

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

6.10 P.M.

17TH DECEMBER 2019

PRESENT:- Councillors Keith Budden (Chair), Joanna Young (Vice-Chair), Tim Dant, Roger Dennison, Jason Firth, Mandy King, Jack O'Dwyer-Henry, David Whitworth and Jason Wood (substitute for Councillor Whearty).

Apologies for Absence:
Councillors Katie Whearty

Officers in attendance:

Paul Thompson	Chief Financial Officer (Head of Finance & Section 151 Officer)
Anne Marie Harrison	Head of Economic Development (part)
Jez Bebbington	Executive Support Manager (part)
Richard Hammond	Cultural Development Manager (part)
Debbie Chambers	Democratic Support Manager

12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2019 were signed as a correct record.

13 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

In relation to item 5, the Arts Investment Strategy, the following Councillors declared an interest should the Dukes be discussed. Councillor Young declared an interest as supplier of the Dukes' website; Councillor King declared an interest as a volunteer.

Councillor Dennison declared, in relation to the same item, that he was a Morecambe Town Councillor and that More Music had been the recipients of grant funding from Morecambe Town Council this year.

15 ARTS INVESTMENTS

The Head of Economic Development presented a report of the Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration. The report provided information to enable the Panel to review the Council's Arts Service Level Agreements and their performance.

Councillor Parr, Cabinet Member with the portfolio for Arts and Leisure was in attendance.

The Head of Economic Development, Councillor Parr and the Development Manager (Arts) all responded to a range of questions from the Panel including:

Whether targets were set for the arts organisations that the City Council supports; the response was that targets were worked up with the arts organisations, however these were not punitive and supported the constructive relationship between all parties.

Whether there was a process in place for an arts organisation to apply for funding from the Council. The Panel were informed that there was no official procedure and the reasons why some of the organisations received support from the Council were largely historical. However, in November 2019 a new Cultural Investment Framework had been approved by Cabinet which would help address this and provide a clear rationale. The Head of Economic Development agreed to supply the Framework to the Panel via email. It was also noted that the Council did invest in other cultural services, particularly festivals and events, such as 'Light Up Lancaster'.

The Head of Economic Development asked if there was anything in particular that the Panel wished to see in any further report. The Panel asked to see audited accounts for the Dukes when available. Members asked if there were reasons why some organisations were using reserves and it was explained that the income for cultural organisations did vary quite a lot year on year, however the situation would be monitored.

Councillor Parr agreed with a suggestion from the Panel to try and make more use of the Ashton Hall for performance events, such as the recent gig by iconic poet John Cooper-Clarke, which drew in visitors from out of the area. She also pointed out to Panel members that support from the City Council for the arts was much wider than grant funding. The Arts Team provided help and advice to make sure that arts organisations were targeting their applications for funding to the right places.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Panel be provided with:
 - a) The Cultural Investment Framework document via email following the meeting; and
 - b) The audited accounts of the Dukes, when available.

Councillor Parr, the Head of Economic Regeneration and the Development Manager (Arts), left the meeting at this point.

16 DELIVERING OUR AMBITIONS, Q2 2019-20

The following report was an update for the Panel, consisting of three parts; performance, projects and resources. In the absence of the Director of Corporate Services, the Executive Support Manager responded to questions about the performance information and the Cabinet Member with the portfolio for Finance, assisted by the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer, dealt with any queries regarding projects and resources.

In relation to the performance information, the following issues were noted and queries raised:

A4.2, employee sickness: Sickness days had increased. What exactly did this indicate and which indicators would best represent success in the council's approach to managing its workforce?

A3.5, food hygiene inspections: it was noted that the amber and red designations were incorrect.

A3.6, Salt Ayre Leisure Centre admissions: could seasonal variations be taken into considered when calibrating future targets?

A2.4, garden waste subscriptions: further explanation was required on the Q4 2018-19 figure.

A4.4, Housing Benefit claims: what was the reason behind the dramatic improvement during Q1 and Q2 in average time taken to process new claims, compared to the 2018/19 figures?

The Executive Support Manager agreed to supply answers to the queries by email following the meeting.

(The Executive Support Manager left the meeting when this segment of the report was concluded.)

The Panel then discussed the updates on Corporate Projects.

It was noted that the Investment and Regeneration Strategy was 'on hold, pending direction from elected Members'. Councillor Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with the portfolio for Economic Development and Regeneration, explained that Cabinet was currently focussing on the budget and that the Strategy was still the subject of dialogue and debate.

The final part of the report provided financial monitoring information.

The Panel asked a number of questions about Dalton Square, particularly about the ice rink and food outlets and whether the Council was receiving an income from the enterprise. Members also raised an issue regarding the electrical works in Dalton Square being funded with monies set aside in the budget for repairs to the Queen Victoria statue.

The Panel was pleased to hear that officers might look at ways of charging rent or entering into profit sharing agreements for future hire of Dalton Square for commercial events.

On the HRA Capital Projects information, the Panel queried the figures under 'Lift Replacement' and the Head of Financial Services agreed to look into that after the meeting.

Members were informed that climate change retro fitting of properties would be proposed in the budget for the coming year.

Resolved:

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the points detailed above by the Panel be addressed and responses to the queries raised be supplied by officers.

17 RESERVES STRATEGY

The Head of Financial Services presented a report from the Director of Corporate Services updating members on various matters in connection with the Council's Reserves Strategy and associated Action Plan.

Members asked about:

- Section 106 monies for affordable housing and how they could be used; the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration responded to queries about this.
- The Homelessness Support Reserve – the Panel requested information on how this would be used.
- Reserves held in perpetuity; the Head of Financial Services explained the type of funds held under this heading, which included the sum which created interest for the annual “marsh grass” payments to Freemen of the City.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That information be supplied to the Panel about the purpose and use of the Homelessness Reserve.

18 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REVIEW 2019-20

The Head of Financial Services explained that a revised version of the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review report would be considered by full Council at the meeting the following night, as this was likely to be affected by the Investment Proposals report at the same Council meeting.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

19 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Panel considered its work programme for the rest of the municipal year.

The January meeting would be the annual stakeholder meeting to discuss budgets. Cabinet would be invited to present its budget proposals for the City Council for 2020/21. In addition, the County Council, Lancashire Constabulary and Lancashire Fire and Rescue would be invited to attend to discuss their budget proposals.

It was reconfirmed that the Panel wished to receive a copy of the new Procurement Strategy, when available; and the Panel also requested an appraisal of the arrangements for the ice rink and Dalton Square giving the overall cost and benefit to the council.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Panel receive a copy of the new Procurement Strategy, when available.

- 2) That a report appraising the arrangements for the ice rink and Dalton Square, analysing the overall cost and benefit to the Council, be submitted to a meeting in the new year.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact
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