



EAST  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## **RESOURCES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Resources and Finance Committee held in Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, on Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 4.30pm.

### **PRESENT**

Councillor Alan Sharp (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)  
Councillor Christine Ambrose-Smith (Substitute for Councillor David Ambrose-Smith)  
Councillor Ian Bovingdon  
Councillor Mike Bradley  
Councillor Steve Cheetham  
Councillor Lorna Dupré  
Councillor Chris Morris  
Councillor Jo Webber (Substitute for Councillor Mark Goldsack)

### **APOLOGIES**

Councillor David Brown  
Councillor David Ambrose-Smith  
Councillor Mark Goldsack

### **In attendance**

Rachel Ashley-Caunt – Head of Audit, LGSS

John Hill – Chief Executive  
Ian Smith – Finance Manager & S151 Officer  
Emma Grima – Director, Commercial  
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager  
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer  
Annette Wade – Customer Services Manager  
Andy Dicks – Reprographics Manager  
Nicole Pema – HR Manager  
Sally Bonnett – Infrastructure & Strategy Manager  
Tracy Couper – Democratic Services Manager

## 72. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions were submitted by the members of the public.

## 73. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests by Members of the Committee.

74. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019 were received.

In response to a question by the Chairman, Councillor Dupré confirmed that she had received responses to all of the issues she had raised that were recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

75. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman stated that as a result of the Committee re-structuring approved at full Council on 21 February 2019, this would be the last meeting of the Resources and Finance Committee. However, it would be succeeded by the new Finance and Assets Committee.

76. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: NEW SERVICE DELIVERY PLANS & END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report (reference T229, previously circulated) detailing end of year performance outputs for 2018/19 and the new Service Delivery Plans (SDPs) for 2019/20 for the Services within the remit of this Committee. Councillor Bovingdon requested that in future the end of year reports for each Service area be printed and presented before the new Service Delivery Plan.

The Performance Management Officer invited each Service Lead to present the information for their Service area:

**Customer Services**

With regard to the end of year report, the Customer Services Manager Annette Wade, commenced by summarising the numerous projects in which she and her Team had been involved in 2018/19. These included providing the Assisted Digital Service for Universal Credit which went live in the autumn of 2018. No testing or training was provided for this, so the Team accessed YouTube videos and produced their own guidance to assist them with implementation. This had resulted in extremely positive feedback from customers accessing the service and many boxes of chocolates to staff! The Team was continuing to develop customer care services and reports for the Waste and Recycling Services following their transfer to the East Cambs Trading Company from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. Telephone and face-to-face service contacts remained of a high quality, despite the volume of these and the level of staff secondments,

turnover and absence. The Customer Services Manager commended the positive 'can do' attitude of her Team in the face of the wide range of changes and challenges they faced.

Councillor Ambrose-Smith commented on the very positive atmosphere she encountered now on walking through Reception at the Council Offices and the friendly and unhurried way that Customer Services Advisors dealt with people. However, she was aware of the challenges that they faced.

Councillor Dupré commented that the Service had been a 'victim of its own success' in that the high quality and skills of the staff made them attractive to other Service areas within the Council, resulting in secondments and transfers. Councillor Dupré requested that the Performance Indicator (PI) on monthly abandoned call rates specify that it be maintained at 'below 10%'.

The Chairman, Councillor Jo Webber, Service Delivery Champion (Customer Services) and Councillor Bradley acknowledged that the abandoned call rate was now moving in the right direction, despite the challenges faced by the Team.

With regard to the draft SDP for 2019/20, the Customer Services Manager referred to corrections to some of the dates and stated that an amended version of the SDP had been published on the Council's website. Key areas would continue to be Universal Credit, Customer Relationship Management for ECSS, as well as supporting the Elections Team in the forthcoming District and Parish Council and potential European Elections.

On the specific issue of staff turnover, the Customer Services Manager reported that the Team had lost 5 staff over the past year and was recruiting new staff. This had meant restricting the number of employees allowed leave each week and the temporary suspension of the scheme whereby allocated Customer Services Advisors spent ½ day per week in a particular service area to learn the operational practices of that area to assist them in responding to enquiries. The Customer Services Manager reminded Members that it took six months to train a Customer Services Advisor and it was crucial that a high level of service be maintained and the Team gave support to alleviate any problems that might arise. Therefore, Supervisors had to re-configure their duties to train and mentor new staff. Consideration was being given to develop an opportunity for a member of staff to become a trainer to assist with this. The Team also had developed greater co-ordination with the Communications Team to identify and respond to 'hot issues'. The period of secondments also were being time-limited, to prevent the uncertainty regarding the possible return of staff. The recruitment process had been speeded-up, partly due to the result of a successful secondment filling a post in the HR Team! Members suggested that consideration should be given to 'over-resourcing' of the Team, to allow for turnover. The Chief Executive stated that this could be considered using data to model the turnover within the Team over recent years. It was a commendable achievement of the Team that their wide-ranging problem

solving skills made them very marketable and attractive to other Service Areas.

Councillor Webber concluded by stating that she had worked with the Team as Service Delivery Champion for the past 4 years and seen how they had faced many peaks and challenges and developed a 'grow your own' culture, which had become a talent pool for the rest of the Council. However, the Council must ensure an adequate level of resourcing for this important front-facing service, as the consequences of a poor level of customer service or the provision of inadequate or wrong advice, could adversely affect the reputation of the Council. She would do all that she could to continue to support the Team and suggested that perhaps former staff could be 'seconded back' for short periods, in the event of severe resourcing shortages.

### Performance Management

The Performance Management Officer, Hetty Thornton, summarised the content of her end of year performance report and new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20.

The Performance Management Officer continued to work 2.5 days per week within the Waste and Recycling Team and was leading on the transfer of Clinical Waste project. Work continued with Service Leads to deliver a LEAN system thinking approach in their Service areas. She also was providing support on the Land Registry changeover. In response to a question by Councillor Dupré, the Performance Management Officer explained the reason for the upwards arrow in the end of year performance report on the PI relating to efficiency reviews.

### Democratic Services

The Democratic Services Manager, Tracy Couper, summarised the end of year performance report and new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20. She commended her staff for maintaining service standards during the period of her sickness absence and highlighted the work currently being undertaken to prepare for the District and Parish Council Elections and induction and training of the new intake of District Councillors, based on the reduction from 39 to 28 Councillors and the revised Committee structure.

The Chairman and Councillor Dupré commended the work of the Team and in response to a question by Councillor Dupré, the Democratic Services Manager explained the work being undertaken to prepare for the possibility of European Elections at the end of May.

### Reprographics Services

The Reprographics Manager, Andy Dicks, reported that his service had experienced another busy year. The Team comprised 6 services - Graphic Design, Printing, Photography, Document Management System (DMS), Post room, Stationery.

Graphic Design - Apart from East Cambs work which was the main bulk (431 Jobs), 174 were our Trading Company, Oliver Cromwell House (OCH) and other external jobs. Ely Markets has kept us busy designing various publications from the Markets Calendar, Vintage & Vegan Fair, Flavours of the World and the visit of Prince Charles. We also now maintain their website keeping it fresh and fully updated. We have supported Palace green Homes (PGH) this year with the launch of Kings Row and The Fledglings developments and we look forward to be involved with their forthcoming developments. We have continued to work closely with OCH with their various events including Eel and Food Festival, Escape Room, Apple Festival and the many other attractions. We had 5 new external clients this year totalling 38 overall. One new customer this year is Specsavers in the High Street and within Sainsbury's. They are highly delighted with our service.

Printing - Printing also has been very busy with ECDC work, Trading Company and our external clients. The potential income this year has risen from £16,000 to £23,500 and has allowed us to purchase a new guillotine and folding machine. Both giving us efficiency savings. A total of 800,000 images have been printed by Repro breaking down into internal 90% External 10%.

Photography - We have reintroduced photography to the service this year with Marta our professional photographer, and using her skills to launch Kings Row Open Day and The Fledglings Show home for PGH. Our next assignment will be the newly elected councillors in May.

Document Management - This service scans and indexes all incoming mail either through the post or electronically via the Planning Portal or emails. The total scanned and indexed this year was 33,000 documents. Planning and Building Control are our main recipients of this service.

Postroom - The post room opens all incoming mail, and scans them all using our x-ray machine for any suspect packages. An extra layer of security for the authority. Very similar to what you find at airports. At the end of the day all mail is franked using 'Mailmark' (which saves the authority money) by using a barcode impression to speed up sorting at Royal Mails depots. Total number of items sent out is 65,000. 11,000 lower than last year reflecting our more efficient methods of posting items. Emailing more and posting less.

Stationery - We manage the distribution of stationery and procurement of supplies.

Looking to the Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20, we will continue to seek new clients adding to our expanding list. Our photocopier/printer contract is being renewed in April with new faster multi-functional devices for the departments and Reprographics will acquire a new professional digital press with online finishing including high end book production allowing us to

produce quality finished books again giving efficient savings and bringing Reprographics to the next level of print production and all within budget.

Councillor Bradley, Service Delivery Champion (Reprographics & DMS) commended the Reprographics Manager and his staff on their high level of service and the investment in new equipment which would generate further service improvements and business.

Councillors Webber and Ambrose-Smith commended the quality of the service provided by Reprographics from their experience for work undertaken for Littleport Parish Council and Councillor Webber suggested that the Reprographics Manager provide District Councillors with details of the services offered to enable them to promote the availability of these to other Parishes and community groups. Councillor Dupré commended the quality of the work undertaken for OCH.

### Human Resources

The Human Resources Manager, Nicole Pema, summarised the content of her end of year performance report and new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20.

HR continued to support the rollout of the new HR and Payroll system. A significant amount of work had been carried out in connection with the TUPE transfer of Veolia employees to East Cambs Street Scene Ltd from April 2018. The Team also had contributed to ICT and Planning Service Reviews.

Job evaluation had been concluded, with the exclusion of new posts, and 98% of the jobs had been moderated by the Consultant and Unison. The initial ranking of evaluated jobs had been completed and presented to Management Team, and work had begun on a new pay and grading structure.

Under the Council's appraisal scheme, 18 staff had received an outstanding rating, 89 staff had received an excellent rating, 43 staff a good rating and 0 a needs improvement rating.

With regard to the Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20, the HR Manager reported that the Team would be preparing for the impacts of the exit from the European Union, concluding implementation of Job Evaluation, implementing the new pay award and continuing to assist with the new HR and Payroll system. A review of the processes relating to DBS checks also was to be undertaken. In response to a question by Councillor Dupré on preparations regarding Brexit, the HR Manager reported that the Council employed 8-10 staff under the European Settlement Scheme and advice had been provided to these employees.

### Financial Services

The Finance Manager & S151 Officer, Ian Smith, summarised the content of the end of year performance report and new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20. Key areas had included the preparation of the Budget for the forthcoming year and currently the Team was focussed on closedown work ready for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts. A number of issues had been encountered as a result of implementation of the new i-Trent Payroll system, with work continuing to resolve these in some cases. Key issues for the forthcoming year were likely to be the Civica implementation and the Government Spending Review for 2020 onwards.

The Chairman highlighted the improvement in the payment of undisputed invoices within 30 days to 96.34% and commented that it would be good if this could be increased to the target of 99%.

### Legal Services

The Legal Services Manager, Maggie Camp, summarised the content of her end of year performance report and new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20. Car Parking appeals responses and recovery of Court costs and Legal costs and fees had improved but some targets had not been achieved due to staffing shortages and recruitment difficulties within the Team. However, the staffing structure had been reviewed and the revised posts advertised, which it was hoped would resolve the problems with recruitment. In response to a question by Councillor Webber, the Legal Services Manager explained that the problem with recruitment of Legal and other professional staff was a national issue, but that the review had focussed on pay scales and target market with a view to a more successful outcome. With reference to a question by Councillor Dupré, the Legal Services Manager stated that the recovery of Legal Costs PI had been removed from the new SDP because there was a requirement for it always to be 100%.

### ICT

The ICT Manager was unable to attend the meeting, so the Performance Officer introduced the end of year performance report and new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20 and confirmed that any questions she was unable to answer would receive a written response.

Councillor Bradley, Service Delivery Champion (Information Technology) congratulated the ICT Manager for 'stepping up to the plate' and he believed that the service was improving overall and the future could be viewed positively. However, he highlighted that the issue of Disaster Recovery needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Infrastructure & Strategic Housing:

The Infrastructure & Housing Manager summarised the content of her end of year performance report and new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20.

Much work had been carried out on a wide range of projects, including the Hive District Leisure facility, Soham Station, North Ely development applications, A10/A142 roundabout improvements, collection and allocation of CIL/S106 funding.

Councillor Bovingdon, Service Delivery Champion (Infrastructure), commended the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager and her Team on the range of projects that they were involved in.

Strategic Planning:

The Committee noted that the Strategic Planning Manager was not present at the meeting and the Director, Commercial introduced the end of year performance report and new Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20 on his behalf.

Member were reminded that this Authority had a Service Level Agreement with Peterborough City Council for Strategic Planning services and this was the subject of a report later in the agenda. Following the withdrawal of the submission draft Local Plan, future options were being considered. The review of a range of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) also was to be undertaken.

With regard to Service Delivery Plans in general, Councillor Dupré commented that the current arrangement of examining Performance Indicators in Committees was not as effective as reviewing and monitoring Performance measures in a workshop environment. Councillor Bradley expressed the view that the Service Delivery Plans were still useful and meaningful documents and the Chairman stated that the new Council could review the performance framework, if necessary.

The Chairman thanked all Service Leads for their reports. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That the End of Year Performance Reports (2018/19) be noted and the new Service Delivery Plans (2019/20) for the following Services be approved:

- Performance Management
- Democratic Services;
- Customer Services;
- Reographics Services;
- Human Resources;



- Financial Services;
- Legal Services;
- ICT;
- Infrastructure and Strategic Housing;
- Strategic Planning.

77. **INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2019/20**

The Committee considered a report (reference T230, previously circulated) which presented the draft Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20 and Internal Audit Charter for review and formal approval.

Rachel Ashley-Caunt, Head of Audit, LGSS, stated that the outline 2019/20 Plan drafted last year had been reviewed and refreshed and an indicative Plan was included for 2020/21.

The proposed amendments to the indicative 2019/20 Plan from last year were shown in Table 1 on page 4 of the Plan. The Internal Audit Charter remained unchanged for the preceding year.

The Chairman referred to the inclusion of the Local Authority Trading Company and Building Control Audits in 2020/21 Plan, rather than 2019/20, and queried whether the risks in these areas should mean they were included in the forthcoming year's Plan. Ms Ashley-Caunt acknowledged that risks would be assessed on an ongoing basis during the year and that, if it was considered necessary, these two areas could be reviewed for inclusion in the forthcoming year within the 200 days of audit and assurance work that LGSS Internal Audit was required to provide to ECDC.

It was resolved:

1. That the Internal Audit Plan and Internal Audit Charter for 2019/20 be approved.
2. That approval be given to the delegation of authority to the Council's S151 Officer to approve in-year amendments to the Audit Plan between Committee meetings in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Committee with responsibility for audit matters.

78. **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee considered a report (reference T231, previously circulated) which advised Members of the work of Internal Audit completed during the period November 2018 to February 2019 and the progress against the Internal Audit Plan.

Councillor Bradley commented on the need to ensure colour printing of pages containing traffic light graphics.

It was resolved:

That the Internal Audit progress report be noted.

79. **SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA) STRATEGIC PLANNING – PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL**

The Committee considered a report (reference T232, previously circulated) proposing arrangements for the delivery of Strategic Planning services for the period 2019/20-2021/22.

The Director Commercial reported that the SLA with Peterborough City Council was operating well, generated cost savings and gave the Council flexibility to adjust its requirements as necessary.

Councillor Bradley expressed concern that the SLA was being submitted to this Committee so close to the start of the new financial year, and the Director Commercial reported that the existing SLA still had 1 year to run. Councillor Bovington queried how the performance and delivery of the SLA were measured and the Director Commercial confirmed that the Agreement was delivering on every level and that direct in-house provision by this Council would cost 2-3 times more than the SLA. Councillor Cheetham requested that Councillors be provided with the content of the SLA in future.

Councillor Dupré expressed concern that the Council had no functioning Local Plan, since withdrawal of the 2019 Plan at Council on 21 February 2019 and regret that Council had not approved her proposal to establish a Committee to deal with the issue. Outsourcing of the Strategic Planning function may save money but sent the wrong messages regarding the priority that this Council gave to the process. In response, Councillor Bradley commented that the withdrawal of the Local Plan was more of a reflection of the quality of the Inspector's determinations rather than the service provided by Peterborough City Council staff who always operated with the utmost professionalism and had greater experience of the production of such Plans than the Inspector appointed to this Council. This issue had been debated at length at full Council on 21 February and a decision reluctantly had been taken to withdraw the Local Plan.

It was resolved:

That approval be given to the Director Commercial to enter into a SLA with Peterborough City Council from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022 as detailed in the submitted report.

80. **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) FUNDING REQUESTS**

The Committee considered a report (reference T233, previously circulated) detailing CIL funding requests in respect two projects - Ely Museum re-development and The Mill Arts Centre/Theatre Project, Soham.

The Infrastructure and Policy Manager, Sally Bonnett explained the background to the requests and Councillor Bradley reported that the local Ward Members were all very supportive of the projects. Councillor Dupré drew attention to the significant expansion of the Mill Project and to an application for funding from the County Council as well for this scheme.

That approval be given to:

- a) The allocation of up to £165,000 to the Ely Museum Redevelopment Project.
- b) An increase of up to £100,000 to the potential amount of CIL funding available to The Mill Project – Soham.
- c) The allocation of up to £280,000 to The Mill Project – Soham.

81. **EXTERNAL AUDIT – LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR UPDATE**

The Committee received the Local Government Sector Briefing from the Council's External Auditors Ernst and Young and a report containing the response from the Finance Manager to the seven key questions detailed in the Briefing.

It was resolved:

That the External Audit Briefing and the response from the Finance Manager to the key questions contained therein be noted.

82. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining items because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1, 2 and 3 Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

83. **APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS AND RESIGNATIONS**

The Committee received a report detailing:

- (i) staff appointments, transfers and resignations for the period 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019; and
- (ii) a summary of the main responses given by staff for leaving the Council's employment and feedback received during Exit Interviews.

The HR Manager, Nicole Pema, highlighted that staff turnover was 4.8% compared to 9.8% for the same period in the previous year.

Councillor Bradley highlighted the turnover level for the Planning Team and the HR Manager explained the factors affecting this.

Members commented that it may be necessary to consider redacting details of the Service area in the summary of exit interview responses, in cases where a very small number of exit interviews had been completed.

It was resolved:

That the content of the information report be noted.

84. **WRITE OFF OF UNRECOVERABLE DEBT**

The Committee considered an exempt report detailing requests from ARP that the Council write-off the amount outstanding on two NNDR accounts where the company had been dissolved and there was therefore no prospect of the debts being recovered by the Council.

Councillors Bradley and Cheetham expressed concern at the level of the write-offs and queried if a rigorous process had been followed to reclaim the sums. They commented that the burden fell on the Council rather than ARP and suggested that ARP's performance in this area could be reviewed by the successor Committee.

It was resolved:

1. That the write-off of £38,864.94 in relation to the debt referred to in the submitted report be approved.
2. That the write-off of one further NNDR amount of £14,318.28 under delegated powers be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.12pm.

Chairman:.....

Date: