

Cabinet

Thursday 10 November 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Margaret Bell

Councillor Peter Butlin

Councillor Andy Crump

Councillor Andy Jenns

Councillor Kam Kaur

Councillor Jeff Morgan

Councillor Wallace Redford

Councillor Heather Timms

1. General

In the absence of Councillor Isobel Seccombe (Leader), Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader) took the Chair.

(1) Apologies

Councillors Isobel Seccombe and Martin Watson.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13 October 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

(4) Public Speaking

None.

2. Council Plan 2022-2027 - Integrated Performance Report Quarter 2 2022/23 - Period under review: April to September 2022

Councillor Andy Jenns (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation) introduced the published report which summarised the Council's performance at the end of the second quarter (April - September 2022) against the strategic priorities and Areas of Focus set out in the Council Plan 2022-2027. Councillor Jenns noted the national context for the report, highlighting that the UK was experiencing the consequences of an unprecedented combination of events including two recent changes of UK Government, the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the war in Ukraine resulting in a period of significant uncertainty and a very challenging financial outlook in the short-to medium-term. This volatility was impacting on the Council's resources, both financial and in terms of recruitment and retention, levels of demand, and increased uncertainty about a number of key national policy areas including Adult Social Care reform, devolution, levelling up and climate change. Councillor Jenns highlighted specific areas of the report in relation to the slight reduction of performance measures on track (from 70% to 63%) which were comprehensively set out in Appendix 2 of the report and highlighted key themes in relation to Human Resources and Risk that were fully detailed in the report.

In response to questions from Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Jenns acknowledged that performance was declining and this was of concern to the Cabinet. Portfolio Holders would be addressing individual areas of concern within their responsibilities. In terms of human resources, recruitment processes were being tested and improved and regarding retention focus was being placed on key themes important to staff, such as equality and diversity and wellbeing (including the Thrive at Work accreditation).

Councillor Andy Crump noted that the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recently received a presentation on flooding. He noted that engagement schemes were in place and support from Members was required to get full community engagement, particularly among new residents. Councillor Crump also pointed out that fire-related deaths could be impacted by many factors and the focus of the Fire and Rescue Service remained first to prevent, then protect and then respond and it was important to ensure that target response times were fit for purpose.

Councillor Jeff Morgan noted the areas of challenge in Children's Services, noting that the figures were set against the recent media coverage of child neglect cases in Bradford and Solihull which had created a level of heightened awareness and referrals. However, he was optimistic the indicators would improve.

Councillor Margaret Bell also recognised challenges in terms of the percentage of children receiving a 6-8 week health check and explained the arrangements that had been agreed with the service provider and the focus placed on ensuring that families in need were identified and supported. The associated recruitment of health visitors was being managed in terms of delivering key priorities.

Councillor Sarah Feeney requested a Member Development Session with a focus on flooding and this was agreed by Councillors Crump and Butlin to take place in the new year.

In response to a question from Councillor Feeney, Councillor Kaur advised that there had been a period of transformation with regard to SEND and Ofsted had advised that the Service was on track and delivering on its previous recommendations. Improvement work was ongoing with

families to shape the programme and its delivery. Forecast overspend had been brought down without any detriment to families.

Councillor Margaret Bell added that the waiting times for autism diagnosis were being addressed and monitored. The measure being used was the longest wait and she was confident this could be brought down to target despite the number of referrals being almost three times that predicted.

Councillor Peter Butlin noted the financial pressures the Council was under due to inflation which was being monitored because of the effect on all services provided by the authority.

Resolved:

That Cabinet

1. notes the Quarter 2 organisational performance, progress against the Integrated Delivery Plan, management of Human Resources and Risk.
2. agrees the proposed changes to the Performance Management Framework outlined in paragraph 2.7 of the report.

3. 2022-23 Financial Monitoring - Forecast Position as at Quarter 2

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property) explained to Cabinet that the quarter two position was relatively straight forward for revenue as detailed in the report, savings were broadly on track and the £4.44m net overspend detailed in the report was due almost entirely to a £6.05m forecast overspend for Education services, the majority from inflationary and demand pressures in SEND and mainstream Home to School Transport. Compared to quarter one, there was a large reduction (£1.4m) in the Adults underspend, bringing it back in line with expected budget. Children Services had also seen a reduction in the previously reported underspend, shifting to a £0.29m overspend, which was still broadly on budget. In respect of Capital, once unallocated capital funding was taken out, the quarter two programme sat at £114m compared to a current budget of £129.2m, with the main movements relating to project delays reprofiled into future years and programme additions.

In response to a query from Councillor Jerry Roodhouse about proposals for home to school transport, Councillor Kam Kaur noted that this was an area which cut across portfolio holder responsibilities and some work was required to understand how home to school transport would be delivered going forward. She noted that it was important to ensure that the factors around public transport that might affect parental choice for school places were made clear to parents and work on this messaging was required. In terms of the timing for introducing any changes to the policy, Monica Fogarty reiterated the importance of ensuring parents had all the information required when making their school choices since it would inevitably influence their decisions on which schools to apply for. Therefore, once there was clarity on home to school transport proposals, the implications for the next admissions round would need to be considered. Councillor Butlin noted that that a working party, associated with the Budget Working Group had been set up to consider the home to school transport policy.

With regard to a question from Councillor Feeney regarding SEND and Inclusion overspending, Councillor Kaur explained that the demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (ECHPs) had increased. Work was taking place with schools to understand how the Council could assist the process and support parents. She noted that the Panel was independent and the choice to appeal lay with parents.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the adjusted forecast overspend of £4.439m (1.2%) that would need to be funded from the Directorate and General Risk Reserves at the end of 2022/23.
2. Notes the forecast delivery of savings for 2022/23 of £9.406m, a shortfall of £0.838m (8.2%) against the target.
3. Notes the forecast capital spend for 2022/23 of £114.048m.
4. Approves the reprofiling of spend on the capital programme of £19.729m in 2022/23 into future years and note the carry forward of s278 contributions of £0.100m that is not directly controllable by the Council.

4. Treasury Management Monitoring Report

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property) presented the six monthly review of treasury management activity, particularly highlighting that since the last reported at the 2021/22 outturn, a net cash outflow from the organisation of £3.62m had been seen and, due to improved interest rates, the Treasury Team had achieved £0.75m more return on cash investments than originally budgeted. The Team continued to review the benchmark used to compare treasury management performance and had been asked to explore this further as tighter medium term cash flow forecasting could allow the Council to lock in investments for slightly longer periods to access better overall returns. Councillor Butlin extended his congratulations to the Treasury Management Team for the work that they had undertaken.

Resolved:

That Cabinet notes Treasury Management activity and performance in respect of the first 6 months of the 2022/23 financial year.

5. Annual Sufficiency Update 2022

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education) explained to Cabinet that the Annual Education Sufficiency Update was supplementary to the Education Sufficiency Strategy and outlined pupil number forecasts from September 2022 covering a 5 year period for primary phase and a 7 year period for secondary phase, compared against school capacities. Details of any pressures expected during that period were included in the report, along with proposed solutions such as school expansions.

Councillor Kaur particularly noted that demand for primary places in all year groups could be accommodated in existing schools in most planning areas. The report set out a forecasted need for additional primary school places in areas of high housing development including Nuneaton, Rugby, Kineton, Kenilworth and South of Leamington. Additionally, the report noted that there was significant demand for additional places at secondary level and, despite significant investment in expansions of existing secondary schools in recent years, further additional secondary school places were forecast to be necessary to meet demand across Warwickshire.

Responding to comments and questions, Councillor Kaur noted that the actual position in terms of people movement in Warwickshire did not correlate with the picture provided by the census. Conversations were taking place with heads at both primary and secondary levels to ensure that Published Admission Numbers (PAN) were correct and within forecasts. A discussion with Rugby Borough councillors was planned in the following week regarding the independent review that had taken place and the executive summary would then be shared.

Councillor Peter Butlin noted there had been increasing numbers of school children in the county because of families arriving from Ukraine, Hong Kong and also London. The requirement for school places was subject to change over time and this made it more difficult to identify where and when school places were required. Work regarding the PANs and school building was, therefore, ongoing.

Resolved

That Cabinet endorses the Annual Education Sufficiency Update 2022 (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) and notes the proposed schemes to ensure sufficiency of school places in Warwickshire.

6. Approval to Tender for Waste Management Contract

Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate & Culture) advised Cabinet that this report set out the contracting process to secure disposal or treatment for the residual waste arising in the east Warwickshire. The process was in line with the municipal waste management strategy agreed by all the district and borough councils and the County Council and the procurement would be undertaken by a multidisciplinary team of internal officers. The Council continued to seek ways to reduce waste and recycle as much as possible.

Councillor Peter Butlin noted that the government's paper on waste management was awaited.

Resolved

That Cabinet

1. authorises the undertaking of a procurement exercise for the treatment and/or disposal of municipal residual waste as set out in this report.
2. authorises the Strategic Director for Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Climate and Culture, to award the contract and to enter into any legal

agreements necessary to implement the contract on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

7. Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2021-2026

Councillor Peter Butlin (Deputy Leader of the Council) introduced the strategy, which had been validated by external experts and provided the Council with a framework for its third party spend over the next five years. The strategy was structured around three value pillars, detailed in the report: commercial value, customer value and social Value. The associated Supplier Statement supported suppliers to understand what the Council was seeking in a supplier, giving them confidence in how to prepare to do business with the Council.

Resolved

That Cabinet

1. approves the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2021 to 2026 attached at Appendix 1 to the report.
2. approves the associated Procurement and Contract Management Supplier Statement 2021 to 2026 attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

8. Reports Containing Exempt or Confidential Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

9. Exempt Minutes of the 13 October 2022 Meeting of Cabinet

The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 October 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

The meeting rose at 2.43pm

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Chair