



Recommendations and updates from other committees to Cabinet on 15 February 2024

Scrutiny Committee

The committee met on 6 February to discuss the following. Each of these matters relates to an item on Cabinet's agenda for 15 February:

(1) Revenue Budget 2024/25 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29
The committee considered the budget report and were content with it. Members asked questions, which were answered in the meeting but no recommendations were made to Cabinet.

(2) Corporate Plan Approach 2024 to 2028
The committee supported the proposed approach to the corporate plan for 2024 to 2028 and asked Cabinet to consider the following:

- slight changes in language suggested – use of adaptation (related to climate), participants not audiences, promoting not supporting community-led engagement. Suggestion of having a jargon-buster;
- engagement should be considered with hard-to-reach groups, look at our communications channel and how we use language;
- draft an overarching vision to crystallise the values in the plan;
- the council's procurement strategy should align with principles and values in the corporate plan;
- there should be fairness on housing (relating to theme 4) and equal access to services and infrastructure;
- consider business support and amplifying that in the plan;
- how do we engage with the visitor economy in the plan;
- support engagement with younger people/future generations;
- timetable for lessons learned from the Joint Local Plan engagement process.

In order to be transparent and open, here is a summary of the officer advice and actions in relation to the above, to aid consideration by Cabinet.

- On the suggestion made about the theme regarding climate and nature recovery to be renamed to climate adaptation and nature recovery is considered to be positive in terms of addressing 'readability'; any decision on this is one for Cabinet members to make.
- Further suggestions made about language can be incorporated into the theme descriptions with simple and more widely understood terms to be used during the engagement activities; this has always been the intention.
- There are already plans to reach seldom heard participants including younger people and these will be built upon. The suggestion of having an overarching vision is reasonable and is something that Cabinet members should consider going forward, although an overly long vision statement could lead to less engagement with the plan.

- Other suggested terms and ideas to include within the themes will be considered with the Cabinet members, including amplifying support for local business. Further work, after the new corporate plan is adopted, will also be undertaken in annual service level delivery plans to engage with a variety of sectors of the local economy.
- Allowing time to learn lessons from the Joint Local Plan consultation process is also a welcome suggestion and can be considered and scheduled into the process ahead of the engagement phase on the corporate plan. Previous engagement processes and approaches used on the Joint Local Plan have been nationally recognised.

Update from Cabinet minutes on 15 February 2024:

The Cabinet member for corporate services, policy and programmes welcomed the feedback from Scrutiny Committee. Most of the points raised were in hand; other suggestions would be taken forward as the draft plan was developed further. For example, further consideration would be given to encompass the climate emergency and nature recovery throughout the plan. The overarching vision was crucial.

Cabinet concurred, believing that widespread engagement was important, particularly with lesser heard groups. It was noted that the corporate plan would be brought back to Cabinet in the autumn for further consideration and then recommendation on to Council.

Cabinet endorsed the approach.

(3) Cornerstone Arts Centre

The committee approved the progression of the action plan but asked Cabinet to consider the following:

- better and more frequent reporting;
- funding sources should be explored as soon as possible;
- a clear marketing and promotion review, with a review of shows and show types, and marketing to a wider catchment area;
- explore energy savings; and
- provide Scrutiny Committee with an update report in 12 months' time.

In order to be transparent and open, here is a summary of the officer advice and actions in relation to the above, to aid consideration by Cabinet.

- Regarding better and more frequent reporting, paragraphs 34 and 66 in the officer's report outline the reporting and monitoring of the action plan. Officers are already preparing a new reporting template to form part of their monthly members' updates. The report will provide key sales and spending statistics, comparison data, marketing statistics, and other key operational performance data for members' information. Any such reports will need to be delivered within the budget and staffing resources available. The council's finance team is not staffed at the level needed to produce budget monitoring monthly, in addition to the data mentioned above.
- Regarding funding sources being explored, subject to approval of the budget for the post (included within the action plan), officers will recruit/procure a fundraising officer to undertake fundraising activity and will write and implement the fundraising strategy. Appropriate officer capacity to undertake fundraising activity, before this additional resource is secure, is limited and

would require diverting officers from day-to-day duties, which is not possible. Officers have engaged with the council's corporate external Funding Officer, who has been able to offer limited support. The Leader and other Cabinet members have been clear that un-resourced activity should not be undertaken by officers. This is why the action plan highlights the need to resource this area to a greater extent.

- Regarding the need for a clear marketing and promotion review, within the action plan there is an outcome to develop and implement a new marketing strategy for the centre once the council has expanded its specialist resource. Within the specific actions officers will feed in increasing the catchment area for the centre and investigation co-promotion options with other venues in the vicinity. Officers are already reviewing the uptake statistics for the programme and adapting future seasons to reflect the audience demand, while retaining a small portion of programming for activities that offer high social value, but limited income potential, and/or that act as a 'gateway' for audiences into genres of artforms not explored before.
- Officers are developing a dynamic approach to programming that will provide direction to the programming team, for establishing future seasons of activity. It will maximise the high yield events and set clear boundaries for shows we programme that while not financially beneficial but offer community benefit. In 2018/19 the show programme did not bring in sufficient income to cover its own costs, predominantly due to the high cost of a co-produced Christmas show, this is no longer the case with recent shows. The intention is for the 'social value' programming, that tends to offer high benefit but low income, to become a focus for external funding, as it is most likely to offer high appeal to funders in terms of outcomes. Where possible, officers will look to apply for multi-year funding to maximise the value of any bids.
- Regarding exploring energy savings, officers are committed to delivering the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme 3b for Cornerstone and will continue to explore ways to reduce energy consumption. The successful bid required that work to identify positive energy efficiencies be completed, so this has already been undertaken.
- Regarding Scrutiny Committee wanting an update report in 12 months, within sections 34 and 66 of the report, officers have already committed to provide regular progress updates on delivery of the action plan and its impact to the officer working group, Cabinet members, and any other key stakeholders, which can include Scrutiny Committee.
- As per the answer above on reporting, officers will be providing more statistical information with their monthly members' updates for March 2024 onwards, showing sales and expenditure income, analysis of what has sold well for the period, as well as marketing and engagement statistics. Officers will also provide written updates on the delivery of the action plan.

Update from Cabinet minutes of 15 February 2024:

The Cabinet thanked Scrutiny Committee for its suggestions. Most were included in the action plan and detailed answers are given above. Cabinet member for Community Wellbeing confirmed that there would be more frequent reporting of progress against the action plan; subject to budgetary approval there would be more resource to fundraise; a new marketing strategy would be developed as well as more dynamic programming; and energy savings and decarbonisation of the centre were being explored. A progress report would also be submitted to Scrutiny Committee as requested.

Cabinet recognised that there were improvements the council could implement to improve the centre's service delivery. The adoption of the development action plan should have a positive impact on the centre's financial viability and benefit the community. Before the council considered longer-term options for the centre, Cabinet considered that the council should do all it could to ensure the centre was operating to its best potential in-house. Therefore, Cabinet supported the adoption of the development action plan. Members asked for performance progress reports at regular intervals.

Democratic Services

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