



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

17 December 2019

7.00 pm – 9.06 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

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Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Doina Cornell (Chair)	P	Councillor Steve Robinson	P
Councillor Martin Whiteside (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Mattie Ross	P
Councillor Nigel Cooper	P	Councillor Tom Skinner	A
Councillor Stephen Davies	P	Councillor Chas Townley	P
Councillor Nick Hurst	P	Councillor Ken Tucker	P
Councillor Keith Pearson	P	Councillor Debbie Young	A
Councillor Simon Pickering	P		

P = Present A = Absent

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive	Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Strategic Director of Resources	Housing Strategy and Community Infrastructure Manager
Strategic Director of Transformation and Change	Head of Community Services
Principal Projects Officer	New Homes and Regeneration Manager
Revenue and Benefits Manager	Democratic Services and Elections Officer
Interim Accountancy Manager	
Head of Property Services	

SRC.046

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Skinner and Young.

SRC.047

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

SRC.048

MINUTES

RESOLVED

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2019.

The Chair, Councillor Cornell, welcomed the new Strategic Director of Transformation and Change to the Council and thanked her for attending the Committee Meeting.

SRC.049**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were none.

SRC.050**COUNCIL TAX – LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTY PREMIUM**

The Revenue and Benefits Manager advised that in 2015 the Committee had agreed to introduce a 50% Council Tax premium for properties that had been empty and unfurnished for more than 2 years. He stated that new legislation had recently been introduced which had increased the possible premium to 100% and had included further incremental changes to properties which had been empty for longer than 5 or 10 years. He brought the Committee's attention to sections 3 and 4 of the report which outlined the impact this change would have and confirmed it would also have an impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) the detail of which was outlined further in Appendix A. The Revenue and Benefits Manager stated that the changes would support the Council's strategy to bring empty homes back into use more quickly and would generate additional Council Tax income.

Councillor Hurst asked whether Officers had considered why properties were left empty. The Revenue and Benefits Manager advised that he believed most properties were deliberately left empty by the property owners and that numbers of empty properties had increased since 2015.

Councillor Pearson asked for confirmation as to whether other Councils had adopted this policy. The Revenue and Benefits Manager confirmed that other Council's within Gloucestershire were adopting the premiums from April 2020.

Councillor Townley stated that it was important to recognise that the HRA properties were empty to allow for works to be carried out for the Sheltered Modernisation Programme.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL **That the Long Term Empty Property Premium (currently set at 50%) is:-**

1. Increased to 100% from 1st April 2020 for those properties which have been empty for two years and over;
2. Increased to 200% from 1st April 2020 for those properties which have been empty for five years and over;
3. Increased to 300% from 1st April 2021 for those properties which are/have been empty for ten years and over.

SRC.051**REDEVELOPMENT OF BRIMSCOMBE PORT**

The New Homes and Regeneration Manager advised that the purpose of the above report was to seek approval for further tender documentation, the questions for the supplier questionnaire and the tender evaluation matrix, and to seek approval to commence the procurement of the infrastructure and phase 1 works. She advised that a further report would be brought to the Strategy and Resources Committee in March 2020 for consideration.

Councillor Pearson asked whether the transfer of land from Stroud Valleys Canal Company (SVCC) to the Council had been completed. The Head of Property Services advised that

they were hoping to have it completed before Christmas, she confirmed that the contracts had been agreed and they were just waiting on a trustee signature.

Councillor Hurst asked for confirmation as to whether the Unite Construction Charter would be adhered to in this procurement process. The New Homes and Regeneration Manager advised that it had been agreed that this would be decided on a case by case basis and that they would need to look into it further to make a decision.

Councillor Pearson thanked the team for the work they had put into this and wished for his appreciation to be documented.

Councillor Pickering welcomed the progress on the site and stated that as a Council we should be taking a lead on redeveloping in a sustainable way some of the more difficult sites. He also stated that it is important that the Council has more of a strategic approach, as this development could be part of a corridor of redevelopment.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

- RESOLVED**
- 1. To approve the following documents for the procurement of a developer partner for the redevelopment of the port:**
 - a. The Supplier Questionnaire (SQ) questions**
 - b. The Tender Evaluation Matrix**

and to delegate authority to the Head of Property Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Strategy and Resources to make minor amendments to these documents prior to finalising the documents for the launch of the procurement process.

- 2. To approve the procurement of a contractor for the infrastructure for phase 1 of the project on a design and build basis and to transfer the package over to the development partner who is delivering the residential/commercial development (once appointed) to co-ordinate, manage and deliver.**

SRC.052

BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20 QUARTER 2

The Interim Accountancy Manager advised that the report above was the second of the quarterly budget monitoring reports that had been taken to Strategy and Resources Committee and that it set out the position for the Strategy and Resources Committee and for the whole Council for both revenue and capital.

Councillor Davies asked for an update on the plan to purchase the Chapel Street building from the Salvation Army. The Housing Strategy and Community Infrastructure Manager advised that they had recently contacted the Salvation Army to advise that the Council would need to pull out of the plan to purchase the building due to the lack of progress made, and that the Salvation Army at this point seemed to want to take faster action to ensure the deal didn't fall through. They have therefore planned a meeting to discuss the purchase in the New Year and are hoping to report further progress to the March Housing Committee.

Councillor Davies advised that a lot of the underspend reported was due to vacancies which shows stress within the organisation and departments, he stated that we should make every effort to fill the vacancies.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

- RESOLVED**
1. **To note the outturn forecast for the General Fund Revenue budget and Capital Programme.**
 2. **To note the outturn forecast for the Housing Revenue Account.**
 3. **To revise the salary budgets in line with the approved Senior Leadership Team structure (under the scheme of virement) as set out in paragraph 3.5.**

SRC.053

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

The Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer advised that he was seeking authority to review the Constitution and re-establish the Constitution Working Group. He stated that as a matter of good practice we should be looking at the Constitution to ensure that it is fit for the Council's purposes. The Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would agree a programme of work with the Constitution Working Group and that any amendments would be taken to Council for approval.

Councillor Townley asked whether they would consider looking at the performance management arrangements and the appointment of tenant representatives. The Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer advised that with regards performance management this would require a larger Council wide piece of work to be carried out. He also advised that they would look at the Committee System and at whether individual Committees could have more delegations.

Councillor Hurst asked whether there was a timescale in mind for completing the review. The Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer advised that it would be an ongoing piece of work and it was about accuracy rather than speed.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

- RESOLVED**
1. **To re-establish the cross party Constitution Working Group to oversee a review of the Constitution; and**
 2. **To authorise the Monitoring Officer to carry out a review of the Constitution on an incremental basis in consultation with the Constitution Working Group and to bring reports proposing amendments to this Committee to consider from time to time.**

SRC.054

RECOMMENDATION FROM ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – 24 OCTOBER 2020

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Allocations

Councillor Pickering, the Chair of Environment Committee outlined the report which proposed the first allocation of the CIL to various strategic infrastructure projects. He confirmed that we had now collected funds of over £500,000 as this had increased since the report had been published. He drew the Committee's attention to Appendix A which contained the recommended projects to provide funding for.

Councillor Davies asked for confirmation that the Subscription Rooms put a bid in for CIL funding. Councillor Pickering confirmed that a bid had been received but it had not been recommended for approval.

Councillor Townley asked whether CIL funding would be approved to replace outdated equipment or facilities or whether it needed to be an additional facility. Councillor Pickering advised that it would have to meet with the requirements of the Local Plan Policies and the Regulation Section 123 List.

The Chair asked whether we supported the Parish and Town Councils to spend their allowance from the CIL funding. The Housing Strategy and Community Infrastructure Manager advised that the money is paid to them to use as they see fit and that they have more freedom than they did under the S106 requirements.

Councillor Cooper asked when decisions would be made about spending the remaining CIL balance. Councillor Pickering advised that funds would be allocated on an annual cycle. The Housing Strategy and Community Infrastructure Manager confirmed that should an urgent infrastructure project arise they would be able to bring a report to Committee for approval.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED **That funding commitments are agreed according to the report.**

SRC.055 **CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN PROGRESS**

The Chief Executive asked the Committee to note the progress that had been made on the actions from the Corporate Delivery Plan. She advised that performance was generally very good and brought the Committee's attention to the summary in paragraph 2.2.

Councillor Davies asked for clarification of the target listed at CDP.13. The Head of Community Services advised that there wasn't a numerical target but advised that there was a representative of Transition Stroud, Stroud District Action on Plastic, who worked in the offices at Ebley Mill alongside the Waste Team and that they were looking at how we can reduce and eliminate the use of single use plastics. Councillor Pickering provided further clarification and advised that it was part of a national programme and target, he advised that the Project Officer from Transition Stroud had signed up many commercial businesses to agree to the target. The Chair advised that we need to ensure that we have clearer and more specific targets where possible.

In a response to a question regarding the progress Members are making in going paperless the Chief Executive advised that there had been an ICT Task and Finish Group where discussions had taken place with Members about this and that they were looking into the use of software such as Modern.gov.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED **To note the progress made in Quarter 2 on the Corporate Delivery Plan Key Actions for 2019-20, as set out in Appendix 1 and highlighted in this report.**

SRC.056**LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN
PROGRESS**

The Chief Executive advised that they had made progress with the initial 4 actions listed on the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan and that considerable progress could not be made with the remaining 4 actions until all of the Strategic Directors were in place. The Chief Executive advised that Rec 1 had nearly been completed, the Strategic Director of Change and Transformation, Caron Starkey, The Strategic Director of Resources, Andrew Cummings and the Strategic Director of Place, Brendan Cleere, had been appointed and an offer had been verbally accepted for the appointment of a Strategic Director of Communities. Credit was given to the IT team who had worked very hard to make progress on Rec 3. The Chief Executive also advised that they were expecting the Corporate Peer Challenge Team to revisit the Council in approximately 18 to 24 months.

The Chair advised that they had spoken at length at the ICT Task and Finish Group about Member experience and what IT support Members would need in the future.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED **To note the progress made in Quarter 2 on implementing the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.**

SRC.057**WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Resources advised that the Fair Pay and Senior Pay Policy scheduled for April would now be taken to the January Strategy and Resources Committee as it would need to be taken to Council in February.

The Chair advised that a report regarding Brimscombe Port would be added to the Work Programme for March.

Councillor Townley questioned whether a report could be added to the Work Programme about what the authority is doing to deal with sites like Tricorn House and how they can enforce the redevelopment of sites. The Chief Executive advised that they had ambition to deal with some of these issues and that this would be covered in the remit of the new Strategic Director of Place.

SRC.058**MEMBER/OFFICER REPORTS**

- a) Investment and Development Panel – Councillor Cornell advised that this meeting had focused on the Brimscombe Port papers which had already been discussed.
- b) Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) and Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC) – Councillor Whiteside advised that the last Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee had been held at Stroud District Council and that he was proud of the presentations and information that had been provided and that he had received great feedback from the Committee Members. Councillor Davies advised that the Committee would produce a report on its findings at its next meeting.

The Chair advised that at the last Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee they had discussed the progress of Fastershire and a report from the Director of Public Health which looked at the link between health and wealth. The Chair also advised that the Committee holds the collective funds for business rates and that various bids had been put forward, a bid for the rail strategy and a project led by Cheltenham

Borough Council on Cyber had been approved. The Chair advised that Members needed to consider whether there were any projects, that would benefit the whole County, that Stroud District Council could lead on and put a bid in for funding.

Councillor Townley asked whether consideration could be given to putting a bid in for funding to help increase the skills of tradespeople to help with the retrofitting of properties to increase their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) levels. The Chair advised that the LEP and Stroud College were also interested in this and it would be good to come up with something together.

SRC.059

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

There were none.

The meeting closed at 9.06 pm.

Chair