



Report to: Cabinet 12 December 2022

Lead Cabinet Members: Councillors John Batchelor, Bill Handley, Brian Milnes, Bridget Smith, and John Williams

From: Councillor Stephen Drew, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee
Councillor Graham Cone, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Purpose

1. This report is to inform Cabinet about relevant discussion among members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at their meeting on 15 November 2022 and the Committee's recommendations at paragraphs 10, 12, 16, 23 and 25.

Quarter 2 Performance report – Key Performance Indicators

2. With reference to FS104 (Percentage of Business Rates collected (year to date)), Councillor Sue Ellington accepted assurances from both Councillor John Williams (Lead Cabinet Member for Resources) and the Head of Finance that the current position was generally positive and said that an attempt should be made to demonstrate this by creating a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that more clearly reflected the state of business in South Cambridgeshire. Councillor Heather Williams asked that the KPI should differentiate between those businesses struggling to pay business rates and those simply not paying.
3. PN510 to PN512 related to Development Management. Councillor Peter Fane said that a differentiation should be made between those planning applications determined within the period set by statutory targets and those determined within a timescale set by an Extension of Time Agreement. Councillor Fane asked that the percentage of appeals against major planning permission refusals allowed should specify the proportion allowed in respect of appeals against non-determination. Despite her initial concern, Councillor Heather Williams was pleased to note that the number of Extension of Time Agreements and refusals made in order to meet determination targets was unrelated to the time taken to validate applications.
4. Councillor Graham Cone questioned how realistic the target of 17 days was referred to in AH211 (Average days to re-let all housing stock). In reply, the Head of Housing gave an assurance that the Council had deliberately set itself

a challenging target after benchmarking itself against a group of similar local authorities. Councillor Heather Williams expressed concern about the impact of stated problems with electricity meters on tenants' cost of living. She was pleased to note that there was now a greater focus on voids and re-lets and that this had increased confidence that this KPI would show improved performance as a result.

5. After clarifying that CC303 (percentage of calls to the Contact Centre that are handled (answered)) referred to calls answered by a contact centre agent, Councillor Sally Ann Hart asked that future statistics should include a measure as to the effectiveness of the call-back option.
6. Councillor Helene Leeming expressed concern with KPI CC307 (Average call answer time (seconds)). The Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services acknowledged that the Contact Centre was subject to peaks in demand and assured the Committee that the situation was constantly monitored to make sure that available resources (considered to be sufficient) were deployed in an appropriate and effective manner dependant on demand at any given time.

Quarter 2 Performance report –Performance against the Business Plan

7. Councillor Richard Stobart asked the Leader to explain why the proposed development of a formal engagement programme with schools and employers was being pursued only locally (Measure A2(ii)). In reply, the Leader said that it was right that the Council should focus on 'local' in the first instance but added that it did work with universities when recruiting to higher-paid jobs. South Cambridgeshire was an expensive area to move into although it was hoped that initiatives such as a four-day-week would help compensate for that.
8. Action B5 related to the delivery of two new sports pavilion, community centre and civic hub (containing health, library, and community facilities) at Northstowe. Councillor Heather Williams said that there was an urgent need for Full Council to consider again the provision of temporary community facilities in the new town especially as a planning application for the civic hub was not anticipated before Quarter 4.
9. Councillor Sue Ellington used Action C6 (Upgrade our stock of 1,800 streetlights to LED, which will reduce energy consumption and save Parish Councils money) to highlight the very significant financial pressures currently being faced by smaller villages in maintaining their streetlights. Both Councillor Brian Milnes (Deputy Leader) and Councillor John Williams (Lead Cabinet Member for Resources) sympathised with the sentiment but regretted that South Cambridgeshire District Council simply did not have the necessary resources with which to help.

Recommendation

10. **Subject to** the comments in paragraphs 2 to 9 above, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee supported submission of the Quarter 2 Performance Report to Cabinet on 12 December 2022.

General Fund Revenue Bids & Savings

11. Referring to paragraph 9 of the draft Cabinet report and the budget gap likely to be between £700,000 and £1 million, Councillor Heather Williams said that future such reports should make it clear what bids had already been discounted so that Members could decide whether resources were being allocated in the most effective way for the benefit of residents.

Recommendation

12. **Subject to** the comment in paragraph 11 above, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee supported submission of the General Fund Revenue Bids & Savings report to Cabinet on 12 December 2022.

The future use of South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne

13. This topic had been selected for review by Scrutiny and Overview Committee members independently from the corporate Forward Plan.
14. Councillor Heather Williams said that great care must be taken to make sure that space was only let to businesses adhering to South Cambridgeshire District Council's ethical standards. Several Councillors said that the personal safety of Council staff and security of the Council's business interests were important given the open-plan nature of South Cambridgeshire Hall. In reply, Councillor Brian Milnes (Deputy Leader) and the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services acknowledged these concerns and assured the Scrutiny and Overview Committee that such concerns would be considered when developing detailed aspects of the project.
15. Having reviewed proposals for the best use of space at South Cambridgeshire Hall, the Chair concluded by saying that, while safety and security had rightly been highlighted as concerns, the general principle offered significant opportunities in finding ways to help address the budget funding gap faced by the Council. An update report would be presented to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at an appropriate date so that it could continue to review progress.

Recommendation

16. Cabinet is asked to **note** the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's input into this project.

Young People Task & Finish Group

17. This is simply an update for Cabinet.
18. The Task & Finish Group has met twice (20 October 2022 and 2 November 2022) and, by the time of this Cabinet meeting, will have met again on 7 December 2022.
19. Most of its work to date has involved information gathering and project planning. The Group will start gathering evidence in January 2023 and aims to complete this aspect of its work by the end of March.
20. Task & Finish Group members will work collaboratively with officers to prepare a detailed report with recommendations for consideration by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.
21. It will then be for that Committee to report to Cabinet (which might further want to report to Full Council).
22. It is anticipated that the Young People Task & Finish Group will have completed its work by the end of July 2023.

Recommendation

23. Cabinet is asked to **note** that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee has endorsed Terms of Reference for the Young People Task & Finish Group meaning that the Group is now formally constituted and therefore able to carry out its work plan.

Ice Rink

24. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received an update report and noted that South Cambridgeshire District Council would not in any case entertain extending the loan period until new leasing arrangements (not involving the Council) had been completed.

Recommendation

25. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted, and asks Cabinet to **note**, that CLIC no longer requires additional finance to keep the rink operational and that agreement to a revised loan schedule requiring payment by 2048-49 (instead of 2043-44 as originally planned) will meet the original objective of keeping the rink operating and should ensure South Cambridgeshire District Council receives its money back in full.

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