
SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES AND PLACE COMMITTEE SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

11 December 2018
(Published on 13 December 2018)

Declarations of Interest - Agenda item 2	Action
<p>Cllr Liz Leyshon declared an interest as a member of Friends of Street Library.</p> <p>Cllr Anna Groskop declared an interest as a member of Friends of Bruton Library.</p> <p>Cllr Bob Filmer declared an interest as Chair of the Planning Committee at Sedgemoor District Council.</p>	
Minutes from the previous meeting held on 13 November 2018 - Agenda item 3	Action
<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2018 were accepted as being accurate by the Committee.</p>	
Public Question Time - Agenda item 4	Action
<p>There were two public questions in relation to Item 7 – Library Service Re-Design Update.</p> <p>Cllr John Irven, Chair of Watchet Town Council (WTC) made a statement that WTC require the freehold transfer of Watchet Library from West Somerset Council (WSC) in order to be able to establish a Community Library Partnership. Cllr Irven sought the Committee’s support with this.</p> <p>Cllr Irven received the following response from the Strategic Manager, Community & Traded Services. Thank you for the question John and thank you and others in Watchet Town Council for your support for Watchet Library.</p> <p>We note that Watchet Town Council have always been clear that their support for a Community Library Partnership at Watchet is conditional on the freehold transfer of the library building. The County Council have supported Watchet Town Council in this objective by supporting their application for an asset transfer. However, ultimately the decision on any freehold transfer would be for West Somerset Council to make. We have discussed and agreed a possible alternative solution of assigning the existing lease, a proposal which is supported by West Somerset Council and the County Council. This offer was put to Watchet Town</p>	

Council yesterday. We hope that a resolution can be found which enables a Community Library Partnership to be established in Watchet and all parties are continuing to work in good faith to achieve this common objective.

Peter Murphy, Chair of Friends of Somerset Libraries made a statement advocating additional funding to establish Community Library Partnerships (CLP) on a sustainable footing. He also asked for support for: District Councils to grant Discretionary Rate Relief to all proposed CLP's; the freehold transfer of Watchet Library to Watchet Town Council and for Taunton Unparished Area funds to support Priorswood Library. Mr Murphy raised concerns about the sustainability of volunteer-led models and questioned how this would be monitored. He also questioned whether the needs assessments already undertaken will be re-visited in order to determine the level of outreach and mobile provision necessary.

Mr Murphy received the following response from the Strategic Manager, Community & Traded Services. Firstly, on the provision of additional funding to all Community Library Partnerships. As you know this was determined through the recent Cabinet decision, which also determined the level of budget allocated to the library service for the next financial year. That level of budget having been determined, it is unlikely that there will be any scope to offer additional funding.

Secondly, following FoSL's submissions and letters on discretionary rate relief this issue is being investigated by district and county officers.

Finally, the level of outreach and mobile library provision was broadly determined in the Library Service Delivery Plan, produced as part of the Cabinet Report. This plan was based on a comprehensive and robust needs assessment, as well as consideration of the consultation feedback and a full impact assessment. We are currently undertaking local engagement in the communities of Highbridge and in high needs areas of Yeovil to determine the optimum mix and form of outreach services, and we will do the same for mobile library provision should this be necessary in other communities. However we will not revisit the full needs assessment and outreach or mobile service provision will be designed within the parameters established in the Cabinet decision.

Month 6 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - Agenda item 5

Action

The Committee considered this report which outlined that the Month 6 projected revenue outturn for 2018/19 was £3.158m over the available budget of £317.883m. Good progress has been made in delivering the required savings and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is currently assessing the additional management action and mitigations required to further reduce the current projected overspend. The next detailed, quarterly report will be presented in February 2019, based on expenditure to the end of December 2018.

In a verbal update, Members were informed that the downward trend of

<p>spend is continuing at that the latest outturn position is now forecast at around £2.3m. The contingency in place would, therefore, be enough to meet the overspend currently although measures to address this overspend are still in place.</p> <p>The Committee discussed: the use of capital receipts; Dillington House; the use of government grant money for highways, particularly potholes; small improvement schemes and the progress of savings proposals which required consultation with the Schools Forum.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report and asked for an update on the use of the Highways grant and the Small Improvement Scheme. It was agreed to provide this once the analysis had been completed.</p>	
<p>2019-20 Capital Investment Programme - Agenda item 6</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered this report which outlined the proposed Capital Programme for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23 of £225.121m.</p> <p>It was clarified that this report would be presented to Cabinet in the New Year and that any comments from the Committee would feed in to the decision-making process.</p> <p>In previous years the Capital Programme has been agreed one year at a time. This creates difficulty in some areas, such as the Colley Lane development in Bridgwater and the A Block refurbishment project, when agreement is reached for the first part of development but not the second. Officers are better able to plan in a considered way if they are able to plan ahead. Therefore, the proposal is to seek approval for an on-going programme which can still be subject to change. Any decision on the capital programme will also have an impact on the revenue budget.</p> <p>The Committee discussed: the school building programme; minimum revenue position; estimated funding in future years; the use of S106 and CIL funds; borrowing and commercial investments; paying down capital loans and parish council support for small improvement schemes.</p> <p>Following a vote, the Committee approved the following recommendation:</p> <p>The Scrutiny for Polices and Place Committee acknowledges the importance of SCC's ability and necessary resources to negotiate the best possible contributions to infrastructure projects from the development of housing in Somerset.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>Library Service Re-Design Update - Agenda item 7</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered this report which provided an update on progress with establishing Community Library Partnerships, in the early stages of implementing the decision by the County Council's Cabinet to re-</p>	

<p>design the libraries service.</p> <p>A summary of the expressions of interest that are being taken forward was provided. The Committee was informed that no expressions of interest were received for Highbridge and Sunningdale libraries. These libraries will therefore close on 29 December 2018, and library services will be delivered to the surrounding communities through the new Library Outreach Service delivery model, as determined through the Cabinet decision. The committee were also updated on the progress of other areas of work underway as part of the Cabinet decision.</p> <p>The Committee discussed: mobile library provision; support for Watchet Town Council and provision of legal advice.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>Corporate Performance Report Q2 2018-19 - Agenda item 8</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered this report which provided an update on the council's ongoing progress towards the outcomes laid out in the council's Business Plan. The report provided the latest information available in the period up until 30th September 2018.</p> <p>The new design and format of the report was highlighted to the Committee.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report and were pleased with the new format.</p>	
<p>A Block Refurbishment Project Update - Agenda item 9</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered a presentation which provided an update on the A Block Refurbishment project.</p> <p>The presentation outlined the business case for change and the Cabinet recommendations, the options considered, expected savings and future opportunities, benefits and risks and key next steps for the project.</p> <p>The Committee discussed: valuations of the county hall site; risks associated with not carrying the enabling works; occupancy studies; parking; financial benefits of freeing up other buildings in Taunton; public perception of the project and the importance of keeping Members updated.</p> <p>Members raised concerns that so few risks had been presented and it was clarified other risks were identified on the full risk register.</p> <p>Following a vote, the Committee made the following recommendation:</p> <p>The Scrutiny for Polices and Place Committee recommends that a complete, detailed assessment of all risks associated with the A Block Refurbishment Project, along with a valuation of A, B & C Block should be provided to the Cabinet ahead of their meeting on 19 December 2019.</p>	

<p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>Lead Local Flood Authority Update - Agenda item 10</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered this report which updated the Committee on the continued progress by the Flood and Water Management team in 2018/19 and set out the key activities for 2019/20.</p> <p>The Committee discussed: the role of the SuDS inspector and the connection between highways, housing and flooding and the need for as much green space on developments as possible.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee Work Programme - Agenda item 11</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions.</p> <p>Following debate, the Committee requested the following changes to the work programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a Revenue Budget Monitoring Item to 23 Jan 2019 meeting • Add an item on the Capital Investment Strategy • Add an update on the County Council policy for disposal of property and an update on County Farms • Add an update on the Council's statutory duties • Add an update on Hinkley Point C <p>A Member also asked whether the CDS update could be provided at the 23 Jan meeting. It was clarified that sufficient information would not be available at that time but it was agreed to circulate a member information sheet once the information was available.</p> <p>The Committee also requested that the additional risk information relating to the A Block Refurbishment Project be provided to the Committee before it goes to Full Council for decision.</p>	
<p>Any other urgent items of business - Agenda item 12</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>Members requested that officers give more consideration to presentations to ensure better accessibility including font size, clarity and colour of information.</p>	