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30 September 2022

Dear Councillor,

Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee
6:00pm, Monday 10 October 2022
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:

McMahon, J.B. (Chair)
Johnson, T.B. (Vice-Chair)

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Arduino, L. | Molineux, G.N. |
| Fletcher, J. | Muckley, A.M. |
| Frew, C.L. | Theodorou, P.C. |
| Hoare, M.W.A. | Wilson, L.J. |
| Jones, P.G.C. | Woodhead, P.E. |
| Kraujalis, J.T. | |

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 28 June 2022 (enclosed).

4. Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan 2022-26

To receive the Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan for the period 2022-26 (Item 4.1 - 4.2).

5. Review of Hybrid Working

Presentation from the Head of Governance and Corporate Services.

6. Work Programme Update

Verbal update from the Head of Governance and Corporate Services and the Head of Economic Prosperity.

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee
Held on Tuesday 28 June 2022 at 6:00pm
In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 1

Present: Councillors

McMahon, J.B. (Chair)
Johnson, T.B. (Vice-Chair)
Arduino, L Muckley, A.M.
Fletcher, J. Theodorou, P.C.
Frew, C.L. Wilson, L.J.
Kraujalis, J.T. Woodhead, P.E.
Molineux, G.N.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor P.G.C. Jones.

Councillor Woodhead advised he would need to leave the meeting by 7pm due to having another commitment to attend.

The Chair submitted apologies on behalf of the Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader, Councillor R.J. Hughes, who was unable to attend due to work commitments, but would aim to be present at other meetings of the Committee during the year.

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

No declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

3. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2022 be approved.

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:

- Support for the Committee
- Background
- Purpose of Scrutiny and Effective Scrutiny
- Committee's Role:

- Policy Development and Review
- Holding the Executive to Account
- Performance Management and Review
- External Scrutiny of Partners
- Committee's Remit
- Work Programme and Examples of Scrutiny Work
- Undertaking a Review.

5. End of Year Performance 2021/22

Consideration was given to the end of year 2021/22 performance update for the Financially Resilient Council Priority Delivery Plan (PDP).

In response to a query from a Member regarding completion of food safety inspections following the Covid-19 pandemic, the Head of Economic Prosperity advised that significant progress had been made and the number of outstanding inspections reduced in recent months.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the proposed report on virtual / hybrid meetings, the Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised she would need to discuss with Democratic Services about when this could be scheduled in around other priorities. A quotation had been received for a high specification broadcasting model that would cost a six-figure sum, so lower specification options were being researched that could provide an interim solution for the Council Chamber.

In respect of the customer relationship management (CRM) system replacement and the development of a new IT strategy, a Member queried what provision had been made for 'digitally excluded' people. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised the replacement was about driving forward the Council's digital strategy as the current software was not suitable but stressed there was no intention to stop offering face-to-face support. It was also noted that the Staffordshire Leaders' Board had discussed the development of a 'Single Front Door' model, but it was unclear at this stage how it would progress.

A Member asked if the Committee could scrutinise the climate change costed action plan when it became available. The Head of Governance and Corporate services advised that the wider scope of climate change work sat within the remit of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, but this Committee could look at it from the perspective of the Council's own assets and its energy management. The Head of Economic Prosperity further advised he would seek clarification on when the energy management strategy report was likely to be ready, as the performance report suggested a timescale of quarter 2 in 2022-23.

With regards to the review of the bridges and boardwalks, a Member noted this had been completed and reported to Cabinet in August 2021, but it appeared no work had taken place since then to commence any replacement / repair works for affected sites. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that quotes had been received for replacement bridges in Anglesey and Rawnsley nature reserves, but the amounts were above the allocated budget, so the position was being reviewed. As Members

would be aware, costs of construction and building materials had increased significantly since the August 2021 Cabinet report.

Another Member noted that as part of the 2021/22 budget report, the Cabinet at the time said £346,000 would be available for such repair works, but the August 2021 Cabinet report included a figure of only circa £200,000. The Committee was told last year that money could not be retained in the budget if it was not needed, so queried if this was the right approach to take. The Chair noted there was a need to consider this matter as part of overall portfolio budgets and inflationary impact on all budgets since that time.

Another Member queried if there was the opportunity to review what was being proposed in terms of the replacement works so something could be installed sooner in the areas where concerns had been raised, and noted a conversation was needed with residents to understand what they wanted to have in place. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that following the report agreed by Cabinet last year, the Corporate Assets team had reviewed where works were most urgently needed. An assessment was made of what materials needed to be used and the most appropriate design, but without going over budget. Quotes had been sought on that basis and came in over budget, and so a report back to Cabinet would be required and decisions made on how to proceed.

A Member raised concerns about Officers not being contactable, noting it had been particularly difficult to do so post-pandemic, and would be discussing this and other issues with the Chief Executive next week.

Another Member noted that work on projects deemed to be a 'priority' appeared to be progressing exceptionally slow.

A Member queried if any opportunities had been identified for funding of green initiatives. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that nothing had been done so far as the priority had been to get the asset management strategy produced. Following this, a review would be carried out of what assets to retain, and funding opportunities would be sought as part of this work. Funding was available, but the Council had not been able to submit bids as no relevant projects or schemes had been developed yet.

(Councillor Woodhead left meeting at this point and did not return.)

A Member noted that concerns had been raised by residents phoning the main switchboard number and their calls not being answered, so were contacting councillors for help instead. The Chair noted that other organisations included an automated call-back option on their telephony options. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised this may not be an option for the current system but could be considered for the new one.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the performance data from the new finance system not being available, the Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that because of issues with implementation and rollout of the system, it had not been possible to collect the data for the three measures identified, so a review would be undertaken as to whether they be included in the new Priority Delivery Plan.

6. Review of Council's Assets Task & Finish Group - Final Report

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 6.1 - 6.3).

The Head of Economic Prosperity talked through the report, setting out the key issues presented to the task & finish group for consideration and the recommendations developed by the group accordingly.

A Member felt that the language used in the recommendation regarding purchase of a new asset management database was not firm enough based on what the group had discussed and put forward. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised this matter had been discussed at Leadership Team as to what other options were available and a view taken that a more considered decision was needed.

Another Member queried if the development of the Council's new website would include the facility to integrate such a database into it. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised this was not a primary consideration, but it could be looked at in future if felt necessary. The Head of Economic Prosperity further advised the main purpose of the database would be to develop and prepare required maintenance and compliance works in a non-paper-based format.

Resolved:

That the recommendations of the Review of the Council's Assets Task & Finish Group, as set out in report paragraph 3.6, be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet for consideration.

7. Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022-23

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 7.1 - 7.13).

The Chair raised that based on earlier discussions in the meeting, call handling / customer first contact and carbon neutrality of the Council had been put forward as potential items for review.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised there was still an outstanding item from the previous year on hybrid working, and that the Committee could engage in the work on the development of the new civic hub, from the perspective of what Members wanted to get from it.

The Chair noted it was important for the hybrid working review to be completed as it was not just about the welfare of employees, but also the robustness and responsiveness of the Council.

In respect of carbon neutrality of the Council, the Chair suggested this be a whole-committee review, and that it may need to be done over the space of a couple years on a regular basis. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised there was a need to keep in mind the Council still had to receive the final version of the climate change costed action plan before it could decide how to proceed. It was noted the action plan was due to be considered by Cabinet in August 2022. The Chair then suggested the first stage of the review be scheduled for the October Committee meeting, with a contingency plan in place if this was not feasible. Another Member

suggested the Committee meet before then to review the action plan in readiness for October.

Resolved:

That the following review topics be agreed for the Committee's 2022/23 work programme, along with the membership of each review group:

- (A) Review of Hybrid Working (conclusion of 2021/22 review) - to be considered at the 6 October Committee meeting.
- (B) New Civic Hub Facilities (task & finish group) - to discuss what Members would like to see in terms of facilities in the new Hub.

Membership: Councillors Arduino, Fletcher, Frew, Kraujalis, Muckley, and Theodorou.

- (C) Call Handling and Customer First Contact (task & finish group) to include support to those who were digitally excluded and accessibility of council services.

Membership: Councillors T. Johnson, Kraujalis, Molineux, Wilson, and Woodhead.

- (D) Carbon neutrality of the Council (whole committee review) - to be considered at the 6 October Committee meeting (bridges and boardwalks to be a contingency item).

The meeting closed at 7:52 p.m.

Chair

Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan for 2022-26

PRIORITY 4 - RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL: “To be a modern, forward thinking and responsible Council”

| Projects | Actions and Milestones | Yr1 | Yr2 | Yr3 | Yr4 |
|--|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Improve our customers' access to services | | | | | |
| Develop a new customer portal to deliver better access to services on-line. | Procurement of new system | X | | | |
| | Implementation of new system | | X | | |
| | Development of new e-forms and processes | | X | X | X |
| Communicate with residents and stakeholders using language that is clear and easy to understand. | Operational | | | | |
| Enhance the use of technology and new ways of working | | | | | |
| Update our digital technology strategy and plan future improvements. | Review of digital strategy and development of action plan | X | | | |
| | Future improvements to be prioritised once a decision has been made regarding the shared services business case. | X | X | | |
| Develop our workforce to ensure they are suitably skilled | | | | | |
| Develop and deliver a workforce plan. | Overarching framework for workforce plan to be developed. Specific workstreams will be determined once a decision has been made regarding the shared services business case | X | | | |
| | Development and trial of hybrid working model | X | | | |

| Projects | Actions and Milestones | Yr1 | Yr2 | Yr3 | Yr4 |
|---|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Be a responsible Council that lives within its means and is accountable for its actions | | | | | |
| Set a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce a draft MTFS for 2023-26 for Cabinet Briefing by end of September 2022 that aims to eliminate the use of reserves over the period. Final MTFS to Cabinet in January 2023. | X | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rolling MTFS produced each year thereafter. | | X | X | X |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of the second stage of the business case for shared services. Further actions will depend on the decision taken by Council in November 2022 | X | | | |
| Make the best use of our assets | | | | | |
| Undertake a corporate wide review of our assets and develop a new Asset Strategy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset & Property Strategy to be approved by Cabinet | X | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a strategic review of the Council's non-HRA land and property assets | X | X | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the business case to create a new Civic Hub in Cannock town centre as part of the Levelling Up Fund scheme. | X | X | | |
| Identify opportunities for funding for green initiatives to improve energy efficiency of our buildings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an Energy Management Strategy | X | | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop asset management plans | | X | X | X |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify "green" funding opportunities to support asset requirements | X | X | X | X |