

Minutes of the Corporate Review Committee Meeting held on 31 July 2020

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chairman)

Attendance

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Ron Clarke | Jeremy Pert |
| Mike Davies | Bernard Peters |
| John Francis | Natasha Pullen |
| Dave Jones | Stephen Sweeney |
| Jeremy Oates | Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman) |
| Ian Parry | |

Apologies: Helen Fisher

PART ONE

11. Declarations of Interest

Philip White, Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills, declared a personal interest in agenda item 4, Parental Leave Policy for Members as he was due to become a parent.

12. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2020

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 3 July 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. Parental Leave Policy for Members

The Committee considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills which provided information on the Parental Leave Policy for Members and accompanying procedure. The policy was aimed at bringing the arrangements for elected Members in line with those of staff, whilst recognising that as Members are elected, procedures and processes needed to be slightly different. The policy mirrored the Councils own policy rather than that of other local authorities or legislation from the Welsh Government.

The policy was welcomed by all members of the Committee.

The following suggestions were made and agreed:

- Policy - paragraph 2.5 should refer to all meetings not just Cabinet.
- Policy - paragraph 4.2.1 remove the word do after 'liability to.....'
- Procedure - paragraph 8 – 'unless re-elected' should be added at the end of the paragraph.
- Policy - paragraph 4.3 should read Division not Constituency.
- Procedure – paragraph 4 replace XX with 'nominated opposition Member'.

- Recognised that members receive an allowance not pay.

The Cabinet Member also agreed to further consider the following prior to the policy being considered at Council:

- Procedure - Point 7. Returning to office - There was concern that providing 8 weeks' notice when returning to work would restrict members from participating in community work which they may want to join. It was acknowledged that this was in order to mirror staff arrangements, but the aim was not to restrict community involvement.
- Policy – paragraph 4.4. There was a debate on the 6 months attendance rule. It was felt that this was too restricting, and the practice should be more flexible. Members were reminded that this was a legislative requirement, but sensitivity would be used so that people's illness or reason for dispensation was treated respectfully.
- Policy introduction. It was felt that the policy should encourage as many people as possible to want to become Councillors and create a welcoming culture, where all work together. Wording to reflect this at the start of the policy was suggested. It was felt that emphasis should be on supporting each other but this would be considered.
- Policy - paragraph 4.1.2. There was some discussion over whether a Vice Chair, covering the responsibilities of a Chairman should be paid their Special Responsibility Allowance.

RECOMMENDED:

That subject to the comments made by the committee and consideration of the issues highlighted which need further consideration, as listed above, the Parental Leave Policy for Members and accompanying procedures be agreed.

14. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 1, 2020/21 and Quarter 4, 2019/20

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the Integrated Performance Report quarter one which also contained information on quarter four 2019/20 report which had not been considered previously by the committee as the meeting had been cancelled at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown.

Quarter one covered the first three months of the Covid-19 crisis and the start of the planning and recovery stages. With regard to the financial position, it was estimated that the council would be approximately £10.1m overspent at the end of 202/21. Appendix 2 of the report set out each of the service areas and the impact Covid-19 had had.

A number of questions were asked on the grants received, and funding applied for during the crisis. Information on the funding received and what it had been spent on was requested. The Cabinet Member agreed to circulate the information to the Committee. A question was asked on the ability to respond to Government funding opportunities. Officers were not aware of any missed opportunities and highlighted some major success such as Highways funding and working with the LEP in various bidding rounds.

The future risk areas were highlighted as; Children and Adult Social Care and the transformation savings planned for this year. There was also concern that there may be cohort of vulnerable people who would need help as a result of the economic effects of Covid-19 that the Council were not aware of yet.

Working with the voluntary sector and sharing of knowledge and skills had proven invaluable during the pandemic. There had been little duplication with Districts and Boroughs generally. This had been particularly valuable during the recent Burton Outbreak.

The Council was required to deliver a balanced budget and it was anticipated that this would be achievable in 2020/21 however, 2021/22 may prove more challenging. The Cabinet Member agreed to discuss with the Leader the possibility of a meeting with all the Staffordshire MPs to discuss future funding and the need for additional resources.

The level of 'Client debt' was proving to be an area of concern and officers were working to ensure that help and support was given to those involved in a sensitive and timely manner. This area would be monitored to ensure that it did not increase. A working group had been established to look at this. The results of the group were requested as part of the next quarterly update report.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) That the update be noted;
- b) Information on Government funding received and what it had been spent on be circulate to the Committee for information.
- c) The Cabinet Member agreed to discuss with the Leader the possibility of a meeting with all the Staffordshire MPs to discuss future funding and the need for additional resources.
- d) That the results of the working group set up to look at client debt be included in the next quarterly update report.

15. Work Programme

The Local Outbreak Control Plan was requested at the September Meeting.

Information on the financial implications of the Adult Social Care and the Children's Improvement Plan was requested as part of the Integrated Performance Quarter two report which would be considered at the 17 November committee along with the Corporate Complaints Annual Report.

Members and the impact of Covid -19 and meeting arrangements was being looked at and would be considered at a future meeting of this committee.

The Committee was informed that since the last meeting, two members of the MTFS working group had been appointed to the Cabinet and therefore additional members needed to be appointed.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) That the report be received;
- b) The Local Outbreak Control Plan be considered at the 8 September Meeting.

- c) Information on the financial implications of the Adult Social Care and the Children's Improvement Plan was requested as part of the Integrated Performance Quarter two report on 17 November.
- d) The Corporate Complaints Annual Report be considered at the 17 November meeting.
- e) That the following Members be appointed to the MTFS working Group 2020/21:
 - Charlotte Atkins
 - John Francis
 - Colin Greateorex
 - Ian Parry
 - Jeremy Pert
 - Jeremy Oates
 - Martyn Tittley
 - Susan Woodward

Chairman