

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 9 January 2020 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Giles McNeill (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn (Vice-Chairman) (until item 73)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Robert Waller
Councillor Trevor Young

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Tracey Bircumshaw	Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager
Ellen King	Senior Performance Officer
James Welbourn	Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: None.

67 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

68 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

In response to Councillor's comments regarding other Members' behaviour, the Chairman advised how complaints of such a nature should be raised, but ruled that the intervention was not related to the accuracy of the minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019 were approved as a correct record.

69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Paul Howitt-Cowan, Stephen Bunney, Owen Bierley and Anne Welburn declared an interest in item 71, as they were members of the Leisure, Culture and Events Working

Group. This did not preclude them from speaking, or voting on this item.

Councillor Anne Welburn declared that she was a member of the Progress and Delivery working group that helped to formulate the measures in item 72. This did not preclude her from taking part in, or voting on this item.

70 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Democratic and Civic Officer introduced the matters arising, and informed Members that a briefing note on the leisure contract would be circulated to them by email.

Note: Councillor Matt Boles entered the Chamber at 1837.

The remaining matters arising were noted.

71 TRINITY ARTS CENTRE LIGHTING

Members considered a report requesting an increase in funding for the upgrade to lighting and communications systems at the Trinity Arts Centre.

£60,000 had previously been approved in November at the Corporate Policy and Resources committee for health and safety investments at the Trinity Arts Centre. Following market testing, it had been identified that an additional £20,000 was required for lighting from the £500,000 capital budget allocated to the Trinity Arts Centre.

Following this introduction, Members provided comment, and asked questions on the report. Further information was provided:

- There was an able manager at the Trinity Arts Centre, which was in the process of improving. This should be considered an investment;
- The increase from the original figure of £60,000 was attributed to receiving quotations in excess of the original estimate. Unfortunately, it was not possible to go to procurement without first getting the approval to spend.

The estimates were originally in the Business Plan for 2019-2024, but new estimates had flagged up that the budget of £60,000 would not be enough;

- In future, more robust estimates should be gathered;
- There were a number of risks at Trinity Arts Centre; one of these was a mechanical risk due to the requirement of using ladders.

At the end of discussions, the Chairman moved an amendment to the written recommendation; the written recommendations had previously been moved and seconded. The amendment was accepted by committee, and therefore it was **RESOLVED** to:

Agree increased funding of up to £20,000 (with a margin of 10%) in order that the upgrade to lighting and communications systems at the Trinity Arts Centre may be carried out.

72 APPROVAL OF THE COUNCIL'S PROPOSED PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Members considered a report on proposed performance measures for future progress and delivery reports, and the proposed performance reporting framework for 2020/21.

The Senior Performance Officer introduced the report, and highlighted the following points:

- The performance measures were reviewed on a yearly basis; officers engage with managers, who attend the Progress and Delivery Working Group. This year Elected Members were given greater ownership of these measures.

This new process had been explained to members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2019, after work by the Progress and Delivery Working Group;

- A series of meetings had been held with managers; this had been a robust process with an adopted approach of a balanced scorecard;
- The Progress and Delivery Working Group had met in November 2019 to consider and feed into any new performance measures, as well as scrutinising targets;
- Currently, the Progress and Delivery periods were as follows:
 - Period 1 covered 2 months of the year;
 - Period 2 covered 4 months of the year;
 - Periods 3 and 4 covered 3 months of the year.

This schedule did not allow for correct benchmarking, and did not give an accurate picture of performance. The proposal in the report was to move to a system of four equal performance reporting periods, which was in line with standard Local Authority practice.

To make this possible quarterly performance reports would be taken to Management Team, an internal management meeting. Members would be made aware through the Members' Newsletter;

- Performance reports would be brought to both the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees, along with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the end of the second quarter of the municipal year, and then again at the end of that year. This would allow for more detailed information; this approach had been acknowledged and supported by the Progress and Delivery Working Group.

Following this introduction, further comment was provided by Members:

- Having equal quarters for reporting was a positive move;
- It can be seen as frustrating that some measures have a 'star' rating whereas others have a percentage score;
- There were members of the public who are dissatisfied with certain services of the authority but haven't responded through feedback;

- In the opinion of one Councillor, users of Council services were unlikely to give low ratings unless they were really dissatisfied. A more interesting piece of feedback would be the 'mid-rating';
- Some of the measures contained within the report were contingent on the consultation on the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan;
- One Member expressed concern that more Members should have been involved, and that there wasn't enough consultation. This view was not supported by other Members that had attended, nor the officers that had carried out the work.
- Other Members expressed that they had difficulty in understanding some of the performance measures; for example the home choices process that resulted in long term accommodation. Sometimes there was room for simpler performance measures, and it is always best if measures can be understood by all members of the public;

The Senior Performance Officer responded to comments with the following information:

- Five Members were invited to take part in the Progress and Delivery Working Group; this number was standard for Member working groups across the Authority. One session was held, lasting two hours, with the Chief Executive present, along with officers from the Programmes and Performance Team. One Member received a briefing outside of this meeting as he was unable to attend the session.
- Indicators in the report that don't have targets attached were income based measures; officers were tied by the budget process. Targets that have been set would align with financial targets in the budget.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Approve the proposed changes to the performance reporting framework for 2020/21 onwards as follows:
 - (a) Reporting periods are realigned to four equal quarters of three months each in line with standard local government practice;
 - (b) All Councillors receive a full copy of the quarterly Progress and Delivery report via the Members' newsletter. This is a more transparent process that will ensure all Councillors will have the opportunity to review and comment on the Council's performance;
 - (c) Progress and Delivery reports are presented to the Council's policy committees and Overview and Scrutiny Committee bi-annually (at the end of quarters two and four) in order to continue to fulfil the Council's constitutional requirements.
- 2) Approve the proposed Progress and Delivery performance measures for 2020/21;
- 3) Note the basket of Corporate Plan performance measures which have been updated for the Council's new Corporate Plan covering

the period up to 2023.

73 RESERVES STRATEGY AND ANNUAL REVIEW OF RESERVES 2019/20

Members considered a report on the proposals informed through the annual review of reserves process.

The report detailed the statutory requirements and the response of the Chief Finance Officer, whilst also containing the strategy detailing the purpose for which the Authority held reserves.

The Deputy Section 151 Officer also highlighted the following points:

- The purpose of the General Fund working balance was to mitigate any in-year budget risks;
- The annual review of reserves was undertaken prior to the Medium Term Financial Plan. The balances at 31 March 2019 were:
 - General Fund working balance totalled £3.849m;
 - General Fund Earmarked Reserves totalled £15.834m;
 - Capital receipts total £3.361m;
 - Capital Grants unapplied £0.587m
- The overall general fund reserves were in excess of £17 million, which was over and above one year's net expenditure. The expectation was to have in excess of £2 million in the working balance, which would be retained until the impact of the fairer funding review was understood.

Following this introduction, Members provided comment on the report and asked questions of officers. Further information was provided:

- The Chairman of the committee had asked the Secretary of State for a fairer funding deal for Councils;
- The strategy for the Valuation Volatility Reserve (VVR) was to hold it at a minimum of 5% of the purchase price of properties that have been acquired. However Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) was monitored throughout the year to see what would have been charged. The Authority had taken the approach of using the VVR rather than MRP for commercial properties as an alternative prudent approach and it was agreed with WLDC's external auditors each year.

The Deputy Section 151 Officer assured Members that the external auditors considered this approach was in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, and was considered prudent;

- Individual reserves were assessed based on risk. The Authority would speak with insurers on its risk reserve. Every reserve was looked at in terms of what would need to be issued in a replacement programme, whilst being mindful of the Corporate Plan objectives;

- The authority had been spending on large projects such as the Crematorium, and the proposed cinema in Gainsborough.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Approve the changes as proposed and informed by the Earmarked Reserves review;
- 2) Approve a net contribution from General Fund to Earmarked Reserves of £0.209 million.

Note: Following the vote, Councillor Anne Welburn left the Chamber and did not return

74 CHANGE OF COMMITTEE DATE

It was **RESOLVED** to move the Corporate Policy and Resources committee date in February. The previous date was 6 February; the new date would be 13 February.

75 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The workplan was noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.35 pm.

Chairman