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GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a special meeting of the Governance and Resources Committee held at 6.00 pm on Thursday 22 October 2020.

Under Regulations made under the Coronavirus Act 2020, the meeting was held virtually. Members of the public were able to view the virtual meeting via the District Council's website at www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk or via our YouTube channel.

PRESENT

Councillor Sue Bull - In the Chair

Councillors Jacqueline Allison, Robert Archer Neil Buttle, David Chapman, Paul Cruise, Tom Donnelly, Steve Flitter, Alyson Hill, Susan Hobson, Michele Morley, Garry Purdy, Mike Ratcliffe, Clare Raw, Peter Slack and Alasdair Sutton.

Paul Wilson (Chief Executive), James McLaughlin (Director of Corporate & Customer Services and Monitoring Officer), Steve Capes (Director of Regeneration and Policy), Caroline Leatherday (Business Support Manager), Ian Brailsford (Digital Transformation Project Officer) Jason Spencer (Electoral and Democratic Services Manager).

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised the Committee that Ken Bull, a former Councillor and Chairman of the Council, had recently passed away. The Chairman and Members of the Committee paid tribute to him as someone who was well respected by his colleagues from all political backgrounds and had made a significant contribution to the Community he lived in and served. The Committee paid a silent tribute to Ken and offered their condolences to his family and friends.

APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Graham Elliot.

121/20 – FUTURE TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the current state of the Council's telephony system and identifying the need to update it. It was noted that as the current system at the Town Hall had been installed in September 2000, the manufacturer had

ceased to manufacture replacement hardware and no longer developed the software. The Council currently had a “best endeavours” maintenance agreement which was due to end in July 2021 and the ISDN30e lines, which connected the system to the PSTN (public switched telephone network), were due to be withdrawn from service entirely by 2025. The report also highlighted the facilities available at the Agricultural Business Centre and the Northwood Depot along with the 110 mobile connections noting that the current arrangements incurred additional costs when calls were made between different sites and platforms.

The Covid-19 situation had demonstrated the limitations of the existing system in terms of remote working and highlighted how vulnerable the Council would be in the event of an emergency situation where the hardware failed or access to the Town Hall was lost.

It was noted that since 2015 when telecommunications and associated expenditure had been centralised and consolidated the annual costs had been significantly reduced to under £30,000, although an increase was anticipated in 20/21 due to the additional outgoing call costs arising from remote working.

To respond to these issues the report proposed that the Council tender to appoint a supplier to provide a single integrated telephony system that will replace the three disparate current systems and migrate the authority’s current DDI number/range’s into the new solution. It was noted that while the preference would be to use a hosted Cloud service to avoid physical equipment located at the Council’s offices, onsite solutions may still be considered but they would need to show significant advantages if the architecture was to be chosen over a cloud/hosted or self-hosted solution. It was confirmed that the most significant difference between a “Cloud” solution and a more traditional on-site installation was the shift from high capital costs to increased revenue expenditure. It was estimated that the revenue costs for a hosted “Cloud” solution were likely to be between £35k and £45k per annum based on the current number of users. It was acknowledged that although there would be significant costs arising from the solution, to do nothing was not an option.

It was noted that the timescales for implementation would depend upon the chosen solution and the provider but it was hoped that installation would take place in January 2021.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Garry Purdy, seconded by Councillor Susan Hobson:

“That the report be noted and delegated authority be granted to Officers to investigate a business case for a new telephony system for the Authority, to invite tenders for procurement and to then report the business case back to the November full Council meeting with costings and recommendations.”

During the debate it was suggested that, as more services and systems became cloud based, the Council needed to develop and approve a Cloud Adoption Strategy and proposed that the business case should include an assessment on the climate change impact. Although it was suggested that consideration of climate change issues was embedded into everything the Council did, the mover and seconder of the motion agreed to add the proposed amendment. It was therefore:

RESOLVED That the report be noted and delegated authority be granted to
(Unanimously) Officers to investigate a business case for a new telephony system for the Authority, to invite tenders for procurement and to then report the business case, including a climate change impact assessment, back to the November full Council meeting with costings and recommendations.

The Chairman declared the motion CARRIED.

122/20 – ADOPTION OF PROCEDURES FOR STANDARDS HEARINGS TO CONSIDER COMPLAINTS UNDER THE MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

The Committee considered a report proposing the adoption of a procedure to enable Hearings Sub-Committees to discharge the standards functions of the Council and town/parish councils in the district where informal resolution cannot be achieved or where a Councillor is unwilling to undertake any proposed remedial action from the Monitoring Officer and Independent Person.

Under Section 28(6) and (7) of the Localism Act 2011, the District Council must have in place “Arrangements” under which allegations that a member or co-opted member of the District Council (or of a parish council within the Derbyshire Dales), or of a Committee or Panel of the District Council, has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct can be investigated and decisions made on such allegations.

The proposed procedure, which would form part of the Council’s arrangements, was based on good practice established at other authorities and would make sure that all parties had a clear understanding of the way in which the Council will deal with complaints made. It was noted that, as Councillor complaints received since 2011 has been dealt with informally, there had been no need for a procedure to be in place, however there was a current need as there were complaints on hold that required a hearing.

During the discussion Members sought clarification on panel member training, sanctions, the right to appeal and how the procedure would operate in practice.

It was moved by Councillor Tom Donnelly, seconded by Councillor Steve Flitter and

RESOLVED That the Hearings Sub-Committee Procedure be approved.
(unanimously)

The Chairman declared the motion CARRIED.

123/20 – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – KEY & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OUTTURN 2019/20

At a meeting held on the 8th October the Council delegated authority to the Committee to consider this item.

The Committee considered a report summarising the outturn performance against the District Council’s Key & Corporate Performance Indicators for the full year 2019/20, which was the final year of the previous Corporate Plan. The positive report identified where services had performed strongly and where improvements could be made noting that of the 27 targets set 22 had been fully achieved.

In introducing the report, the Director of Regeneration and Policy identified the following highlights:

- 99.7% of undisputed invoices paid on time with an average of 6.33 days from receipt of invoice and 81.67% paid within 10 days.
- 61.9% of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, composting or anaerobic digestion.
- An average of 8.36 working days per fte employee lost to sickness better than target and the lowest level in 8 years
- 90.6% of minor planning applications were determined in 8 weeks
- 12.85 days for new benefits claims, the quickest turnaround of processing new claims in 8 years
- Processing notifications of changes in circumstances for benefits was 2.97 days
- 89 affordable homes were completed against a target of 51
- 381 vulnerable households were assisted with £261,326 financial gains in welfare support and £754,565 of debt affected.
- 92 adaptations provided to homes of disabled people exceeding the target by 35
- 5 funding bids were submitted for Hurst Farm

The following four targets were not achieved:

- The percentage of appeals allowed against District Council decisions to refuse planning applications missed the target by 4.4% (at 34.4% allowed against a target of 30%). This included 2 decisions made by Planning Committee that were contrary to the officer recommendation. It was noted that, as performance was only just off target, there were no plans to produce an improvement plan, however, performance would be kept under review.
- Develop a business case to intervene in the creation of employment units/ business workspace in the central area of the District. This project had been delayed initially due to waiting for a decision from Historic England on the area of a Scheduled Monument site which would have impacted on the scheme and then due to further site investigations and discussions with landowner being delayed due to COVID-19.
- It was decided in September 2019, after a review of the data, to delay preparing a business case on other measures to bring empty homes back into use so that a full year's worth of data on the impact of an increase in Council Tax Premium could be evaluated.
- The target of a continued programme to identify efficiency savings and/or additional income of £400,000 by 2020/21 was not met due to the deferment of the savings requirement following temporarily increased Government funding for 2019/20 and 2020/21 and subsequent deferral of the Government's Review of Local Authority Needs and Resources.

It was noted that, following initial delays, work on the roundabout at the airfield site in Ashbourne would commence on Monday 26 October.

Members acknowledged the hard work and commitment from employees in meeting and exceeding the targets and noted that a report on performance during the first 6 months of

the current Corporate Plan would be brought to a meeting of the Council in November. This report would provide information on how the restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19 had impacted upon performance.

It was moved by Councillor Michele Morley, seconded by Councillor Susan Hobson and

- RESOLVED**
(unanimously)
1. The outturn performance against Corporate Plan targets for 2019/20 be noted.
 2. The outturn performance against the Key Performance Indicators for 2019/20 be noted.
 3. Bi-annual reports continue to be brought to Council to highlight progress, demonstrate good performance, and address areas for improvement.

The Chairman declared the motion CARRIED.

124/20 – VISION DERBYSHIRE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

At a meeting held on the 8th October the Council delegated authority to the Committee to consider this item.

Councillor Clare Raw declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in this item as she was employed by Derbyshire County Council and left the meeting at 7.10pm.

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the 'Vision Derbyshire' project and considered the process for the sign-off of the Vision Derbyshire case for change. The report also provided an update on the imminent publication of the Government's Devolution and Recovery White Paper and asked for the approval of 'Vision Derbyshire' as the Council's preferred option of local government reform in Derbyshire at the current time.

In introducing the report, the Chief Executive highlighted how the coordinated response to the Covid-19 situation in Derbyshire had demonstrated the effectiveness of the kind of collaborative working arrangements which were at the core of the Vision Derbyshire Project.

It was confirmed that publication of the White Paper had been delayed and, although it had not set a date, the Government still intend to publish it hence the proposed delegation to the Chief Executive to engage in discussions and report back to the Council. It was also noted that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had prepared a letter stating that the Government did not intend to compel anyone to go down the unitary council route and was open to other locally led proposals.

It was noted that Derby City Council had indicated that it did not wish to participate in Vision Derbyshire and still aspired to extend its boundaries.

It was noted that it was planned to bring a report on the case for change to the November meeting of the Council for consideration.

It was moved by Councillor Garry Purdy, seconded by Councillor David Chapman and

RESOLVED
(unanimously)

1. To acknowledge the progress work that has taken place with Derbyshire Councils on the development of Vision Derbyshire.
2. To note the imminent publication of the Government's Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper and the potential implications in relation to potential local government reform.
3. To note the potential offered by the White Paper to secure a devolution deal for the East Midlands and the resultant benefit to the Derbyshire Dales through additional investment in the county.
4. To approve Vision Derbyshire as the Council's preferred option of local government reform in Derbyshire at the current time.
5. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive to participate in discussions with authorities across Derbyshire in regard to any alternative propositions for local government reform that may emerge and present an updating report to Council as appropriate.

The Chairman declared the motion CARRIED.

MEETING CLOSED – 7.45PM

CHAIRMAN