

## SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES AND PLACE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee held in the Meeting Room, Taunton Library, Paul Street, TA1 3XZ, on Tuesday 16 July 2019 at 10.00 am

**Present:** Cllr A Groskop (Chair), Cllr A Bown (Vice-Chair), Cllr P Ham, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr John Hunt, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr M Keating and Cllr T Munt

**Other Members present:** Cllr M Chilcott and Cllr L Redman

### Apologies for absence:

#### 196 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 197 **Minutes from the previous meeting held on 19 June** - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2019 were accepted as being accurate by the Committee.

#### 198 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions.

#### 199 **Prevention Fund Update** - Agenda Item 5

The Committee considered a Prevention Fund Update presented by the Interim Finance Director on behalf of the Director of Public Health who is the senior lead for the Fund.

It was agreed by Full Council to set up a prevention Fund totalling £1m in February 2019 and in June 2019 the Cabinet took the decision to allocate the fund across three core areas:

- Initiatives that will improve lives through Preventing Demand (£850k)
- Member initiatives to Improving Lives (£125)
- Somerset Young People's Fund (£25k)

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are now developing the processes for each element of the fund. As well as agreeing criteria and process, each element is now progressing to specific proposals and are at various stages.

The Improving Lives to Prevent Demand Fund enables SCC officers to put forward bids that will prevent need/or the escalation of need in order to reduce future demand on SCC services. The purpose of the fund is to empower services and teams to take responsibility for their areas in modernising their approach to how they enable a preventative culture / model which reduces

demand on SCC that demonstrates a financial pay-back over a three-year period. Proposals must support the following criteria:

- Support delivery of the Somerset County Council 2019-20 Business Plan
- prevent or reduce demand for SCC services, enabling the initial funding level to be saved through reduced costs within a three year period.
- Redesign SCC services or processes to improve lives, enabling the initial funding level to be saved through increased efficiency and productivity within a three-year period.
- Improve Lives for Somerset residents and bring additional external money into the county which exceeds the initial investment within three years.

With regard to the Preventing Demand element, Members were informed that there are currently four active proposals and officers provided a brief executive summary of these:

- Slim My Waste, Feed My Face – a scheme to reduce the amount of food waste going to landfill
- Safe Families – a scheme that works with families experiencing difficulties and seeks to prevent social care intervention for the children involved and reduce the need to access short term fostering arrangements
- Pause – a charity that supports women who have had multiple children removed from their care
- Securing Grant Funding - supporting organisations to tap into funding and match funding opportunities.

The purpose of the Members Improving Lives scheme is to empower communities and groups to take responsibility for local action, help people to become better integrated in their own communities and to reduce pressure on local services. The fund opens 1<sup>st</sup> September and applications must be received by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Each Member will have £2k to spend on up to 4 projects in their ward and proposals must support the following criteria:

- Help communities and neighbourhoods develop activities that deliver the County Council Improving Lives vision and priorities
- Help reduce pressure on local services
- Address health inequality - it is expected projects will in some way, include between one and three groups
- Provide opportunity to lever in additional funding from partners or other funders (matched funding opportunities)

The purpose of the Young People's Fund is to support internal and external youth services and organisations. The Fund will involve and benefit disadvantaged, at risk or vulnerable young people who will receive priority consideration by the Somerset UK Youth Parliament and match funding will be used to increase the fund to £50k. Proposals must support the following criteria:

- To fund youth and community projects, youth social action or aligned to UKYP campaigns
- Not to enhance educational or career prospects

- Not to secure driving lessons
- Not for transport/ travel or therapeutic/ medical treatment
- Not retrospective
- For the benefit of young people and the community
- Not for repairs, utility bills/ rent,(but hire of a venue for an event is fine), tax, insurance substantial amounts of equipment
- Has to be deemed as value for money by the Somerset UK Youth Parliament funding allocation group.

Further points raised during discussion:

- It was confirmed that a guidance document is available to help Members with completing expression of interest forms and officers are also available to give support.
- Members questioned how officers will ensure that the need of rural locations is taken into account and were reassured that there is a desire for opportunities to be locally-based and that a piece of work will be completed to ensure that there is a fair distribution across the county.
- Members expressed concern that the process may be too onerous for some councillors or that some may not engage. This could result in missed opportunities. Members also expressed concern that officers would have the ability to review 220 member applications before the deadline.
- Members questioned whether they would have sight of what was spent and it was confirmed that for every initiative there will be a full business case and a key or non-key decision taken so there will absolute transparency.

Officers agreed to consider a suggestion from Members to publish a spreadsheet on the Members' Portal showing what initiatives had been applied for by Members and when.

The Committee noted the report.

## 200 **Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - Month 2 - Agenda Item 6**

The Committee received a report outlining the revenue budget position at Month 2. The report shows a projected balanced position for the authority, however, Key Service forecasts project a small net overspend.

The Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the paper and was pleased to report a forecast balanced position for the authority. She highlighted that:

- the areas of challenge are primarily in Children's Services and in the Dillington House trading account
- Funding for Home to School Transport was inadvertently not included in the re-basing of budgets but will be in future
- The amount of savings agreed that have or will be delivered is at 99% - a significant achievement

- The authority continues to have a tight grip of finances and management actions remain in place. It is determined to deliver services within its means.

The Interim Director of Finance highlighted to members that as an early report it can only be indicative at this stage but that it allows the authority to identify any potential problems early on. The financial situation is dramatically improved from the position 12 month ago but further contingency is in place for anything that can't be addressed through management action. Additional reserves will be reported on in future reports and the Scrutiny for Policies, Children & Families Committee will now receive quarterly budget monitoring reports for additional scrutiny.

Further discussion included:

- Members expressed concern about the level of understanding that Members have of the financial situation both over the past 12 months and the current picture.
- It was noted that a detailed report from the Councils' auditors is available but members commented that a simple explanation in layman's terms is required. This would be particularly helpful to Members to report to Parish Councils. A two-page document is available on the Our Somerset pages and it was agreed to send Members a link to this.
- A Member commented that services had been reacting rather than planning for things and that some services had been permitted to overspend continually.

The Committee noted the report.

201 **Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee Work Programme** - Agenda Item 7

The Committee considered it's Work programme and did not request any changes at this time.

202 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 8

With regard to the Climate Change Member Task & Finish Group, it was agreed to articulate to relevant officers Members concerns regarding a) a lack of information being shared with Members b) no date being set for the first Member T&F Group meeting and the lack of time for the Group to report to the November full council c) a lack of urgency to commence action.

**(The meeting ended at 11.22 am)**

**CHAIRMAN**