

Meeting	Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee
Date	5 October 2020
Present	Councillors Crawshaw (Chair), Fenton (Vice-Chair), Hunter, Hollyer, Rowley, Musson, Pearson, Mason and Kilbane

Apologies

32. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

33. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held at 5:30pm on 5 October 2020 be approved as a correct record; subject to the following amendments:

- i. That minute 27. that the minutes of the meeting held at 2:00pm on 10 August 2020. Be approved as a correct record, be amended to 5:30pm on 10 August 2020 be approved as a correct record.
- ii. That minute 29. discussions took place regarding the for the council review project governance arrangements with the partnership and Members were advised by the Corporate Director Economy and Place that the Terms of Reference would be part of the oversight for the York Central Partnership. Be amended to read, discussions took place regarding the council review of project governance arrangements with the partnership and Members were advised by the Corporate Director Economy and Place that the Terms of Reference would be part of the oversight for the York Central Partnership.

- iii. That minute 29. Members considered the options in detail and Cllr Pearson proposed Option 5. This was seconded by the Chair and following a unanimous vote was carried. Be amended to read, Members considered the options in detail and Cllr Hollyer proposed Option 5. This was seconded by the Chair and following a unanimous vote was carried. The Chair then noted the view expressed by several Members of the Committee that when options relating to the car park are considered in due course, this should not be undertaken in isolation. He accepted that whilst there may be revenue implications associated with not proceeding with a replacement car park, this should not in and of itself be a reason to proceed as there are other costs associated with cars coming into the city centre that will need to be fully considered and taken into account.

34. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

35. Finance Update

The Committee considered the update report provided and officers outlined the Council's financial position. It was noted that the Government had announced a Spending Review in the Autumn of 2020 which could have an impact on the Council's finances, however, details of the spending review had not yet been released.

Discussion took place regarding financial support for residents in York and the potential impact of the end of furlough and the introduction of a new government scheme. Members also noted the positive of the Council maintaining the York Financial Assistance budget while up take had not been as high as expected. It was highlighted that the Council didn't use the furlough scheme and would be unlikely to use a new scheme as it had the majority of staff working in their business as usual roles.

The Council's finances were discussed and it was noted that the Council had a healthy amount in its reserves, however, the Council had been hit by the pandemic. It was noted that income from areas such as car parking was down and that income from council tax and business rates would likely see a decrease in the next financial year if forecasts for a rise in unemployment and a decrease in business' that pay business rates were correct. Members considered this in the context of the Council's expected deficit and discussed how the Council tackle its expected deficit including if the reserve could be used. It was noted that any use of the reserves would require a planned approach to replenishment.

Members raised questions as to whether the Council and residents were expecting budget cuts, officers noted that this would depend on a number of factors including the government spending review. However, the Council would likely need to reduce its expenditure. Discussion took place regarding areas of overspends including in both Children and Adults Social Care which had overspends prior to COVID-19. It was confirmed that work continued to be undertaken to reduce costs in these areas, however, results from these changes in Social Care would take time and during COVID-19 there had been an increase in the cost of securing care and support for those with complex needs.

It was noted that the Council had taken the decision to implement a freeze on non-essential recruitment and would review how temporary and agency staff were being used. The Council would also look at how each directorate worked in order to find efficiency savings where possible. Officers noted that towards the end of each financial year it is always expected that some areas will produce an underspend and that this would be expected to reduce the Council's expected end of year deficit. Members highlighted cuts to the Council budget from Government throughout the last decade and acknowledged that the financial challenges the Council were facing were a national issue faced by many Councils. Members discussed and it was noted that the Council had lobbied Government regarding the need to properly support Council's financially throughout the pandemic and would continue to do so.

Resolved:

- i. That the Finance Update be noted.

Reason To ensure that the Committee remains updated on the Council's financial position.

The meeting was adjourned from 18:32 and reconvened at 18:39. Councillors Kilbane and Mason gave their apologies and left the meeting at this point.

36. Public Scrutiny Arrangements And Decision Making

The Committee acknowledged the impact that COVID-19 had had on the delivery of Council meetings and the role of the Council's Scrutiny Committee's since the start of the pandemic. The Chair outlined the discussions that had taken place in order for the return of public Scrutiny Committee meetings and the proposals for how meetings would be conducted moving forward with the Committees consent.

The Committee considered the proposed new structure for Scrutiny Committees. Members discussed the challenges relating to the number/frequency of meetings that were held prior to COVID-19, and considered how to achieve the most value out of the proposed structure moving forward.

Members enquired about the possibility of meetings being conducted face to face in West Offices in the event of a vaccine, while this was not ruled out, it was noted that the calendar of meetings had been agreed until May of 2021 and due to a number of factors would likely have to be significantly amended if meetings were to change from being remote. The possibility of hybrid meetings were also raised and it was noted that this could be an option for meetings at a future date.

Resolved:

- i. Members considered the information provided and endorsed the re-introduction of Scrutiny, as outlined in the report.

Reason: To ensure a timely and effective re-introduction of public Scrutiny.

37. Scrutiny Work Planning

The Committee considered the proposals for the Scrutiny Committees work plan, it was noted that the document attached to the agenda was from July and that there had been several amendments since the document was written. The role of the Scrutiny Commissioned slots were also outlined and discussed.

It was noted that a proposal was in place for the Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee to undertake work in the first Commissioned Scrutiny slot, subject to whether there would be any items called in from the meeting of the Executive, and would look into community safety during the pandemic. It was also highlighted that Scrutiny would look to be involved in more pre-decision scrutiny to allow Scrutiny Committee's to feed into Council decision making prior to a final decision being taken. This was proposed to continue with a meeting of this Committee on the 23rd November to consider the Asset Management Strategy.

An update was also given regarding a proposal from a prior meeting of this Committee which requested that the Audit and Governance Committee be given the opportunity to review the York Central Risk register. This did not happen at the September meeting of Audit and Governance as was requested and was now scheduled to be considered at a meeting in November.

Resolved:

- i. Members approved the proposals in Annex 1 of the report for establishing one corporate scrutiny work plan managed by this Committee but developed in collaboration as set out in paragraphs 6-8.
- ii. That subject to Call In, Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee be commissioned to consider community safety during COVID on the 2 November 2020.
- iii. That this Committee consider the Asset Management Strategy as a piece of pre-decision scrutiny on the 23 November 2020.

Reason: To establish clear, effective and manageable scrutiny work planning.

Councillor J Crawshaw, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.34 pm and finished at 7.29 pm].