;
- Reported fly tipping increase, could more have been done to reduce fly tipping? Could the tip of been opened earlier;
- Would Garden waste service be maintained to help reduce fly tipping if restrictions were enforced again;

Recommendations –

- 1) The Committee recommended that the grass cutting schedule and mapping for next year would be brought back to the January Committee meeting;
- 2) The Committee requested a report on tree campaign and how the Councillors and residents were involved to be added to the January Committee meeting.

99. **Capital & Revenue Monitoring Report 2020/21- Month 4**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Andrew Hardingham (Service Director for Finance) and Paul Looby (Head of Financial Reporting) presented the Capital & Revenue Monitoring Report 2020/21- Month 4 –

Outlined the capital and revenue finance monitoring position of the Council as at the end of July 2020;

Updated the report presented to Cabinet on 18 August 2020 which set out a revenue position statement for 2020/21 and the impact upon 2021/22 financial planning arising from the COVID-19 pandemic;

Set out the capital budget 2020-25, taking into account changes to the capital programme and adjustments to income assumptions as a result of the pandemic.

The forecast revenue outturn after the application of Covid grants and council mitigating actions was shown in Table 1.

Key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- We were 2.4 million into reserves, why were the reserves being used and separated;
- Budgeting setting process last year, identified 12-16 million savings. How had Covid pandemic effected the savings;
- Have legacy savings been effected and were they still trying to be achieved;
- Whether the budget needed to be reviewed;
- More clarification needed over income compensation scheme, concerns over percentage return;
- Did government pay for Nightingale hospital? More investigation needed.

The Committee noted the report and recommended that the Cabinet Member for Finance and Scrutiny Management Board write a letter to the Secretary of State to ask him to honour his pledge to fund councils fully.

100. **The impact of COVID-19 on Homelessness in Plymouth**

Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-operative Development), Jackie Kings (Community Connections Manager), John Hamblin and Mike Taylor updated the Committee on The impact of COVID-19 on Homelessness in Plymouth –

The report sets out the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness in the city, provided data to demonstrate the levels of homelessness in the city and explained how Plymouth City Council were addressing these through partnership working.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the impact on housing and homelessness had been significant; from needing to rapidly accommodate our most vulnerable rough sleepers who were at greater risk of infection, to continuing 'business as usual', creating outbreak guidance to enable support work to continue safely in a range of accommodation settings.

It was recognised that in a time of crisis, people were often more vulnerable and there was a need to ensure the right support was available at the right time to prevent homelessness wherever possible; this was true even more so at the present time.

The report-

- Described what impact COVID-19 has had on homelessness in the city;

- discussed the links to unemployment and homelessness;
- Provided performance data around homelessness;
- Outlined the gap between housing benefit payment and private landlord rent;
- Shared Plymouth City Council's mitigation plans as a city for homelessness.

Key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- Congratulated the team and Partners on the level of compassion and support delivered;
- How challenges had been dealt with in a multiagency approach. Dealing with mitigating issues whilst supporting the vulnerable;
- What work was taking place with private landlords to improve the situation? was this something that could be looked at;
- When could tenants be evicted and what support was in place for them.

The Committee noted the update.

101. **Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Work Programme.