

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Tuesday 30 July 2019

Present

Councillor Mike Mackrory (Chairman)	Councillor John Moran
Councillor John Aldridge	Councillor Wendy Schmitt
Councillor Malcolm Buckley	Councillor Andrew Sheldon
Councillor Graham Butland	Councillor Mike Steptoe
Councillor Mike Garnett	Councillor Anne Turrell
Councillor Ian Grundy	Councillor Julie Young

Apologies

Councillor James Abbott	Councillor Valerie Metcalfe
Councillor Michael Hardware	Councillor Ron Pratt

Other members in attendance

Councillor Chris Pond

Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager was supporting the meeting.

1. Membership, Apologies and Declarations

Apologies were received from the following:

- Councillor James Abbott
- Councillor Michael Hardware (substituted by Councillor John Aldridge)
- Councillor Valerie Metcalfe
- Councillor Ron Pratt (substituted by Councillor Ian Grundy)

2. Minutes of previous meeting – May 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28 May 2019 were approved by the committee as an accurate and signed by the Chairman.

3. Minutes of previous meeting – June 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 25 June 2019 were approved by the committee as an accurate and signed by the Chairman.

4. Questions from the public

No questions from members of the public received.

5. Ringway Jacobs contract extension

Councillor Mackrory welcomed Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Andrew Cook, Director for Highways and Transformation, to the meeting.

Councillor Bentley introduced his written response to the joint Task and Finish Group's recommendations and invited questions from the committee.

The committee asked a number of questions and received the following responses:

- Pragmatic approach is being taken in terms of the contract extension and should a re-procurement process be necessary, there is sufficient lead in time to undertake this
- There is sufficient resource in order to re-procure and would be dependent on the outcome of Brexit
- Happy to work with committee members regarding proposals for any changes to the contract. The negotiation is between the administration and the contractor
- Commended Councillor Tony Ball on his chairmanship of the Task and Finish Group and the officers who attended who were open and honest during the meetings the group held.

The committee invited Councillor Bentley back to a future meeting to provide an update on the progress being made on to the upgrades to IT in terms of the online tools.

6. 2019/20 Financial Overview as at the first quarter stage

Councillor Mackrory welcomed Councillor Gagan Mohindra, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Housing and Kevin Mitchell, Senior Finance Business Partner, to the meeting.

Councillor Mohindra introduced the report which provided a financial overview of the first quarter.

The committee asked a number of questions, as set out below, to which a written response will be provided after the meeting.

Actions

Responses to the below will be provided to the committee in writing at a later date:

1. The reason as to why there is an overspend of £319,000 in the Children and Families budget.
2. To understand why there seems to be a recurring issue of recruiting to vacancies within Technology Services.
3. To understand in more detail the reasons for holding vacancies within the Equality and Partnership team, which are helping to offset pressures in other areas of the service.
4. To understand if Community Initiative Fund payments are now being made quarterly instead of annually.

7. Call-in: Land for Housing Development in Epping Forest (FP/945/09/17)

Members received the report which set out the notification of the call-in and the decision which was published on 19 June 2019.

Member making the Call-In

The Chairman asked Councillor Pond, as the member calling in the decision, to speak.

Councillor Pond addressed the meeting; he raised a number of concerns:

- Heading of the decision is misleading – the plan is to demolish and partial restoration and partial provision of a prime community hub
- It is the fifth largest library in the County and houses the Town Council, CAB and National Jazz Archive
- This site is within four minutes of the European Special Area of Conservation (Epping Forest). Importance is given to ancient woodlands
- Has been advised that the main purpose is not to provide profit but to reduce maintenance issues.

Response from the Cabinet Member

The Chairman asked Councillor Mohindra, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Housing to speak:

- Decisions need to be made on the information available at the time and cannot wait until the planning inspectorate has made its decision
- Does not want to delay the project for reasons that are currently unknown
- The current condition of the building requires a decision to be made either way in order to secure the safety of the building
- Councillor Pond would be consulted directly on any future decisions in terms of the design of the building.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

On the proposal of Councillor Mackrory, the committee resolved that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting since it is likely that if members of the public were present during the remaining items of business, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information falling within paragraph 3 schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

Decision:

Members noted that, based on what they had heard today, the Committee could take one of the following courses of action:

- Having considered the decision, the Committee may refer it back to the decision taker setting out in writing its concerns or refer the matter to the Full Council, also with a record of its concerns.
- If the Committee does not refer a decision to either the decision taker or Full Council, the decision shall take effect at the conclusion of the meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Buckley proposed, seconded by Councillor Sheldon, that this is not referred to the decision taker (Councillor Mohindra) or Full Council. Therefore, the decision will take effect following the conclusion of the meeting.

Upon being put to the meeting, the proposal was carried by 7 votes to 2.

Resolved:

That the committee move to accept the decision without further delay.

8. Work Programme – July 2019

The updated work programme was noted by the committee.

9. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 24 September 2019 at 10:30am.

10. Urgent Business

No urgent business was received.

11. Confidential appendix C to agenda item 7

On the grounds that this item would likely involve the disclosure of exempt information falling within Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, this item was held in private and the Committee agreed that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting.

12. Confidential appendix D to agenda item 7

On the grounds that this item would likely involve the disclosure of exempt information falling within Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, this item was held in private and the Committee agreed that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting.

13. Future of Resourcing Services – Temporary Workers Supply

The committee were provided with an update on the progress to date on the procurement of ECC's Temporary Workers Supply.

On the grounds that this item would likely involve the disclosure of exempt information falling within Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, this item was held in private and the Committee agreed that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting.

14. Urgent exempt business

No urgent exempt business was received.

The meeting closed at 13:26.

Chairman