

REPORT TO: Cabinet 4 December 2019

LEAD MEMBER: Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Chairman, Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Councillor Brian Milnes, Vice Chairman, Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Purpose

1. This report is to inform Cabinet of the discussions and recommendations agreed by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at its meeting of 14 November 2019, which Cabinet may wish to consider in its decision making.

Streetlighting Policy and LED upgrade program

2. The committee considered and commented on the policy for South Cambridgeshire District Council's Streetlighting Service.
3. Scrutiny and Overview Committee members made the following comments:
 - Following the LED streetlight trial in Hardwick, it was suggested that an alternative light deflector be investigated, which spread the light more widely and evenly to avoid dark patches between streetlights.
 - Some committee members commented on the County Council's dimming policy and felt that 10pm was quite early for lights to be dimmed. Some committee members had noticed a visible increase in people in villages walking with torches as lighting was insufficient.
 - Although there was concern regarding insufficient lighting, lamp design to minimise light pollution was suggested. The committee was assured that lamps were directional and should therefore reduce light pollution.
 - Some Members raised concerns regarding the problematic situation that had arisen in parishes in relation to the arrangements for paying for the electricity for streetlights. The challenge parishes had faced in having to deal with the legacy of the PFI contract with Balfour Beatty, was also highlighted.
 - It was suggested that something be included in the policy to ensure that trees would be cut back, so that streetlights were not obscured by vegetation.

2019-20 Quarter Two Performance Report

4. The committee considered and commented on the Quarter 2 Performance Report and the Operational Key Performance Indicator results:

- Committee members supported the use of apprenticeships in the Contact Centre and thanked the Lead Cabinet Member for having taken onboard the committee's past comments regarding staffing.
- It needed to be ensured that Contact Centre staff felt that they could say when they did not know the answer to a query, and not feel under pressure to always provide an answer. Some committee members felt that this was important so that staff did provide the wrong advice when they were unsure of the answer.
- The need for a standard deviation was raised, which would help Members see how useful the figures provided were.
- The Council's readiness to deal with the impact of Universal Credit was queried.
- The committee queried what measures were in place to reduce voids and re-let times. The Director of Housing, Health and Environmental Services agreed to provide an update on this at the next Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting.
- Members thanked the Interim Assistant Director of Waste and Special Projects, for arranging the clearing of traffic islands in the centre of the A10.

General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy

5. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered and commented on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and financial forecast for the Council. The committee considered the projected changes in service spending and the overall resources available to the Council over the medium term.
6. Committee members expressed their sympathy for officers having to deal with high levels of uncertainty and thanked them for their efforts in trying to manage this.

Service Transformation: Savings Proposals

7. The committee considered and commented on the proposed objectives and intentions in relation to the review of Council services. The committee commented on the challenges facing the Council given the financial outlook, including Government announcements in respect of local government funding and the expectation that future cost pressures will exceed the resources available. The committee considered the revenue budget guiding principles, growth bids and the proposed service efficiency savings and policy options.
8. Committee members thanked officers for a clear report and commended the shared waste service for the savings it had made.

Property Acquisition

9. The committee's feedback in respect of the above report is included as a separate exempt report, as the committee discussed this item in confidential session due to the commercial sensitivity of the information contained in the report. This was in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act).

Report Author:

Victoria Wallace – Scrutiny and Governance Adviser 01954 713026