

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 27 March 2023
5.02 - 6.50 pm

Present: Councillors Robertson (Chair), S. Smith (Vice-Chair), Carling, Nethsingha, Payne, Scutt, Smart, Davey (Executive Councillor) and A. Smith (Executive Councillor)

Councillor Bennett joined the meeting remotely.

Officers:

Chief Executive: Robert Pollock

Assistant Chief Executive: Andrew Limb

Director of Enterprise and Sustainable Development: Fiona Bryant

Head of Finance: Caroline Ryba

Head of Property Services: Dave Prinsep

Committee Manager: Chris Connor

Producer: Boris Herzog

Others Present:

South Cambridgeshire District Council Chief Executive: Liz Watts

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

23/68/SR Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Bick and Sweeney.

23/69/SR Declarations of Interest

Item	Councillor	Interest
All	Clr Davey	Personal: Board member of Cambridge Investment Partnership

23/70/SR Minutes

Note: Councillor Carling was not listed as present at the meeting of 30 January 2023 however he was present.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23/71/SR Public Questions

A Public Speaker made a statement regarding the cancellation of the Big Weekend.

- i. Following the cancellation of The Big Weekend event as announced in the recent Budget debate in full council, was the City Council willing in principle to meet with (and without prejudice) potential commercial sponsors and donors to see if the event, first established in 1995 as 'Pop in the Park', can be restored in one form or another, through medium-long term agreements - including covering the administrative costs borne by the Council given the current financial circumstances?
- ii. Since posing this question, had met with members of the chamber of commerce and others members of the public, to see if financial contributions could be made towards the Big Weekend event.
- iii. Would like to know how the council goes about getting funding and sponsorships.
- iv. Would like it noted that in 2021 the Department of Levelling Up Homes and Communities Committee concluded that local government finances and unsustainable without radical reform. In 2022 the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee needs an overhaul. Both were rejected by ministers.
- v. Stated that private companies should contribute to civic events. Please review how we pitch to firms and colleges for funding.

The Executive Councillor for Finance, Resources, Transformation and Non-Statutory Deputy Leader and the Leader of the Council said the following in response:

- i. Had attempted to gain funding for events over the course of the last two years however thus far this has been unsuccessful. However, was sure

that Executive Councillor for Open Spaces, Food Justice and Community Development and Statutory Deputy Leader Councillor Collis would be happy to meet with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss this.

- ii. Agreed that the council should be receiving more funding from the central government.
- iii. If the member of the public has had conversations with people willing to fund the big weekend, the council would be willing to speak to them.
- iv. There was work on social impact investment being done in the city. Would like to work with local companies in partnership with the city to see what could be done. There are more details available about that work to come.
- v. Would feedback information regarding potential sponsors to the right people.

23/72/SR General Fund Revenue Carry Forwards

Matter for Decision

This report presents details of any anticipated variances from budgets, where resources are requested to be carried forward into the 2023/24 financial year in order to undertake or complete activities which were originally intended to take place in 2022/23.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Finance, Resources, Transformation and Non-Statutory Deputy Leader:

- Agree the provisional carry forward requests, totalling £351,070 as detailed in Appendix A, are recommended to Council to approve, subject to the final outturn position.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Head of Finance introduced the report.

The Head of Finance said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Justification of why funds were not spent were listed in the report as it goes through each item.
- ii. Had discussions with the University of Cambridge regarding the Mill Lane redevelopment proposal. Officers were discussing how this may be incorporated with their wider scheme. This had not progressed at this moment. Would continue to work with the University to see when they wish to proceed, as officers believe they would in the future.

The scrutiny committee unanimously approved the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Finance, Resources and Transformation and Non-Statutory Deputy Leader approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/73/SR Review of Asset Management Plan

Matter for Decision

The Council has an existing General Fund Asset Management Plan approved in 2019. It was good practice to review such Plans every 5 years or so to reflect changes that have occurred since. There have been changes to property owned, how assets would be utilised post Covid and how they will be used in future as part of the Council's wider 'Our Cambridge' business transformation programme so a review is timely. The Council's Climate Change Strategy 2021-26 had set a net zero carbon target for its buildings included in its Greenhouse Gas report. The government's Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards also requires that leased out/commercial property achieve an Energy Performance Certificate of at least 'B' by 2030. The Asset Management Plan sets out how the Council will manage its General Fund assets, is updated to reflect the current environmental performance of properties and how this will be improved to meet the targets as set out above.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Finance, Resources, Transformation and Non-Statutory Deputy Leader:

- Approve the Asset Management Plan as attached at Appendix A; and
- Agree the proposed approach to identifying works, seeking funding and delivery to meet environmental targets by 2030 as set out in the Asset Management Plan and this report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Head of Property Services introduced the report.

Head of Property Services, Assistant Chief Executive and Strategic Director said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Some of the data in the report was historic data, advised that Assistant Chief Executive could provide updated data.
- ii. The Assistant Chief Executive stated Parkside Pool had historically been the biggest emitter of carbon. Officers successfully applied to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund a couple of years ago and that work was completed last summer. Therefore, the data on emissions from Parkside Pool does not reflect these completed works. Members should expect to see a significant reduction in emissions from Parkside Pools when years data is published. This should be available at the October 2023 Environment and Communities Scrutiny Meeting.
- iii. Regarding office accommodations, officers brought a report to S&R Committee in October 2022 outlining the council's approach. There was still demand in Cambridge for office space. Recognised there was a surplus of office accommodation at the Council. Currently most staff

were based at Mandela House since COVID 19, but it was still not being fully utilised. Refurbishment to the Guildhall will take time. The council had let the ground floor to Allia who were now using and managing that space. This was helping with overhead costs in respect to the building. Going forward the council would need approximately 40% of the space that it had used historically. The Guildhall would need to be refurbished and fit for purpose when staff moved back. A project team would be working on how this could be accomplished.

- iv. Environmental improvements would need to be undertaken with the refurbishment of the Guildhall. The district heat network would be important to this process. It was difficult to improve the performance of the Guildhall building. It was difficult to install ground source heat pumps due to its location. There were solar panels on the roof of the Guildhall but probably not enough room to install air source heat pumps. Part of the process would be how to make improvement to a listed building such as the Guildhall, to produce environmental savings and also generate income from spaces that the council did not utilise.
- v. When reviews were done regarding Ditton Lane shops, officers would take into consideration access and crime prevention if refurbishment was considered.

The Scrutiny Committee unanimously approved the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Finance, Resources and Transformation and Non-Statutory Deputy Leader approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/74/SR Update on the Four Day Week Trial in the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service

Matter for Decision

By the time this report was received by the Strategy and Resources Committee on Monday 27th March, the 4DW Phase One trial, which included the Shared Planning Service, would be nearing its completion. The Officer's report provides a brief insight into the first two months of the trial including KPI performance for the Shared Planning Service (which was as much data as was available up to the report deadline date). The report also sets out the next stage of the process, in terms of final evaluation of the trial.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Finance, Resources, Transformation and Non-Statutory Deputy Leader:

- i. Note the report and agreed the decision option highlighted in 3.11 for the next stage of the process; a special meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee will meet and debate the issues to inform a decision the Executive Councillor would make on 15th May.
- ii. Provide any feedback thought relevant to the Chief Executive of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Chief Executive of South Cambridgeshire District Council introduced the report.

The Chief Executive of South Cambridgeshire District Council said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The data in appendix 2 of the Officer's report (the Pulse survey) was more of a temperature check. The data that they would be using to measure health and wellbeing would be a survey run by Robertson Cooper Ltd, an external agency. It would be a 120-question survey. The survey would be launched later this week and it will be open for 3 weeks.

- ii. There were surveys for people who were specifically not in the trial to ask what the impact was in consequence of people participating in the trial. Apart from Waste Services there were few people not involved in the trial.
- iii. The main driver behind trialling the 4-day week was concerns about recruitment. South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC), prior to the trial was carrying over £2 million in employment agency costs as staff turnover was high, which is costly and disruptive. Though could not reasonably expect to get rid of all agency costs, could reasonably expect to get rid of much of those costs which would reduce the cost of services for taxpayers. Therefore, it was in SCDC's interests to make those sorts of savings and efficiencies rather than cutting or reducing services.
- iv. No decisions have been made regarding extending the trial at this point. Officers would be providing data and evidence to SCDC Cabinet and to Cambridge City Council Scrutiny Committee. Both Councils would make their decision based on that data and evidence.
- v. Recruitment was a key issue. The reason for extending the trial for a year was that SCDC could not measure the impact on recruitment in 3 months. The reason the trial did not start with a year was that it was too risky, as this was the first trial in the public sector of the 4-day week. Started with 3 months to see if SCDC could run functionally and see if the performance could be kept up for that time. If trial extended a year would have better data regarding recruitment and retention.
- vi. It was always the plan to do a 3-month trial to see if performance was maintained.
- vii. The health and wellbeing survey being launched would identify which service employees belonged to. Therefore, there would be data from people working in the planning service, how they fed back in August 2022 and how they were feeding back in March 2023 as a comparison.
- viii. There would be questions about whether people were able to complete their work in 4 days. Staff would be asked if they wished to be included in the trial if it was extended. Those who do not wish to continue in the trial and wish to work a 5-day week are welcome to do so. Staff who wanted to continue on a 4-day week but are struggling with workload would be provided with support to help them manage their workload.
- ix. Employees could opt out of the trial if they so wish.
- x. The planning service had vastly improved its service in the last year.

- xi. The SCDC Chief Executive agreed that quality of work in the planning service must be maintained during the trial.
- xii. During the past 6 months SCDC had done more transformation than in the last 3 and a half years combined. The reason was that people want to be more productive, as they were now invested in this process and want the trial to be successful.
- xiii. It was SCDC policy to respond to residents within 14 working days. This would not be affected if an employee had a non-working day on a Friday, so they did not respond to a resident until the following Monday.
- xiv. It would have been preferable to trial waste services first, but it was a much more complicated to do. This was due to doing a round optimisation exercise which was complex and had taken several months.
- xv. Would be able to provide KPI's regarding processing times for planning applications from before the trial began and during the trial.
- xvi. Staff could choose any day they wished to off at the beginning of the trial. During the trial SCDC realised that it is easier to choose either a Monday or a Friday as a non-working day and have Tuesday-Thursday as core working days. It was still to be determined if this was what would remain in place going forward.
- xvii. No-one specifically requested a 4-day working week. This was an idea put forward by the Chief Executive of SCDC based on discussions with colleagues regarding staff recruitment and retention.
- xviii. Stated that salary was not always the most important factor in recruiting and retention. Based on her conversations SCDC Chief Executive has discovered that quality of life and work/life balance was just as important.

The Committee noted the report.

The Committee resolved (4-0 with 2 abstentions) to endorse the recommendations.:

- i. That a special meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee could meet and debate the issues to inform a decision the Executive Councillor would make on 15th May.

The Executive Councillor for Finance, Resources and Transformation and Non-Statutory Deputy Leader approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/75/SR Funding to Cambridge Investment Partnership Purchase of Land

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report set out funding to Cambridge Investment Partnership for the Purchase of Land

Decision of Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources

- i. Approve Officer's recommendation

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee unanimously agreed to exclude the public after considering that the public interest was outweighed by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to enable committee debate of the officer report.

The Committee unanimously endorsed the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

23/76/SR Update on the Work of Key External Partnerships, Incorporating Combined Authority Update

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report provided an update on the work of the following partnerships:

- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (including the Business Board)
- Greater Cambridge Partnership
- Fast Growing Cities
- Oxford-Cambridge Partnership

Decision of the Leader of the Council:

- Note the achievements and progress of the strategic partnerships that the City Council is engaged with, outlined in this report.
- Provide an update on the issues considered at the Combined Authority Board meeting held on 22 March 2023. 10. Scrutiny of the General Fund (GF) Draft Budget 2023/24.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced the report.

The Leader of the Council provided a verbal report.

- i. There has been a Chief Executive of the Combined Authority appointed. The name is not yet in the public domain.
- ii. Members wanted their thanks to Councillor Anna Smith noted for her work in the last 3 months as the interim Combined Authority Mayor.
- iii. Councillor Anna Smith asked for the minutes to note her welcome back to Dr Nik Johnson as the Combined Authority Mayor.

The Committee noted the report.

The Leader of the Council agreed to note the report.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted):

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Leader of the Council.

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm

CHAIR