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13 September 2021

Dear Councillor,

Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee

4:00pm, Tuesday 21 September 2021

Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

You are invited to attend this meeting for consideration of the matters itemised in the following Agenda.

Yours sincerely,

T. Clegg
Chief Executive

To: Councillors:

Hughes, R.J. (Chairman)
Adamson, G. (Vice-Chairman)
Allen, F.W.C. Muckley, A.M.
Davis, Mrs. M.A. Smith, C.D.
Hoare, M.W.A. Startin, P.D.
Jones, P.G.C. Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Kruskonjic, P. Woodhead, P.E.
McMahon, J.B.

Agenda

Part 1

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

- (i) To declare any personal, pecuniary or disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (ii) To receive any Party Whip declarations.

3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021 (enclosed).

4. Quarter 1 2021/22 Performance Update: Financially Resilient Council Priority Delivery Plan

To receive the latest performance information (Item 4.1 – 4.12).

5. Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021-22 Update

Verbal update from the Head of Governance and Corporate Services.

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee
Held on Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 4:00pm
In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock
Part 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Hughes, R.J. (Chairman)
Adamson, G. (Vice-Chairman)
Davis, Mrs. M.A. Smith, C.D.
Jones, P.G.C. Startin, P.D.
Kruskonjic, P. Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
McMahon, J.B. Woodhead, P.E.
Muckley, A.M.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declarations of Interest of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

No other declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee 2 March 2021 were noted.

4. Introduction to the Role of the Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Governance and Corporate Services that covered the following:

- Support for the Committee
- Background
- The Purpose of Scrutiny
- The Committee's Role and Remit
- Work Programme
- Undertaking a Review

(Councillor Adamson arrived during the presentation of this item.)

5. End of Year PDP & Recovery Performance Information

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 5.1 – 5.28 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that 65% of actions in the Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) had been delivered in full and 15% were in progress. In respect of the Recovery Plans, 70% of actions had been completed, and 25% were in progress. Delivery of some actions had been impacted by the need for the Council to move between response and recovery phases during the pandemic lockdown periods.

A Member queried that for those actions due to be completed in quarter 1 of 2021/22, were any likely to suffer from further slippage in completion. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that the quarter 1 report was not yet complete, so it was hard to know at this stage the likely position. Members were advised the report before the Committee today was based on the old Corporate Plan, whereas the quarter 1 report would reflect the new Corporate Plan.

Another Member commented positively about the number of actions that had been achieved given the circumstances of the last 15 months. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that Leadership Team took a view early in the pandemic about what work was planned and what realistically could be achieved. From that, Cabinet approval was given to defer actions where possible and re-prioritise workloads, such as for the payments of business support grants.

6. Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021-22

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 6.1 – 6.21 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised the proposed work programme (appendix 5 of the report) was based on previously suggested items and issues that had risen because of the coronavirus pandemic. It was recommended that the Committee select no more than 2 items to scrutinise during the year.

The Chairman noted that the items in respect of hybrid working for employees and the Council's assets had been suggested due to associated issues being referenced in the alternative budget presented to Council in February 2021.

The Committee then discussed the proposed work programme, putting forward the following topics for consideration:

- Council's response to the coronavirus pandemic – incorporating matters such as emergency planning and business continuity, and seeking the views of the external partners, the public and local community etc.
- Council's partnership working arrangements, particularly how it engaged with different partners during the pandemic and how that work could be built on going forward.
- Staff morale during the pandemic – to include hybrid working arrangements.

Resolved:

That the following review topics be agreed for the Committee's 2021/22 work programme, along with the membership of each review group:

- (A) Review of Hybrid Working Arrangements (staff morale during the pandemic to be included as part of this review)

Membership: Councillors Davis, Kruskonjic, McMahon, Smith, Sutton, Woodhead.

- (B) Review of the Council's Assets





Membership: Councillors Adamson, Hughes, P. Jones, Muckley and Startin.

The meeting closed at 4:57 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

**Priority Delivery Plan for 2021-22
Priority 3 – Financially Resilient Council**

PROJECTS – Summary of Performance

Delivery of Projects for Q1					
				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Project on Target	Work in progress but project slightly behind schedule < 3months	Action more than 3 months behind schedule – specific action required to address delay	Project not yet started	
0	21 (88%)	0	0	3 (12%)	24

Summary of Successes as at Quarter 1

Work is progressing well on all key projects

Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 1

No significant slippage to report at the end of quarter 1

3.1 To make the best use of limited resources – managing our people, money and assets

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
3.1.1. COVID Recovery / Service Restoration							
Ongoing restoration of services and clearing of backlogs	Planning for clearing of Housing Repairs backlog: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of Void Supervisor • Prioritise backlog jobs 	✓				Void Supervisor appointed and is having the expected impact on the void backlog. Admin Staff allocated dedicated areas of backlog to focus on and prioritise jobs are completed; repairs backlog is reducing.	✓
	Food safety inspections - recovery of 2020/21 backlog of approx. 400 interventions across all risk categories	✓				Agency EHO now engaged (following unsuccessful attempt to recruit into temporary post). Preparation completed and delivery of recovery plan has already commenced.	
	Planning enforcement – deal with backlog of cases	✓				Short term support to be brought in to deal with backlog.	
Re-introduction of face-to-face customer services, where necessary and by appointment	Appointments will be available where necessary from 12 April in line with the easing of restrictions	✓				Reception has re-opened at the Civic Offices on a limited basis	✓
	Planning for wider opening of reception areas		✓			Assessment to be undertaken of trial re-opening to inform future planning for Reception	

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
3.1.2. Shared Services							
Explore the business case for the further sharing of services and a Chief Executive with Stafford Borough Council	Establish project team, appointment of independent advisor and review models for sharing services		✓			Sharing of Chief Executive commenced 1 June 2021. Project team being established	✓
	Prepare business case and report for Cabinet			✓			
	Subject to outcome of the business case and Cabinet approval, develop implementation plan				✓		
3.1.3. Review and Reshaping of Operational Delivery Model							
Develop options for reshaping operational delivery re:							
Customers – to include future Reception Services, the Contact Centre and making more services available on-line which will form the basis for a Customer Engagement Strategy	Produce options paper for future of Reception Services		✓			Work so far has been focussed on trialling the re-opening of the reception at the Civic Offices alongside discussion of options for the future	✓
Employees – to include development of business case for increased use of homeworking and flexible working in the future, the infrastructure needed to	Proposal for interim hybrid working arrangement to be developed and agreed with Cabinet		✓			Work is in progress with broad principles for an interim hybrid model discussed and agreed with Leadership Team. Awaiting details of easing of lockdown in order to refine the proposals	✓

Item No. 4.4

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
support this and the implications for office space	Interim changes to working arrangements and policies to be reviewed and agreed			✓		Have identified the key policies that will need to be reviewed	
	Identify changes that need to be made to improve infrastructure to support remote working		✓			Some preliminary work has been done to identify changes that need to be made. This will be refined and actions determined once the interim hybrid model has been agreed	
	Development of longer-term business case for remote working and implications for Civic Offices				✓	Work on this will commence once the interim model has been agreed	
Members – to include the ongoing use of virtual meetings in the longer term and the implications of this	Produce a paper on hybrid and broadcasting meetings, the technology needed, costs and training implications		✓			Report to Cabinet on digitising meetings in July seeks approval to commission further work on broadcasting of meetings and the implications	✓
3.1.4. Increase our use of Digital Solutions in Delivering Services							
Establish changes made to working practices brought about by the pandemic and how these can be improved or be extended further	Inform staff of the tools and techniques available to them using our newer systems and software.			✓			N/A

Item No. 4.5

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
Development of a digital strategy and action plan	Develop a digital strategy made up of – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Infrastructure • Digital Workplace • Digital Engagement 				✓	Drafts of the Digital Infrastructure and Digital Engagement (customer) have been written. Digital Workplace needs to reflect the work of the Organisational Recovery Group	✓
Ongoing development of cyber security arrangements utilising Government funding	Establish and ‘air gap’ backup process.			✓		Technologies to support this are being reviewed.	✓
	Procure the necessary hardware and services to support the new backup system.			✓			
Procurement and development of customer portal (replacement of current CRM system) to include e-forms package	Determine requirements/ specification for the Customer Portal/Digital Engagement platform.	✓				A number of systems demos have taken place and a specification has been drafted	✓
	Procurement of new system		✓				
	Development of project plan for implementation			✓			
	Implementation and testing				✓		
Procurement of new website software and re-design/review of content	Establish requirement for new website and draft specification		✓			Work has commenced on drafting the requirements for the specification	✓
	Commence procurement			✓			
	Award contact and commence implementation				✓		

Item No. 4.6

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
Campaign to encourage the sign up to e-billing for Council Tax and Business Rates	All bills issued to make taxpayers aware of the e-billing facility. All e-forms to incorporate easy sign-up option.	✓	✓	✓	✓	All envelopes issued by the Revenues Team display a large graphic encouraging paperless billing and showing how to access it. Council Tax e-forms routinely include a tick-box to request e-bills. More e-forms are being developed in Q2	✓
	Social media campaign to coincide with Chase Matters distribution and in advance of Annual Billing			✓	✓		
3.1.5. Organisational Development							
No projects planned for 2021/22							
3.1.6. Asset Management and Maintenance							
Develop a new asset management strategy (aligned to the new corporate priorities)	Develop the strategy			✓			✓
	Present to Cabinet				✓		
Develop a new energy management strategy (aligned to the asset strategy and the costed action plan for climate change)	Develop the strategy				✓		✓
Develop a new maintenance strategy and plan	Undertake a review of maintenance priorities for 2021/22 and present to Cabinet		✓			On track to be presented to Cabinet in August 2021	✓

Item No. 4.7

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
	Develop a 5-year Maintenance strategy (aligned to the new Asset Management strategy and the costed action plan for climate change)				✓		
Identify opportunities to enhance, redevelop and transfer the Council's assets (aligned to the asset management strategy)	Review of individual assets to be included as individual projects (on a rolling programme)	✓	✓	✓	✓	This will be an ongoing process. Current priority is to review bridges, followed by Elmore Park public toilets.	✓
Options for Public Toilets at Elmore Park, Rugeley	Undertake a feasibility study, identifying options			✓			✓
	Present outcome of feasibility study to Cabinet setting out options, costs and secure a way forward				✓		
Undertake a review of the bridges and boardwalks across the district	Audit review of bridges & boardwalks	✓				Audit has been completed.	✓
	Present outcome of review and options for improvement / investment to Cabinet		✓			Report to be presented to Cabinet in Q2.	

3.2 Being a financially sustainable Council that lives within its means





Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
3.2.1. Prudent Financial Management							
Manage the collection of council tax and business rates collection and ensure outstanding debts are chased in accordance with Council policy	Day to day operation of service in accordance with policy.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Bills for 2021/22 have been issued	✓
Identify opportunities to apply for grants and submit applications as appropriate	Ongoing review of new funding sources with applications submitted with a sound business case	✓	✓	✓	✓	Application submitted for Levelling Up funding	✓
Set a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to fund Council services by a prudent mix of investment, services and tax income, while maintaining adequate reserves. MTFS to be reviewed annually as part of budget setting process	Medium term financial plan set as part of budget process			✓			N/A
	Review of existing fees/charges			✓			
	Review of income generation opportunities			✓			
	Identify potential Invest to save initiatives			✓			
Lobby for a fairer distribution of Government funding to sustain essential local services	Response to consultation documents on funding and letters to MP's where appropriate	✓	✓	✓	✓	No opportunities identified in quarter 1	N/A

3.3 Consider the impact on the environment in managing our assets and use of resources






Projects	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress	Symbol
3.3.1. Environmental Impact							
Undertake an assessment of our current carbon footprint and develop a management plan to inform how our buildings may be most efficiently maintained and reduce our carbon consumption.	Base Information - schedule current energy efficiency levels and energy usage of all corporate buildings		✓	✓	✓	Detail to be developed alongside the development of the new Asset Strategy	✓
	Develop costed proposals for improving the energy efficiency levels of the buildings (to achieve carbon neutrality)				✓	Work on this will commence during Q4 and into 2022-23	
Identify opportunities for funding for green initiatives.	Review opportunities and submit funding bids if they support Asset Strategy and/or Corporate Priorities	✓	✓	✓	✓	Monitoring of funding opportunities on-going	✓

Priority Delivery Plan for 2021-22
Priority 3 – Financially Resilient Council

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Summary of Performance as at Q1			
			
Target Exceeded	Target Achieved	Performance Slightly Below Target	Performance Significantly Below Target
1	2	0	2

Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target Achieved?
Objective 3.1 To make the best use of limited resources – managing our people, money and assets								
Total Number of Stage 1 Complaints	Q	29	n/a	9				N/A
Total Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Q	4	n/a	6				N/A
% of invoices paid within 30 days	Q			* Data not currently available				N/A
No of incoming calls received	Q	91,623 (22,905 per qtr.)	n/a	22,917				
No of calls answered	Q	83,691 (20,923 per qtr.)	n/a	19,568				

Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target Achieved?
% of calls answered	Q	91%	94%	85%				
Average Call Wait Time	Q	1.41	2.00	3.06				
Number of on-line forms completed	Q	707 per qtr.	700	728				
Number of Council Tax payers receiving e-bills	Q	Baseline March 2020 = 2085	New	5748				N/A
Number of Business Rate payers receiving e-bills	Q		New	1627				N/A
Objective 3.2 Being a financially sustainable Council that lives within its means								
% of council tax collected annually	Q	96%	98%	28%				
% National non-domestic rates (NNDR) collected	Q	96.3%	98%	26.2%				
Total income from service fees and charges	Q	New measure		*Data not currently available				N/A
Value of successful grant applications secured for the District	Q	New measure		*Data not currently available				N/A
Amount of external funding secured to support the delivery of projects and programmes	Q	New measure		*Data not currently available				N/A

*Due to the closedown of the accounts and the implementation of a new financial system, the financial information for quarter 1 is not currently available. It is anticipated however, that the information will be available in quarter 2

Comments on Performance Significantly Below Target:

The Contact Centre Team have experienced issues throughout the first quarter in transferring calls to services and this has resulted in more “Callback” requests being created which has extended the interaction times. This in turn impacts on the call waiting time and a reduction in the number of calls answered.

The problems in transferring calls relate to problems with the technology used which does not support effective remote working and lack of availability of staff in the service teams. The Technology Team are exploring alternative software solutions to improve remote call handling.

The Contact Centre has also been short-staffed following a member of the team leaving. The vacancy has been recruited to and training is underway, but it will take time before the new employee is able to operate at full capacity.