

**STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 29 January 2024  
5.30 - 8.25 pm

**Present:** Councillors Robertson (Chair), Bick, Gawthrope Wood, Griffin, Holloway, Sheil, Young, Bennett, Davey (Executive Councillor) and S. Smith (Executive Councillor)

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

**24/7/SR Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

**24/8/SR Declarations of Interest**

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Baigent	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge Cycling Campaign
Councillor Bennett	24/127/SR	Personal: Supporter of Save Honey Hill

**24/9/SR Minutes**

**24/10/SR Public Questions**

A list of public questions was publishing on the meeting page available via:

[\(Public Pack\)List of Public Questions Agenda Supplement for Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, 29/01/2024 17:30 \(cambridge.gov.uk\)](#) and [\(Public Pack\)Additional Public Question Agenda Supplement for Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, 29/01/2024 17:30 \(cambridge.gov.uk\)](#)

Responses to public questions and supplementary questions are included below:

## Question 1:

I should like to ask a question on behalf of the Federation of Cambridge Residents about the use of the general fund to pay for the refurbishment of the Guildhall, Corn Exchange and Cambridge market Square. Item 6 on the agenda. The BBC reported that “The Guildhall, Corn Exchange & the Market Square in Cambridge could all be refurbished as part of a £20 million project and that the £20 million would come from the council’s general reserve”. Residents say there has been no consultation about these plans or the vision for the city centre and that there is no mention of Cambridge’s traditional market or of the market traders. This is important because at the last market square stakeholders’ meeting the CEO of Cambridge Bid told attendees a bid for investment in the city centre was going out to tender and that the vision for the city centre would be commercially driven and not civic. Cambridge residents ask why there has been no public disclosure of the discussions about using the General Fund for this, which involves large sums of taxpayer money and impacts world famous city spaces and people’s livelihoods?

The Development Assistant Director responded:

- i. Report details how public and stakeholders could engage.
- ii. Meeting with market traders would be taking place.
- iii. The objectives for the Council were outlined in the report. Which were:
  - to create a more attractive Central Cambridge which would increase visitor numbers to the market, Corn Exchange and businesses in the area.
  - To make long term saving to help ensure frontline council services were sustainable by cutting operational costs and increasing revenue streams.
  - To contribute to the Councils target of being net zero by 2030.

Supplementary Question:

- i. Why was the report which was marked as being having been in the public domain for two years included in the restricted pink pages and not in the public section until Councillor Bick queried it?

The Development Assistant Director responded:

- i. The Council had a right to restrict information in accordance with 10.4 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, particularly if it related to the financial or business affairs of a particular organisation or the

Council. In this instance regarding Appendix 1, a shortened version had been released but the full version has been withheld on the basis that it contained commercially sensitive information. Intellectual property that could be advantageous to bidders in a procurement process.

#### Question 2:

Regarding proposals for a civic quarter reserve, my questions are about financing and designs. Back in 2022 I wrote a blogpost with some thoughts on how the guildhall could be revamped at <https://cambridgetownwl.com/2022/10/16/revamp-cambridges-guildhall-intime-for-florence-ada-keynes-mayoral-centenary-1932-2032/> which included lifting the existing council chamber up a level to create space for a state-of-the-art lecture hall for the conferencing industry, creating a rooftop cafe, and revamping the facade of the guildhall in time for Florence Ada Keynes' mayoral centenary. Furthermore, over the years I have also suggested converting the Corn Exchange to enable both a top floor open space as well as either start-up space or an indoor market in return for building a new concert hall opposite the Catholic Church, part-financed by the University as Sir Ivor Jennings QC, the former Vice Chancellor, committed the University to doing on 31 May 1962 (see <https://lostcambridge.wordpress.com/2021/10/06/vice-chancellor-sir-ivorjennings-qc-says-cambridge-university-has-a-duty-to-improve-the-city-and-says-universitywill-contribute-50-of-the-cost-of-a-new-large-public-hall-1962/>) In commissioning RIBA to undertake a design competition, please could the council ensure that the parameters take into account the proposals that I've put forward so we don't end up with a design that was as unpopular as the present guildhall's design was back in the 1930s - see here <https://lostcambridge.wordpress.com/2017/08/29/florence-ada-keynesgets-it-in-the-neck-from-cambridge-over-new-guildhall-designs>.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded:

- i. The Civic Quarter report makes clear that the three civic spaces must be preserved and fit for purpose for the next 100 years.
- ii. Hope is that when the next report regarding the Civic Quarter comes to Committee in November 2024, there would be more clarity regarding the next phase.

Supplementary Question:

- i. Could the mayor convene a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and Masters and Presidents of the Colleges (University of Cambridge), to discuss how to deliver on Sir Jennings commitment when he was Vice Chancellor of the University of Cambridge to fund half of the cost of a brand new Concert Hall, as that would give flexibility to the Corn Exchange.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded:

- i. Finances, strategies and policies had moved on since the original promise was made by Vice Chancellor Jennings. Though still in conceptual stage, a developer had proposed a Concert Hall for the City. Would need to be patient and wait to see if that transpired.

Question 3:

Our special thanks to the Chair for allowing this late question in exceptional circumstances. We are Cambridge residents and market shoppers, involved in the Market Square Liaison Group. We have also been engaged with proposals for the Market Square for many years. The last meeting of the Market Square Liaison Group was on 27 September 2023. Its next meeting, announced only on 17 January, is in 2 days' time. Why is that meeting being held only AFTER this one? This one being presented with the recommendation that the current Liaison Group is replaced by a Civic Quarter Liaison Group. This sequence has denied a vital opportunity for public consultation prior to the recommendations and decisions you may now make. It is also particularly unfortunate because para 1.10 of the report claims that key issues have been resolved in relation to the Market and the public space. These key issues, raised by ourselves and others over the course of years, have not been resolved. Neither the public nor vitally the market traders have been informed by report, or any other means of: What and how frequent the evening events might be? How exactly it could be possible to accommodate both a thriving market and evening events, given the Square's limited capacity in both space and time, and the logistics of setting up and dismantling? The total fiasco of the trial of demountable stalls is still fresh in our minds. RIBA Stage 1 is "agree a brief and establish that it can be accommodated on the site". This vital step has not yet been achieved for the Market Square project: what was approved 2 years ago was only aspirational. No REALISTIC vision for the Market Square has been presented for public approval. That said, we welcome the widening of scope to include the Guildhall and Corn Exchange, but the recommendation

to take all these to RIBA Stage 2 is premature. As well as taking all three elements to RIBA stage 1, we call for a realistic vision to be developed. This in actual consultation with the market traders, so that our existing market can be sustained, and with our Cambridge public as the ultimate client.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded:

- i. Market traders had been in touch and concerns noted.
- ii. Traders would be consulted and included in the engagement process.
- iii. Would engage with the public. What was decided would be in consultation with the public.

Supplementary Question:

- i. Asked members to look at how East Cambridgeshire council promoted Ely Market.
- ii. The feasibility work carried out in 2021 did not tackle the scale of the project. Would ask for a more in depth study and to include traders and market liaison group.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources responded:

- i. Stated point was well made and noted.

## **24/11/SR Combined Authority Update**

### **Matter for Decision**

This is a regular report to the Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Committee each cycle providing an update on the activities of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Board since the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on 2 October 2023.

### **Decision of the Leader of the Council**

- i. To invite the Council's representative on the Combined Authority Board, Councillor Anna Smith, to provide an update on the Board and issues considered at the meeting of the Combined Authority Board held on 29 November 2023.

- ii. To invite Nick Bell, the Director for Resources and Performance at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to take questions from committee members on issues relating to the CPCA budget.

### **Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

### **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

### **Scrutiny Considerations**

The Council's representative on the Combined Authority Board Councillor A. Smith provided a verbal report:

- i. Cambridge bus routes to be discussed at next CPCA meeting.
- ii. Bus reform.

The Executive Director of Resources and Performance of the CPCA addressed the Committee.

The Council's representative on the Combined Authority Board and the Executive Director of Resources and Performance of the CPCA and the said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Currently running a non-regulated system for busses and there is not yet public control of the bus network.
- ii. Recommend in principle to go to bus franchising.
- iii. Bus subsidies were still apart of the budget.
- iv. Regarding improvements to Cambridge Park & Ride, would need to come back with further details. If more funding were available in the future, it may change.
- v. Would wish to get more bus routes in outlying areas to reduce need for cars, thus slightly reducing congestion.
- vi. Would enquire about electric busses and report back.
- vii. Looking at supporting the bus operators with driver training to support bus routes.

- viii. Discussion of cost efficiency of route 7A had been taking place. Was subject of bus review and would not be moving forward in its current form but in a different, more efficient form.
- ix. Auditor for franchising bid would be Grant Thornton, that was in the public domain.
- x. Source of funding would be to see if CPCA could secure include:
  - government funding
  - borrowing to fund capital investments
  - transport levy, funds provided by the Transport Authorities
  - Precepts
  - Biggest potential source would be if central government could be persuaded to allow CPCA to keep all business rates.
- xi. Regarding bus reform, cost was a sliding scale. Franchising could potentially offer financial advantages.
- xii. There were budget proposals coming to the next CPCA meeting with two potential capital schemes for Cambridge City Council, one for the Civic Quarter project which would be for £1.5 million pounds. The second for £3 million for work around the Cambridge Junction area to create a potential creative industries area.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

### **24/12/SR Corporate, Policy & Partnerships Group Design Programme**

This report summarizes the outputs of the research and development phase of the Our Cambridge corporate design programme. It focuses on the proposed Corporate Hub which brings together functions from across the Corporate Group and the Chief Executive's Office. It sets out the purpose of the proposed Corporate Hub, what it will do, and what functions it will have. It also sets out how it will co-ordinate those functions across the organisation. This is an integral part of the wider Our Cambridge programme.

### **Decision of the Leader of the Council**

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- i. Agree the purpose, value statements, high-level functions and operating model as set out in this paper;
- ii. Agree to delegate decisions in relation to the detailed operational design to the Chief Operating Officer, and for consultation and implementation of changes to staffing structures, in line both with the direction recommended in this paper and our Organisational Change Policy.

### **Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

### **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

### **Scrutiny Considerations**

The Chief Operating Officer said the following in response to Members questions:

- i. Fundamental role of corporate hub was to work with managers to understand how they know they were achieving their goals. That would be monitored by senior management.
- ii. Rather than doing work for managers, need to ensure managers had the tools and capacity to do this for themselves.
- iii. Regarding shared services, were in a position to be clear what the council wants and to work with partners.
- iv. Regarding a question as to whether a more detailed organogram of staff would be useful, stated would look into it. The current 'who does what' document which had corporate management team on it, should be able to find the right entry point for any query.

The Committee unanimously endorsed the recommendations.

The Leader of the Council 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.

## **24/13/SR Civic Quarter Project**

### **Matter for Decision**

- i. The Council's General Fund Asset Management Plan updated in March 2023 and in the Future Office Accommodation Strategy approved at Strategy and Resources Committee in October 2022 are an important part of the Council's transformation programme 'Our Cambridge' to achieve significant annual savings for the General Fund which can protect frontline services.
- ii. There have been some initial quick wins. In the Guildhall, the Council has piloted space for small businesses working with Allia to establish a Future Business Centre, generating income. The development of an operational hub at Cowley Road has merged two existing sites and 171 Arbury Road Office has been vacated and those premises are being rented out to two charities reducing operational costs as well as generating income. The next steps are to consider: the remodeling of the Council's office accommodation to ensure that it meets modern requirements and expectations of council staff, tenants and the public; reducing operational costs across the whole building lifecycle; how to reduce costs to attain Net Zero; and generating more income for the council.
- iii. This report outlines the findings from the feasibility report undertaken for the Guildhall in November 2023. The findings demonstrate that the consolidation of Council offices with £16m generated from the disposal of Mandela House and refurbishing the Guildhall for £35m (Option 1) produces a positive Net Present Value of £22m for the Council in 30 years with a payback in 9 years when compared to the Do Nothing option.
- iv. Option 1 generates:
  - significant operational savings of £918k per annum for Mandela House and £1.342m for the Guildhall.
  - an opportunity for an enhanced commercial revenue stream, through both commercial office letting and more flexible and accessible events spaces generating over £700k in net revenue per annum.

- a reduction in the Council’s exposure to an estimated c. £500k annual cost if refurbishment is to Net Zero
- v. The recommended next steps are to further develop design work to RIBA 2 for the Guildhall and to develop a more detailed appraisal analysis for both the Guildhall and Mandela House.
- vi. In March 2022 a report to the Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee approved the updated vision for the Market Square:
  - “An inspiring, strategic public realm heart to the city centre, the market square will be welcoming to all to work, visit and spend time here. A 21st century international and local multi-generational and multi-cultural space, celebrating Cambridge’s history and heritage, it integrates a thriving, sustainable, accessible, safe and open environment, connecting the surrounding streets with spaces to shop, wander, stop and socialise. A bustling 7-day market, space for seating and eating, additional business and social opportunities and engaging and inclusive cultural events will add to the richness of the area, making this an active day and evening hub in the city centre for local businesses, residents, and the wider community.”
- vii. Having reported in March 2022 on the initial design work and consultation already undertaken on the Market Square, the recommended next steps are to: progress the current designs on the agreed vision; support the market, its shoppers and its traders by continuing with the essential business as usual maintenance works; and for the Executive Councillor to consider a report at the Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee in March 2024 on the current market legal status.
- viii. Should procurement be approved, the winning design and consultant team will be asked to provide decanting options that maintain current levels of trade which, if there is future approval, will be part of the planning submission for refurbishment.
- ix. The Corn Exchange is one of the largest venues for concerts outside London and within East Anglia, but has significant operating costs per annum (excluding staff costs) and the 10 year projection of capital costs required for the listed building based on a 2021 condition report is in the region of £5.5m This includes some carbon reduction measures.
- x. With recommendations to take forward designs to RIBA 2 for the Market Square and Guildhall in place, this report makes the case for a feasibility

report including RIBA 2 designs for refurbishment to be undertaken for the Corn Exchange to consider how operating costs can be reduced and how the spend per head can be improved by offering a more attractive destination generating more income for the Council.

- xi. By creating a Civic Quarter project including the Guildhall, Market Square and Corn Exchange, the Council will consider how it can create a more attractive destination and increase visitor numbers for the Market, Corn Exchange and businesses in the area, whilst providing modern flexible office facilities for its own staff to improve staff retention. With a more attractive Civic Quarter destination, with increased visitor numbers the Council will be looking to enhance the economic multiplier effect in the quarter as well as reducing annual operating costs of its civic spaces through the Net Zero refurbishment designs and enhanced placemaking.
- xii. This work will also contribute towards the Business Case for matched funding of £1.5m announced by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority on November 30th 2023.
- xiii. Creating a single project team with a single design and consultant brief for the Civic Quarter offers an enhanced placemaking opportunity, better value for money in procurement and a more robust business case for the Council in maximizing revenue income, reducing operational costs and an enhanced destination.
- xiv. £1,450,000 is recommended, based on advice from independent cost consultants, for the overall budget to procure design and consultancy services to RIBA 2 for the Civic Quarter managed through a single project and professional team.
- xv. It is proposed that the work undertaken by the appointed design and consultant team will provide design proposals and detailed appraisal analysis on a range of refurbishment options allowing the Council to make an informed choice on the next steps for its Civic Quarter at the November 2024 S&R Committee.
- xvi. Should approval be granted to proceed with full design team procurement, stakeholder engagement will be channelled through two Civic Quarter Steering groups. An Internal Civic Quarter Steering group will focus on the design requirements for the Civic, Office, Customer Services and Cultural Events spaces required by the council.
- xvii. An External Civic Quarter Steering Group will consider the views of market traders, the public and the Civic Quarter Liaison Group. The Civic

Quarter Liaison Group will replace the Market Square Liaison Group. A communications company with a track record in Cambridge will be appointed to assist the Council with this external stakeholder engagement and the Council's online consultation portal (Citizen Lab) will be used to ensure all views are captured. This engagement will start in January 2024 with meetings held with Market Traders and the Civic Quarter Liaison Groups.

- xviii. A members steering group will provide feedback to the appointed design team on civic requirements.

### **Decision of the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources**

- i. Note the report and the development of the Proof of Concept on the Guildhall and associated cost and revenue estimates for the Options 1 and 2.
- ii. Approve the delegated authority to Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategy & Resources to appoint a design team through a compliant procurement exercise for the Civic Quarter project.
- iii. Agree that:
  - A budget proposal of £1m for progression to the end of RIBA stage 2 for the Guildhall, is put forward to be considered as part of the Council's budget setting process, funded from the Civic Quarter Development Reserve, and
  - In principle, £0.450m should be allocated for progression to the end of RIBA stage 2 for the Market Square and for a feasibility and refurbishment RIBA 2 design for the Corn Exchange with final approval delegated to the Executive Councillor for Strategy and Resources. £0.300m to be allocated from the Civic Quarter Development Reserve and £0.150m from the existing Market Square capital scheme.
- iv. 2.5 Note the review by Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) of the options of Mandela House to provide a capital receipt and profit return for the Council.
- v. 2.6 Request that a further report and recommendations be brought back to Committee in November 2024 to enable review and approval of:

- the business case options for Mandela House, including redevelopment, disposal and refurbishment, and for the refurbishment of the Civic Quarter
- progression to planning applications
- a procurement strategy of a construction or development partner

### **Reason for the Decision**

As set out in the Officer's report.

### **Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

Not applicable.

### **Scrutiny Considerations**

The Development Assistant Director said the following in response to Members questions:

- i. Sections of the appendix were not in the public domain due to significant information that was considered intellectual property and commercially sensitive.
- ii. The Market, Guildhall and Corn Exchange was about the public realm. To create a greater sense of space.
- iii. There are synergies between the Guildhall and the Corn Exchange, as conferencing facilities would be available at both.
- iv. By putting the bids in for all three (Guildhall, Market, Corn Exchange) better for value that doing three separate bids.
- v. There would be extensive stakeholder engagement.
- vi. If numbers were increased in the Civic Quarter area, would demonstrate increased income for the area. That would require creative work from bidders.
- vii. The Customer Service Centre in Mandela House would not close until there was another space for them to move to.
- viii. Would undertake extensive surveys and design work and bring back to Committee in November.
- ix. A high-level appraisal had been done on Mandela House. When returning to the Committee in November, Members would be given business case options on how to proceed next.

- x. The design input would be workshops from design consortium, including Members steering group.
- xi. There would be flexibility around the amount of desk space for the City Council and commercial use.
- xii. Concerns about design had already been captured through meetings with Market Traders. Further input would be sought from Market Traders regarding the design of future market.
- xiii. Wished to explore what design improvements could have an effect on business for the Corn Exchange.

The Committee unanimously endorsed the recommendations 7-1.

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.

### **24/14/SR Hartree - Proposed Early Stage Development and Possible Acceleration (Subject to Permissions)**

#### **Matter for Decision**

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

#### **Decision for the Leader of the Council**

- 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 Leader of the Council approved the recommendations.

### **24/15/SR List of Public Questions**

### **24/16/SR Additional Public Question**

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm

**CHAIR**