



# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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## STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

22 July 2021

7.00 - 8.33 pm

Council Chamber - SDC

### Minutes

#### **Membership**

##### **Councillor Doina Cornell (Chair)**

Councillor Chloe Turner  
Councillor Gordon Craig  
Councillor Martin Percy  
Councillor Steve Robinson  
Councillor Chris Brine  
Councillor Nicholas Housden\*

\*= Absent

##### **Councillor Catherine Braun (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor Stephen Davies  
Councillor Nick Hurst  
Councillor Mattie Ross  
Councillor Ken Tucker

Councillor Keith Pearson\*

#### **Officers in Attendance**

Chief Executive  
Strategic Director of Resources  
Accountancy Manager  
Interim Monitoring Officer

Senior Policy and Governance Officer  
Senior Democratic Services and Elections  
Officer  
Democratic Services and Elections Officer

#### **SRC.010 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Housden and Pearson. Councillor Hurst also provided apologies but joined the meeting during Item 10.

#### **SRC.011 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

#### **SRC.012 Minutes**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the meetings held on 10 June 2021 are approved as a correct record.

**SRC.013      Public Question Time**

There were none.

**SRC.014      Procurement Update Report**

The Senior Policy and Governance Officer introduced the report and explained that the procurement strategy was adopted in 2019 with 3 main aims which had been set out in the report. An update was also provided on the following:

- A new Contract Management Framework had been formed which set out a standardised approach to managing contracts, included within were the roles and responsibilities of officers and reporting guidelines.
- The Spend Analysis. Last year out of a £29million spend, £12million of that was spent with local suppliers (those with a GL postcode). There was a slight decrease from the previous year due to the Housing Repairs contracts being brought in-house.
- Audit and Risk Assurance (ARA) colleagues had carried out a procurement consultancy review which concluded with 5 recommendations each of which were put into an action plan. Those recommendations included ensuring induction training was taking place, amending the way contracts were managed and published on the Council website and the creation of a register for contracts which had been let or extended under the Covid guidelines.
- New regulations would be coming into effect, following Brexit the Government has agreed to review public contract regulations. Once the new regulations were in place an information sheet would be published to advise the Committee of the main changes.

In response to questions from Councillor Davies the Senior Policy and Governance Officer explained there was a thorough training programme for procurement 5 years ago which was very successful and they had recently asked all managers what they felt training requirements now were. Councillor Davies asked for the full list of recommendations raised by ARA. The Strategic Director of Resources pointed out that the report they were looking at was an action plan of what they were going to do to improve the recommendations which were included in the report to Audit and Standards Committee. The Strategic Director of Resources confirmed he would be happy to share the report that went to Audit and Standards Committee with Members.

Councillor Brine asked if spend within the local area was growing year on year and what the council would be doing to support local spending. The Senior Policy and Governance Officer noted that the local spend fell this year compared to the previous years due to the Housing Repairs being brought in-house. She stated that one of the aims for 2022 was to increase local spending and to do this they needed to understand who the local suppliers were. In response to a further question from Councillor Brine she stated that she hoped that the revised regulations, which were due imminently, would make the process simpler for local suppliers to apply for council contracts.

Councillor Braun raised a question regarding the monitoring dashboard and whether it would be available for members to review on a quarterly basis. The Senior Policy and Governance Officer confirmed that local spend information could be made available in briefing notes to Councillors.

Councillor Percy raised two points, the first regarded maximising the opportunities of positive engagement with the supply chain in particular with local suppliers. The second point he raised was regarding responsibilities, he felt that the organisations and legal office responsibilities had been omitted. The Senior Policy and Governance Officer agreed to take these points on board.

Councillor Brine Proposed and Councillor Braun Seconded.

The Chair thanked the Senior Policy and Governance Officer for the report and stated that it was great to see so many local suppliers and was interested to see how we could increase this further. Councillor Braun welcomed section 2.5 of the report, the aims and objectives and stated she looked forward to the new positive ways of working being embedded.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED To note the report.**

#### **SRC.015 Parliamentary Boundary Review**

The Strategic Director of Resources introduced the report to the committee explaining that there was no requirement for the Council to respond to the consultation however they had encouraged all Town and Parish Councils to respond. He drew the Members attention to Section 3.2 which included the proposal for the Stroud District and Sections 4.2 and 4.3 which set out the proposed response.

Councillor Turner Proposed and Councillor Robinson Seconded.

Councillor Davies stated that this was a difficult issue and that the proposed response had summarised well the Councils position.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED** a) **Note the initial proposals from the Boundary Commission for England; and**  
b) **Approve the draft Council response to the consultation.**

#### **SRC.016 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Outturn Report 2020/21**

The Strategic Director of Resources introduced the report and confirmed that the draft accounts had already been published a month ahead of schedule. The report covered the General Fund Outturn, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn, Reserves and Capital Project. The Strategic Director of Resources highlighted two of the decisions the Committee was being asked to make which were regards the business rates pool and the Capital Programme budget. He drew Committees attention to the Summary of the General Fund Outturn position in table 2, and confirmed that there was an overall underspend of £786,000 and listed the main reasons for the underspend.

The Strategic Director of Resources explained that as the Section 151 Officer it was his responsibility to allocate any under or overspend and was asking Members to consider his recommendations listed in Table 3. The Strategic Director of Resources also directed

the Committee to table 4 in section 5.9. He explained the collection fund smoothing to the Committee stating that the government funding for business rates discounts arrived in the last financial year however the collection fund balance wouldn't unwind until the current financial year, so there is a timing difference.

The Accountancy Manager ran through the HRA report and directed members towards table 7 which set out the underspend of the HRA of £373,000. The committee was advised that the proposal for the underspend included £234,000 to be placed in the transformation fund and for £139,000 to be placed in the retrofit reserve as shown in table 8 and paragraph 8.3. The Accountancy Manager also brought the Committees attention to the HRA Earmarked reserves in Section 9 and the HRA general reserves in Section 10.

The Accountancy Manager introduced the Capital Programme and confirmed that there was a £12.7million spend against a budget of 22.7 million, this was largely due to timing differences as out of the £10million not spent in year £8.7million was linked to the slippage requested to roll forward into 2021/22.

In response to questions from Councillor Davies the Strategic Director of Resources explained that the Brexit funding had not been used and that there had been 3 grant allocations from Government to support the cost of Brexit and it would need to be decided where to put this funding. The Strategic Director of Resources also acknowledged the Council had received substantial support from the Central Government but noted that there was still no information regarding funding after March 2022.

Councillor Pearcy asked whether the dispersal of the money shown in Appendix H was spread equally distributed across the district including the more rural areas. The Strategic Director of Resources explained that expenditure was not looked at on a ward by ward basis. If there was something specific within the rural areas that needed to be targeted, then that could be done however, it would have needed to be addressed during the planning stage.

Councillor Turner asked where the green homes LADS funding had come from, the Accountancy Manager confirmed it had been received in the form of Government grants and that an extension into 2022 has been allowed for the unallocated funding from 2021. Councillor Craig asked whether the Council could advertise the grants so that more residents who have problems with insulation could apply. The Strategic Director of Resources advised that there were strict rules as to where the funding would be used but he would pass the comments on to the Housing Renewal Manager.

Councillor Tucker drew attention to the underspend listed for the disabled facilities grant scheme and questioned whether this was a result of Covid. The Accountancy Manager confirmed there were delays due to Covid and the teams were working with County and other agencies to clear the backlog. She also explained that it is an opportunity based fund and therefore they have little control over what is spent, if more money was required in any year they would be able to claim it from the Better Care Fund.

Councillor Brine Proposed and Councillor Braun Seconded.

Councillor Davies commented that he was impressed with the improvements on the Ubico contract and raised one concern over the savings accrued from vacancies, he stated that this meant that some departments may have been understaffed or may not have been able to complete pieces of work due to the vacancy.

The Chair, Councillor Cornell, supported the report and acknowledged the work of Officers who had been able to continue delivering on projects despite the challenges.

Councillor Brine expressed his gratitude to the teams who were able to distribute grant funding quickly to provide support to local businesses.

Councillor Braun thanked the finance team for a detailed report and presentation and encouraged new Councillors to look at the spends relevant to their Committees. She welcomed the Climate Change reserve which would allow the Council to look to the future, she was keen to see the carbon impact of future projects being considered.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

- RESOLVED**
- a) **Note the General Fund Revenue Outturn position for 2020/21, as shown in Table 1.**
  - b) **Note the Housing Revenue Account outturn position for 2020/21, as shown in Table 6.**
  - c) **To note the transfers to and from earmarked reserves for the year, as detailed in Sections 5 and 8 and Appendix E.**
  - d) **Approve the ring-fencing of the Business Rates pool gain for economic development projects.**
  - e) **To note the Capital Programme outturn position for 2020/21, as shown in Table 11.**
  - f) **Approve slippage of the Capital Programme budget and a revised Capital Programme budget for 2021/22, as shown in Table 11 and Appendix H**

#### **SRC.017 Leadership Gloucestershire Update**

The Chief Executive provided a brief update to advise that Gloucester City Council were canvassing support for the UK City of Culture bid however, due to tight deadlines they withdrew their Expression of Interest.

#### **SRC.018 Performance Monitoring**

The Chair advised that they were looking to ensure that a youth council representative was able to participate in the Performance Monitoring Meetings going forward.

#### **SRC.019 Regeneration and Investment Board**

The Chair of the Committee stated that the economic development strategy was due at the Committee in September however, that wouldn't provide enough time to carry out a full consultation and that therefore more time was needed before it would be reported on at Committee.

**SRC.020**     **Support of the Leisure Contract Provider in Stroud (Sport and Leisure Management) to Recover from the Impact of COvid-19 Update**

The Strategic Director of Resources stated they were continuing to support SLM and that they were using the National Leisure Recovery Fund to support them with reopening costs. It was also confirmed that there was £82k left from the initial agreed funding of £150k.

**SRC.021**     **Brimscombe Port Update**

The Strategic Director of Place advised that work was ongoing with Grace Network and Rush to find suitable accommodation, he confirmed that Rush was currently progressing opportunities themselves but the offer of support from the Council was still available. The Council was also still assisting Grace Network to explore opportunities. The pre-demolition surveys and contract works were ongoing. There was a community zoom meeting scheduled for the 4 August 2021 for residents to ask questions and find out more information about the project. He stated there was a long term development proposal with the Parish Council to help keep residents informed and involved in the project as it progresses.

Councillor Davies suggested there should be follow up sessions for those that couldn't attend the meeting as it was being held in the summer holidays. The Chair agreed and echoed the proposal in place with the Parish Council to come up with an ongoing plan in order to keep residents updated.

Councillor Ross paid a tribute to the fantastic work completed by Dave Marshall, the previous Canal Manager, and stated the current success of the project was a great testimony to him.

**SRC.022**     **Members' Questions**

There were none.

**SRC.023**     **Work Programme**

The Strategic Director of Resources advised that the Committee may need to consider holding an additional meeting in January to consider the Budgets. He proposed an additional Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 27 January 2022. Councillor Davies asked if they could make the decision imminently so that Members could ensure they were available.

The Chair expressed her thanks to the Interim Monitoring Officer who was would be departing the council shortly. She added that he had been a huge support to members and wished him all the best in his new role. The Interim Monitoring Officer thanked the Chair and added that he had really enjoyed working for Stroud District Council. Councillor Davies echoed the chairs comments and added that it was a shame that he did not take a permanent position at the Council.

The meeting closed at 8.33 pm

Chair