

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 October 2017
5.00 - 6.35 pm

Present: Councillors Ratcliffe (Chair), Sinnott (Vice-Chair), Abbott, Austin, Barnett, Bird, Gillespie and O'Connell

Executive Councillors: Johnson (Executive Councillor for Communities) and Smith (Executive Councillor for Streets and Open Spaces)

Officers:

Strategic Director: Suzanne Hemingway

Head of Corporate Strategy: Andrew Limb

Head of Environmental Services: Joel Carré

Strategy and Partnerships Manager: David Kidston

Project Officer: James Ogle

Committee Manager: James Goddard

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

17/19/Comm Apologies

No apologies were received.

17/20/Comm Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

17/21/Comm Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17/22/Comm Public Questions

Members of the public made a number of statements, as set out below.

- 1. (Reference item 17/27/Comm) Mr Whyte was pleased that £200,000 was being spent on Arbury Court.**
- 2. (Reference item 17/26/Comm) Ms Rundblad had contacted various Councillors by email regarding walkabouts by Officers and Councillors in her area. Histon Road Residents Association requested this type of community engagement continued.**

The Chair noted that Councillor Holland had responded to Ms Rundblad and that the Executive Councillor for Streets and Open Spaces would also respond in future.

17/23/Comm Record of Decision Taken by Executive Councillor for Communities, Community Services Chair and Spokes

The decision was noted regarding Community Facilities Funding for Refurbishment of Memorial Hall and Church Hall, Cherry Hinton Road.

17/24/Comm Re-Ordering the Agenda

Under paragraph 4.2.1 of the Council Procedure Rules, the Chair used his discretion to alter the order of the agenda items. However, for ease of the reader, these minutes will follow the order of the agenda.

17/25/Comm Anti-Poverty Strategy Review

Matter for Decision

The Council's first Anti-Poverty Strategy was approved by the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources at Strategy and Resources Committee on 23 March 2015. The strategy set out the Council's strategic approach to addressing poverty in Cambridge during the period April 2014 to March 2017.

The Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy aimed to improve the standard of living and daily lives of those residents in Cambridge who currently experienced poverty; and to help alleviate issues that could lead households on low incomes to experience financial pressures.

The Council has produced a revised and updated Anti-Poverty Strategy for the period from April 2017 to March 2020, which was presented at committee for approval by the Executive Councillor. The revised Anti-Poverty Strategy set out 5 key objectives and 57 associated actions to reduce poverty in Cambridge over the next three years.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Communities

Approved the revised Anti-Poverty Strategy for 2017-2020.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Strategy and Partnerships Manager.

Opposition Councillors made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Sought clarification on whether projects that received funding from the Sharing Prosperity Fund delivered value for money. Requested quantifiable details such as return on investment data.
- ii. Requested that future officer reports included additional information on the impact of projects funded through the Sharing Prosperity Fund so Members could properly scrutinise them and assess whether they are effective and were delivering value for money.
- iii. Sought clarification regarding the respective contributions to some anti-poverty projects made by the Council and partners, such as the Living Wage campaign and the collective energy-switching scheme.

The Strategic Director undertook to put measurable details of impacts in future officer reports where available, so that councillors could scrutinise projects.

- iv. The Anti-Poverty Strategy approach was working well where it had been introduced by Labour Councils across the country.
- v. Requested the Anti-Poverty Strategy looked at the impact of general long term risks (eg Brexit, low income families not being able to afford food due to rising cost of living). Particularly for disabled people in poverty as they were hit harder than able bodied people and had less access to resources (eg education and leisure facilities).
- vi. Suggested that community centres could provide more free ICT facilities.

The Strategy and Partnerships Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The table in Appendix A (P31 Sharing Prosperity Fund expenditure to date and future allocations to projects) showed time limited (1-3 years)

- funding for projects. Some projects had funding until 2017-18 whereas others also received it for 2018-19. Funding would be reviewed in future.
- ii. The Officer's report set out a cost/benefit analysis for funding allocations, where available. Overall projects delivered value for money, but some led to more direct cost savings than others. For example the fuel and water poverty project led to direct cost savings for residents by providing support for measures such as switching energy providers, energy efficiency improvements to properties, energy debt write-offs, and installing water metres. However, the project was resource intensive as many people who were in fuel poverty were vulnerable and required a high level of face-to-face support from officers in order to make these changes.
 - iii. Both the original and revised Anti-Poverty Strategy emphasise that the City Council could not undertake work on its own and would have to deliver initiatives alongside partners. This was one of the learning points from the original strategy.
 - iv. (Reference P31 of the agenda) The City Council was working in partnership to deliver a number of anti-poverty projects which had received funding from the Sharing Prosperity Fund. The Council has worked in partnership with the national Living Wage Foundation (LWF) to promote the Living Wage, with the LWF focussing on national employers based in Cambridge, and the City Council focussing on independent employers in the city. The Council has carried out additional promotion of the county-wide collective energy-switching scheme organised by Cambridgeshire County Council. Data was available on the number of Cambridge residents that have switched providers through the scheme, but it was not possible to identify how many of these have done so as a direct result of the Council's promotional activity.
 - v. The Council works in partnership with a number of churches and other partners to provide free holiday lunches to low income families in venues across the city. This project will continue in future, but the Council is not required to continue funding it through the SPF as the project is sustained by contributions from mainstream Council budgets and voluntary and private sector partners.
 - vi. Additional resources have been allocated the Sharing Prosperity Fund through the Mid Term Financial Strategy. Prior to this allocation being made, the Strategy and Partnerships Manager had worked with officers across the council to identify initial project ideas which would achieve the Strategy's objectives. These projects would be worked up into more detailed proposals in due course and progress will be reported back to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee in future.

- vii. The City Council had various projects that addressed multiple priorities eg the Sharing Prosperity Fund has funded Cambridge Sustainable food to deliver cookery lessons for low income residents, which addresses poverty, healthy eating and sustainable food issues. The Digital Skills Strategy focussed on increasing people's access to the internet, but also helping them to upskill so they could apply for better jobs. Once they were on-line, people were more able to change tariffs and get better deals.
- viii. The City Council was working with private sector providers to increase access to, and reduce costs from, broadband services. For example, people could access free wi-fi in community centres and some other council buildings. The Strategy and Partnerships Manager was unable to go into detail of other projects due to commercial sensitivity.
- ix. It was sometimes hard to quantify which benefits to residents were due to the input of the City Council when working in partnership with other organisations, but that we valued working together and believed that those partnerships were the best way to use council resources alongside others to help communities. Other partners and services were also facing diminishing resources from Central Government.

The Executive Councillor said:

- a. Digital skills were important as people had to access more (services) on-line, for example Universal Credit.
- b. Undertook to follow up concerns about Clay Farm ICT facilities with the Centre Manager.
- c. The revised Anti-Poverty Strategy contained a stronger reference to the dual impact of poverty on disabled people and people with other protected characteristics.
- d. £1.3m of dedicated Sharing Prosperity Fund funding had been spent to date through the Strategy.
- e. The City Council would do what it could to mitigate the impact of County Council Children Centre closures on City Council services (ie greater strain due to increased demand).

The Committee resolved by 6 votes to 0 to endorse the recommendation.

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.

17/26/Comm Streets and Open Spaces Development Strategy Implementation Plan (Phase 1)

Matter for Decision

As the Council's largest frontline service, Streets and Open Spaces (S&OS) has undertaken a review to consider how best to deliver the service in future, taking into account the increasing demand placed on the service by growth, as well as the need to continuously deliver value for money for the Council.

At the 29 June 2017 Community Service Scrutiny Committee, the Executive Councillor for Streets and Open Spaces accepted the findings of the service review and approved a four year service development strategy (2017-21).

The Officer's report set out the first phase programme of proposed service changes to deliver the approved strategy and achieve the target outcomes. Subsequent programme phases, detailing further proposed changes, would be developed and reported to future Committees as required.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Streets and Open Spaces

- i. Approved the proposed review of the following operational service areas, with the aim of aligning resources to service needs:
 - a. Operational management and supervision structure and capacity.
 - b. Operational overlap in City Ranger and Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing service activities.
 - c. Community engagement and education service structure and capacity.
- ii. Supported, as a stakeholder, the proposed joint streets and open spaces and waste ICT management systems project involving Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire District Councils.
- iii. Approved the proposed rescheduling of cleaning to the following public toilets:
 - a. Arbury Court.
 - b. Barnwell Road.
 - c. Chesterton Recreation Ground.
 - d. Chesterton Road.
 - e. Coleridge Recreation Ground.
 - f. Jesus Green.
 - g. Lammas Land.
 - h. Mill Road.

- i. Nightingale Recreation Ground.
 - j. Romsey Recreation Ground.
 - k. Kings Hedges.
 - l. Victoria Avenue.
- iv. Requested a report to Committee on the events service review and associated recommendations, including changes to fees and charges and protection of the green spaces, in January, 2018.
- v. Approved the introduction of car park charges at Lammas Land car park, to deter long stay commuter and shopper use; and delegation of authority for approving final charging system to the Strategic Director, in consultation with Executive Councillor for S&OS.
- vi. Approved the roll out of pictorial meadows and other such attractive and environmentally friendly planting schemes in place of ornamental bedding on city-managed sites.
- vii. Delegated authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with Executive Councillor for S&OS, to approve any resulting changes to the staffing structure arising from any approved phase 1 programme proposals.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Head of Environmental Services. He tabled an addendum to the report to clarify Kings Hedges and Victoria Avenue public toilets would be included in the rescheduled cleaning arrangements. This was set out in the main body of the report, but omitted from the covering report recommendations.

- iii. Approve the proposed rescheduling of cleaning to the following public toilets:
 - a. Arbury Court.
 - b. Barnwell Road.
 - c. Chesterton Recreation Ground.
 - d. Chesterton Road.

- e. Coleridge Recreation Ground.
- f. Jesus Green.
- g. Lammas Land.
- h. Mill Road.
- i. Nightingale Recreation Ground.
- j. Romsey Recreation Ground.
- k. Kings Hedges.**
- l. Victoria Avenue.**

The Executive Councillor said the strategy was about how actions would be undertaken, not what would be undertaken. The review would be staff led if it were approved by committee today.

Opposition Councillors made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Expressed concern about perceived cuts to services such as toilet cleaning on Jesus Green.
- ii. Sought reassurance that the service review would not lead to staff reductions.
- iii. Suggested that members of the public did not have time to undertake volunteer maintenance work.
- iv. Sought clarification about who paid for repairs to the public realm after events. If it was the event holders, sought reassurance maintenance would be done immediately after events as sometimes this did not occur eg after the Beer Festival.

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

- i. Frequency of cleaning times were proposed to be reduced for toilets identified as low usage facilities. The Head of Environmental Services was confident that services could be reduced and cleaning standards maintained. The situation would be monitored and cleaning times amended if required. Usage could be monitored through coin box deposits of pay-for-use facilities and data extrapolated for nearby 'free' toilets.
- ii. The service review had 3 themes:
 - 1. Improving operational efficiency while maintaining high standards.
 - 2. Making Cambridge 'greener'.
 - 3. Increasing income generation.
- iii. The strategy aimed to address service overlap. There was no clear idea how to do so at present, which was the point of the review. There was no plan to delete services that people valued, the intention was to keep

these and give them the resources they needed but remove the overlap in services.

- iv. There was no fixed plan on how to resolve issues or the impact of proposals on staff. There were some vacancies in the service at present. If some staff implications arose from the review it was hoped some staff could be transferred to the vacant posts or new ones created in future.
- v. The future of the Jesus Green toilet was uncertain, so there was no plan to invest in it at present but necessary maintenance work would be undertaken.

The Strategic Director said that a decision on the pool and pavilion were due in Spring 2018, which would enable officers to take a decision on the best way forward in relation to the Jesus Green toilets. In the meantime issues such as anti-social behaviour would be monitored and any necessary refurbishment undertaken.

- vi. Volunteer/community work on the public realm was popular at present and this side of the service was growing. Officers would cover what volunteers could not.
- vii. Making Cambridge Greener was a corporate priority to make the public realm more environmentally friendly such as re-routing vehicles to reduce mileage. The Service was committed to this through actions such as changing diesel vehicles to electric.
- viii. Event organisers had to pay for maintenance work to repair the public realm after events. This was part of their licence. The Head of Environmental Services undertook to follow up concerns about damage caused to the public realm as a result of the Beer Festival.

In responses to questions the Strategic Director said work was currently underway to procure a new single integrated ICT management system, including mobile working technologies, for the streets and open spaces and waste services of Cambridge City and South Cambs and Hunts District Councils. This would be an integrated customer service system that councillors and officers could follow progress against 'tickets' (reported issues) once they were raised by members of the public etc. The Strategic Director undertook to brief Councillors on the current position after the meeting.

The Committee resolved by 6 votes to 2 to endorse the recommendations (as amended).

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations as amended.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

17/27/Comm Arbury Court Local Centre Improvements**Matter for Decision**

The Officer's report detailed the development, proposed improvements and completed consultation for Arbury Court Local Centre Project.

The scheme involved soft and hard landscaping, upgraded crossing point across Arbury Road, improved lighting and public realm in and around Arbury Court. The City Council part of the project has been developed as part of the Local Centres Improvement Programme, for which approval was granted by the Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places in October 2014, to improve two local centres (Cherry Hinton High Street and Arbury Court) with a third to be determined.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Streets and Open Spaces

- i. Noted the results of public consultation on improvements to Arbury Court as set out in Appendix A of the Officer's report.
- ii. Noted that the scheme was being proposed for funding through the Mid-Year Financial Review (MYFR), following Capital Programme Board approval 04/07/2017.
- iii. Supported the proposed improvements to Arbury Court Local Centre as illustratively set out in Appendix B of the Officer's report for further development and implementation.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Project Officer.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Expressed concern that opening up Arbury Court (eg removing planters) may lead to safety concerns if cyclists used it as a thoroughfare, which may result in collisions with pedestrians.

- ii. Sought clarification on the type of trees proposed for the area, their suitability and impact on residents' light levels.

The Project Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Trees were chosen to ensure they had appropriate height/foliage so they had the least impact on residents' light.
- ii. Planters were removed as they were a maintenance issue, in need of refurbishment and to fit in with a modern urban design.
- iii. Trees would act as discreet barriers to prevent the court becoming a cyclist thoroughfare. Some drop bollards would be in place too. Cyclists currently passed through and only irresponsible ones caused a danger to the pedestrianized area, so the new proposal should not worsen residents' safety. Physical barriers to improve safety for pedestrians against irresponsible cyclists would be extensive and very intrusive on the space.
- iv. The amount of cycle parking facilities was not being reduced, the parking bays were being moved to the edges of the Court (from the middle) to discourage cycling in the Court. The number of useable cycle parking bays would increase overall.
- v. Following concerns raised in consultation feedback an improved seating area was proposed nearer Arbury Road, outside the Library and Gurdwara, rather than the central square of Arbury Court. A number of the seats would have arms.
- vi. Undertook to review seat location with the designer to determine if seats could be located to act as discreet barriers to discourage high speed cycling in the Court.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse 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.

The meeting ended at 6.35 pm

CHAIR

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