

Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 February 2021

This Scrutiny meeting was conducted via Zoom, in accordance with the provisions of the The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present:

Councillor Russell (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Ahmed Ali, Andrews, Clay, Davies, Lanchbury, B Priest, Rowles, A Simcock, Stanton, Wheeler and Wright

Also present:

Councillor Leese, Leader
Councillor N Murphy, Deputy Leader
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Skills
Councillor Stogia, Executive Member for Environment, Planning and Transport

RGSC/21/9 Minutes

Decision

The Committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2021.

RGSC/21/10 Climate Emergency petition

The Committee considered a petition, submitted on behalf of Climate Emergency Manchester, entitled “Respond to climate change with more democracy and more money”, which having received over 1,700, signatures requested the Council to establish a permanent “Climate and Environment Scrutiny Committee”, of equal standing to the existing six scrutiny committees and to make strenuous efforts to secure additional funding for climate action, including the use of some of its strategic reserves.

Ms Chloe Jefferies, representing Climate Emergency Manchester addressed the Committee setting out the rationale as to why she believed the Council should establish a 7th Scrutiny Committee, which included:-

- It was felt that the current Scrutiny arrangements were not working in relation to addressing climate emergency;
- The current Scrutiny Committee with oversight for climate emergency had a vast remit and there was insufficient time to address an issue on the scale of climate change with sufficient depth and detail;
- It was felt that the current approach to scrutinising climate change to date by the current scrutiny committees had been scattered rather than embedded;
- According to a Manchester Climate Change Agency report in 2020, a quarter of Manchester’s remaining carbon budget for the 21st century had been burned in

the space of just two years and the current arrangement were not keeping the city on track;

- It was felt that the Council's scrutiny arrangements had not been updated to reflect the complexity of climate change and growing area of Council activity which required transformative change and speed of action; and
- For scrutiny of climate change to be robust it needed to be central to the remit of a particular committee

The Leader was invited to respond to the points raised. In doing so he commented that:-

- In the main he supported the principles that had been raised by the petition and the comments made;
- The Council only accounted for approximately 2% of the city's emissions and had no statutory powers to require other parts of the city to act or scrutinise them;
- It was the purpose of the every part of the Council to make a contribution to tackle climate change;
- The demands on the current Neighbourhood and Environment Scrutiny Committee were too high to allow sufficient consideration of climate emergency;
- It was proposed that the balance of Scrutiny Committee remits would be reviewed, with the proposals that Homelessness would come under the remit of Communities and Equalities Scrutiny and that all Transport matters would be consolidated and placed under the remit of Economy Scrutiny;
- The above proposals would free up capacity for Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee to give more time to scrutiny of climate change and zero carbon; and
- It was envisaged that these proposals would come into effect as of the new Municipal Year and negate the need to establish a 7th Scrutiny Committee.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:-

- Members were in support of the proposal to realign the remits of the Scrutiny Committees to allow greater scrutiny of climate change and zero carbon;
- It was proposed that in addition to the realignment of scrutiny remits, the Council renamed the current Neighbourhood and Environment Scrutiny Committee to Environment and Climate Change Committee, which would be the main committee to scrutinise issues such as environmental integrity, climate change, bio diversity and flooding;
- It was also felt that this should not preclude scrutiny of climate change by other Scrutiny Committees where appropriate to do so;
- It was suggested that the proposed changes to scrutiny remits were made as soon as possible;
- It was commented that perhaps consideration needed to be given to the remits of all Scrutiny Committees in order for them to remain relevant and respond to changing circumstances impacting on the council and the city;
- It was felt that investment in tackling climate change was essential to securing the long term future of the city;

- It was felt that the re-establishment of the Climate Emergency Sub Group needed to take place as soon as possible; and
- It was proposed that this Committee scrutinised the financial implications in tackling climate change as part of its future work programme.

Clarification was sought by Ms Jeffries as to what the recommendation of the Committee would be and what the next steps would be. The Leader advised that the determination of committee structure and scrutiny remits was a function of full council and the process that would be followed would be for proposals to be considered by the Council's Constitution and Nominations Committee with recommendations then made to full Council. He added that he would be supportive of this process being undertaken in time for consideration at the next meeting of the Council on 31 March 2021.

Decisions

The Committee:-

- (1) Recommends to Council, via the Constitutional and Nominations Committee, that the existing Scrutiny Committee structure is reviewed with a view to a significantly greater emphasis being given to climate change and the environment more broadly, by an existing committee that is predominantly focussed on this.
- (2) Recommends that the review is undertaken and concluded in time for proposals to be considered at the Full Council meeting on 31 March 2021.

RGSC/21/11 Corporate Core Budget 2021/22 - final proposals

Further to minute (RGSC/21/3), the Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and City Solicitor, which provided a further update on the savings proposals being proposed as part of the 2021/22 budget process which reflected any feedback from the November 2020 meeting.

The Leader advised that the changes contained in the report were either as a result of recommendations previously made by the Committee or where of such a minor nature that they did not significantly impact on the overall budget proposals.

Key points to note were:-

- The Core had identified proposed budget reductions of £6.281m, which required a reduction of c.115.1ftes;
- There were currently c.54 vacancies earmarked as contributing towards the overall reduction, with the remainder likely to arise from applications for the targeted Voluntary efficiency scheme;
- As at December 2020 the Directorate was forecasting a net overspend of £1.321m, this included COVID-19 related pressures of £5.969m, offset by in year savings and other mitigations of £4.648m;
- Coroners Service would have a backlog of jury cases in 2021/22 and the forecast cost implications of these was £131k, which had been included in the budget for next year;

- As part of planning for the May 2021 Elections additional costs would be incurred in order to ensure that the election is Covid secure. The estimated costs of this was c£113k and a one year budget increase was proposed to meet these costs; and
- An increase of 1.9% above inflation in Bereavement Services was proposed which would bring fees and charges in line with other local authority areas, and result in an additional £85k income per year.

A point raised by the Committee was that there was no reference to LGBT+ in the references to equality groups and it was requested that this be included.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer gave an assurance that this reference would be included.

Decision

The Committee agree the savings proposals as described within the report and endorse these to the Executive.

RGSC/21/12 Capital Programme & Projects Review 2020/21

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer, which provided an update on progress against the recommendations made by Local Government Association (LGA) external review of 2018, a summary of Internal Audit reviews on Capital Programmes and Projects since 2018 and the proposed plan for further external review and timeline.

Key points and themes included:-

- Detail of the recommendations made by the LGA Peer Review together with departmental responses;
- During the timeline between the publication of the LGA Review in 2018 and the drafting of this report Internal Audit had undertaken 21 reviews, covering the Our Town Hal project, the Factory, Highways and Capital Programmes to provide further assurances across the activities; and
- Details of a proposed plan for further external review of the capital programme and projects.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committees discussions were:-

- It was requested that any review included the appropriate Executive Member and any other relevant Elected Members;
- Had consideration been given to employing apprentices or those on the kick start programme within Capital programmes;
- Why had benchmarking with Stockport and Sheffield been identified

The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that it would be crucial for the inclusion of the relevant Executive Member and other Members as part of any review. She added that at the point when the original review was undertaken, Sheffield had been

identified as a particular example of good practice and there was a similar rationale for Stockport.

The Director of Capital Programmes advised that there were apprentices in the service and there was a career progression plan within the service to bring people through from lower grades.

Decision

The Committee notes the report

RGSC/21/13 ICT update

The Committee considered a report of the Director of ICT, which provided an update on the progress in developing the Council's IT Strategy, the development of its Datacentre Programme, an update on the LiquidLogic Programme (Social Care System) and an update on the Council's migration to Microsoft 365.

Key points and themes of the report included:-

- A draft ICT strategy was with the Deputy Chief Executive to review prior to going to SMT in February;
- The priority for ICT was the provision of fit for purpose, secure by design and resilient technology to enable improvements to the delivery of public services;
- An update on the ICT Data Centre migration from the Sharp site, which was at the last stage of the physical move, with an overall aim of achieving improved resilience and disaster recovery;
- An update on the LiquidLogic suite of social care products, which had been operational for 18 months;
- An update on the implementation of new LiquidLogic Adults, Children's and Early Help System;
- An overview of the financial savings achieved through the adoption of LiquidLogic;
- An update on the MS365 Collaboration Programme, including confirmation that all individual users were now migrated to Microsoft 365, amounting to 7,250 accounts;
- An update on the End User Device (EuD) Project; and
- ICT's response to the COVID crisis.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:-

- Were the six outstanding shared mailboxes now migrated to MS365;
- Was the Council disposing of old ICT equipment in a responsible and sustainable way;
- It was recognised how well the Service had responded to the COVID crisis in providing staff with the necessary equipment to work from home;
- The teams involved in the successful MS365 and telephony migration were congratulated on the work that they had undertaken under the difficult circumstances the Council was operating under;

- It was suggested that within the new ICT strategy, reference needed to be made to addressing digital exclusion as part of any public facing system;
- Was there an ambition to move to more cloud based data centres rather than physical data centres;
- Was there any plans to recoup the overspend in delivering the implementation of the new LiquidLogic Adults, Children's and Early Help System;
- There was a need to recognise that Manchester's carbon footprint would increase with the arrival of GHCC in the city;
- Why had the Council moved from using Public-1 to webcast its Scrutiny and other committee meetings;
- Was there any plans to migrate away from other software platforms that the Council was currently using, such as SAP and if so, what consideration would be given to compatibility with other software and partner;
- What value for money had been derived from the migration to Microsoft365; and
- An update on the future of Citrix was requested.

The Director of ICT advised that any equipment returned was initially assessed to see if it could be reallocated to other staff. If not consideration was given as to whether it could be provided to schools and young people and only as a last resort would they be disposed of for recycling. He confirmed that all of the outstanding shared mailboxes had now been migrated to MS365.

The Committee was advised that the move to the new data centres was the first step in moving to a cloud based storage and as part of the draft ICT strategy was to adopt a cloud first approach. In terms of the overspend with LiquidLogic, it was explained that the implementation of the case management system was significant and complex. The previous product was no longer supported and therefore the Council had had to move quickly in replacing the software. A number of the benefits of adopting LiquidLogic were also outlined.

The Deputy Leader acknowledged the point made around the impact to the city's carbon footprint and stated that there were also benefits that could be derived from the arrival of GHCC in the city's economy. In relation to the Council ceasing to use public-1 for webcasting scrutiny and committee meetings, it was explained that this was due to budgetary issues but work was ongoing with Officers from Governance and Scrutiny Support to ensure a similar experience could be provided from the use of other platforms.

The Director of ICT advised that with each major software upgrade, the Council reviewed what lessons had been learnt to enable a smoother transition for future changes. He added that it was anticipated that future changes to the Council's software packages would be incremental and not on a similar scale to the recent migration to Microsoft 365. It was recognised that going forward, the integration and interconnectivity of various software systems was essential and this would be reflected in the new ICT Strategy.

The Committee was informed that at present, Citrix was still a supported channel for staff to access the Council's systems in a secure manner. It was envisaged that the reliance on Citrix would decrease in time with the roll out of the end user device program. In terms of value for money and benefit of Microsoft 365, it was reported

that the Council was starting to see the benefits of improved integration with other organisations and greater collaborative working.

Decision

The Committee notes the report.

RGSC/21/14 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

A Member suggested that as part of the Committee's future work programme it should receive a further update on the progress of implementation of Council Motions.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme subject to the above addition.