

MINUTES of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES** held via MS Teams on 17 September 2020.

PRESENT

Councillor T A Kemp (in the Chair)

Councillors N Barker, B Bingham, J Boulton, C Moesby, C Short, J Twigg, M Wall and G Wharmby.

18/20 **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – Resources held on 23 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

19/20 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS** There were no public questions.

20/20 **REGULAR COMMITTEE UPDATE ON THE FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY POSITION AND INPUT INTO 2021/22 BUDGET PLANNING** Peter Handford, Director of Finance and ICT attended the meeting and provided members with a detailed update on the financial position and outlined what has been done in terms of budget planning for 2021-22.

In summary at the time of setting the Revenue Budget 2020-21 in February 2020, there were a number of unknowns such as the cost of independent sector fees and the pay award. There is sufficient funding set aside in the contingency budget to meet these costs.

The costs of Covid-19 were substantial and this was reflected in the July Budget Monitoring Report. The Council expected Government to provide sufficient funding to meet the costs of Covid-19 and would continue dialogue with Government in expressing the concerns of the Council.

With sufficient financial support from Government to meet the costs of Covid-19, the Council should be in a position to manage the in-year budget.

A number of Section 151 Officers in England had indicated that they may be inclined to issue a Section 114 Notice. The Director of Finance & ICT did not consider that this is appropriate at this stage.

The concern was the Council's ability to set a balanced budget in 2021-22 and subsequent years. Local authorities needed the funding certainty of a three-year settlement from Government to plan the delivery of its services, whilst seeking assurance that any Covid-19 related costs will be fully funded.

In relation to the preparation of Budget 2021-22, the production of the Council's budget was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the

Council's Constitution. The Constitution required that a timetable was publicised by Cabinet for making proposals to the full Council in relation to the annual Revenue Budget, along with arrangements for consultation with stakeholders, which should be for a period of not less than six weeks. The proposed timetable was attached at Appendix 1 to the Director of Finance and ICTs report.

A key element of the Council's budget setting process was consultation with stakeholders and details of the consultation activities were listed

Cabinet would take account of the consultation when drawing up firm proposals to the Council. Results would be communicated after the consultation has ended.

As in previous years, an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be undertaken at a corporate level. It was anticipated that this corporate assessment would help identify areas where there is a significant risk of adverse impact which would then be subject to a full equality impact assessment process. Alongside the budget consultation, the budget saving proposals in the updated Five Year Financial Plan would be considered to assess which proposals would need a separate targeted consultation with staff, the public and/or with current/potential service users. The outcomes of these processes would be reported to Council/Cabinet as part of the budget process and specific assessments/consultation outcomes reported to Cabinet before decisions are made on individual services.

The Council's Five Year Financial Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25 (FYFP) is being updated during 2020-21 and the results would be included in a report later in the year.

The FYFP would be updated again as part of the budget setting process, to reflect the Government's Autumn Budget, the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 for the period 2020-21 to 2023-24 and the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which were expected to be announced in November / December 2020.

The Council had in place a Reserves Policy which sets out the framework within which decisions would be made regarding the level of reserves. In line with this framework the balance and level of reserves over the medium term are regularly monitored to ensure they are adequate to manage the risk of the Council. This covered both the General and Earmarked Reserves.

A review of the Earmarked Reserves Position is being undertaken and the results will be included in a report to Cabinet in November 2020.

Members made a number of comments and asked questions which were duly noted or answered by Mr Handford, who confirmed that he would keep members updated moving forward.

The Chairman thanked Mr Handford for his update.

RESOLVED to note the update on the financial and budgetary positions.

21/20 MANAGEMENT OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK (INCLUDING COMPLAINTS) Emma Crapper, Director of Organisation, Development and Policy and Julie Odams, Assistant Director Communications and Customers, attended the meeting and summarised the work undertaken between October 2019 and July 2020 to analyse the management of customer feedback including complaints, compliments and comments and made recommendations for future delivery.

As part of its work to improve the customer experience and considerations of technical platforms to support resident interaction the communications & Customers area was asked by the Director of OD & Policy to undertake an independent review of the complaints process in Autumn/Winter 2019 and the outcome of the findings were detailed in the report provided to members.

Detailed below are the terms of where the Council wants to be:

- Ensuring that we are able to meet all statutory reporting requirements.
- Meeting the best practice recommendations of the LGCSO.
- Producing reports for management teams that are consistently used to improve service delivery and outcomes.
- Having a robust approach to learning from resident feedback, implementing lessons learned into policy and process changes to improve the customer experience.
- Welcoming feedback from our residents and having a clear, effective and easy to use process for residents to give comments, complements and complaints.
- Having clear ownership and responsibility for customer feedback at an appropriate senior level within the council, ensuring a 'one council' approach and accountability.

It was important to recognise that an opening up of the feedback process, making it easier to navigate and for residents to engage with the Council, may result in a temporary increase in complaints. This should reduce as the council implemented meaningful improvements as a result of the

lessons learned from feedback and supports our commitment to being an open, accountable and value for money organisation.

Details were provided of the statutory requirements for complaints reporting and discretionary reporting and current departmental processes.

The Channel Shift procurement exercise saw tender papers released in June 2020 which include the procurement of a technical complaints solution. The procurement of this solution was agreed by CMT and Cabinet in March 2020 to support more effective statutory and non-statutory complaints reporting and resolution.

A range of options for delivery were considered by CMT on 1st September 2020 and Cabinet / CMT on the 9th September 2020 and were detailed in the report. Option C summarised below was recommended by both as the most appropriate model.

Under this Hybrid feedback model, a centralised team would be created under the Head of Customer Service with both Adult Social Care and Children's Services each having a dedicated officer to support their requirements. This approach would allow for a consistent approach to feedback, effective reporting and the implementation of lessons learned whilst maintaining specialist support for those areas of greatest complexity and statutory requirement.

In terms of portfolio responsibility, it was suggested that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture and Tourism have feedback management included within his portfolio recognising both its cross-cutting nature and proposed position with Customer Services. Given that this was a council-wide area of work, each Cabinet Member would also hold responsibility for feedback and complaints falling specifically within their areas of remit.

Once the revised customer feedback approach had been agreed and implemented successfully, stage two of this process would look at:

- How best to integrate with Legal Services regarding management of the relationship with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – clearly work will be needed within stage one to ensure that any new complaints approach supports the LGSCO requirements.
- Any required integration of Subject Access Requests (SARs) and Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) with the feedback management approach.

Further papers on this would be brought before CMT and Cabinet in due course.

Members made a number of comments and asked questions which were duly noted or answered.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their update

RESOLVED to note the report and endorse Option C as the proposed approach.

22/20 **HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING UPDATE** Emma Crapper Director of Organisation and Policy and Jen Skila. Assistant Director HR attended the meeting and updated members on developments relating to the Wellbeing Strategy and its associated action plan.

The Council's Wellbeing Strategy and accompanying action plan were approved in early 2019. Since then a number of the interventions within the plan had been achieved, such as the development of the Mental Health Policy and mental health first aider network. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted hugely on the Council's capacity to fully progress some of the identified actions, employee wellbeing has and continues to be crucial throughout our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council had implemented a wellbeing system for employees which consists of five levels of support, ranging from general support through to more specific and specialist individual support. The introduction of a smartphone app 'Thrive' enables employees to download the app providing access to mental health support as well as signposting employees to other support which is available. Furthermore, the Council has introduced an Employee Assistance Programme, commissioned initially 6 months, providing support for employees and family members within the same household, available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

It had therefore been timely to review the wellbeing action plan in light of the implications arising for the workforce as a result of COVID-19 to ensure a holistic approach to health, safety and wellbeing and practical steps that could be taken to achieve improvements.

The purpose of the original action plan was to meet the broad aims of the Wellbeing Strategy namely:

- bring together all initiatives currently in place within the council that support and maximise the health, safety and wellbeing of employees
- ensure a safe working environment and culture of wellbeing
- clarify the roles and responsibilities for safety and wellbeing
- identify areas for development and enable improvement

- identify the measures by which we will assess whether our workplace wellbeing support and interventions have been successful and are targeted effectively

This has now been reviewed and redefined to deliver the aims of the strategy within three core areas which complement each other and enable improved clarity and more clearly defined targets:

- Systems
- Resources/People
- Data

The focus was on not only on statutory compliance but also on ensuring a healthy and robust workforce, when considering the wellbeing of our employees.

This approach was further underpinned by the Council's moral, legal, economic and social responsibility and aims to demonstrate that the Council values all employees aligned to becoming an Employer of Choice. We aim to have an engaged, safe and healthy workforce delivering first class services for the people of Derbyshire.

The short term focus was based on three key themes:

1. Reviewing what we are currently doing.
2. Reviewing internal structures to support our wellbeing performance going forward.
3. Establishing appropriate systems to support the delivery of health, safety and wellbeing across the Council.

Reviewing current performance was vital to provide a starting point from which the revised wellbeing journey would commence. It was important that not only to understand current performance but that it is contextualised by comparing our performance with similar organisations both in the public and private sector. The development of appropriate and real time recording of data was a key part of the strategy, to ensure this can be analysed and fully understood to inform our decision making and actions.

In order to further develop a health, safety and wellbeing culture within our organisation, it is key that internal structures support, develop and challenge health, safety and wellbeing performance. This means not only reshaping the health, safety and wellbeing function but ensuring that all leaders within the organisation not only continue to champion health, safety and wellbeing performance, but drive improvement in required areas.

The establishment of a health, safety and wellbeing challenge group would oversee the delivery of the actions and ensure health, safety and wellbeing performance was considered at a senior management level. It would establish future wellbeing delivery targets and monitor departmental management performance. Existing wellbeing working groups would be reviewed and realigned to the delivery of key parts of the strategy and action plan. The Council continued to ensure that all employees fully understood their responsibilities in relation to health, safety and wellbeing.

The redefined approach would support sustainable health, safety and wellbeing performance ensuring that the Council had in place easy to understand and practical health, safety and wellbeing guidance which was consistent across all departments. This one council approach would continue to ensure that all employees fully understood their responsibilities in relation to health, safety and wellbeing.

The medium term focus would develop and build upon the immediate actions undertaken to ensure sustainable change in all three key areas: people, data and systems.

The Council would further develop manager and employee awareness and understanding of the benefits of positive health safety and wellbeing. Secondly, we will look to refine and improve the data we collect to drive targeted work initially identified to develop longer term proactive and preventative interventions.

Finally, there would be a focus on developing appropriate systems to support the Council's ability to fully embed practices and accountability to drive continuous improvements in our employee health, safety and wellbeing.

The long term focus is to embed within the organisation future behavioural change that will lead to the development of a positive and sustained health safety and wellbeing culture. The long term data targets will be determined by the findings of the initial review of performance.

To provide improved clarity and focus, separate sickness absence related actions had been defined, which are intrinsically linked to the overall action plan, and will focus on delivering outcomes against the same key themes (systems, data and people).

The Council had a target of 10.0 days average days lost per appointment, underpinned by the following departmental targets:

- CCP 8.5 days
- ASCH 13.0 days
- CS 7.0 days
- ETE 9.3 days

At end March 2020, the Council's average days lost due to sickness was 10.40 days. In comparison to the prior year, average days lost due to sickness had increased from 9.87 at March 2019. The Council had since seen a decrease in average days lost due to sickness to 10.0 days at June 2020. Ongoing monthly analysis was in place to outline and review sickness absence trends.

The sickness absence delivery plan would complement the overall wellbeing action plan ensuring improved data accuracy and clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of line managers when managing sickness absence. The introduction of a Sickness Absence Delivery Group, aligned to the Wellbeing Challenge Group would enable focused interventions at pace. Departmental specific interventions would be determined to further enhance the delivery plan.

The revised approach would be formally reviewed on an annual basis (with the first review at end March 2021) and progress would be reported internally quarterly through CMT and Cabinet/CMT aligned to the defined sickness absence delivery plan.

Members made a number of comments and asked questions which were duly noted or answered.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their presentation

RESOLVED to note the revised focus of the Wellbeing Strategy and its associated Action Plan

23/20 **UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN ON THE REVIEW OF SCRUTINY** The Chairman provided a verbal update on the review of Scrutiny. A review steering group made up of the four scrutiny Chairman and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services had held a series of meetings to drive this work forward. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) had been commissioned to conduct an independent review of Derbyshire's Scrutiny function. They had consulted Members and Officers, considered past and present scrutiny work programmes and observed an online scrutiny committee meeting. An online workshop was scheduled for Monday 12 October to enable the CfPS to present their final report and recommendations. All members were invited and encouraged to attend.

RESOLVED to note the update.