

Minutes of	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Meeting date	Thursday, 25 January 2024
Committee Members present:	Councillor Aidy Riggott (Chair), Councillor Roy Lees (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Kim Snape, Michelle Beach, Dedrah Moss, Ryan Towers, Michelle Brown, Christine Heydon, Samantha Martin, Pauline McGovern, Joan Williamson and Debra Platt
Committee Members present virtually (non-voting):	Cllr Samantha Martin
Guests present:	Councillors Alistair Bradley – Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform) Councillor Peter Wilson – Executive member (Resources) Councillor Bev Murray Executive Member (Early Intervention)
Officers:	Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer), Neil Halton (Head of Finance), Jennifer Mullin (Director of Communities and Leisure) and Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

A video recording of the public session of this meeting is available to view on [YouTube here](#)

22 Declarations of Any Interests

There were no interests declared.

23 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 5 October 2023 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 5 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

24 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

25 Executive Cabinet Minutes

Resolved:

That the Executive Cabinet minutes be noted.

26 Notice of Executive Decisions

One member referred to page 53 – CCTV Award of Contract listed for December 2023 and requested an update as to this contract award.

Resolved:

1. That the Notice of Executive Decisions be noted;
2. That an update be provided to the Committee as to the CCTV Award of Contract.

27 Health Scrutiny update

Councillor Margaret France provided an update from the Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.

She reported on the following:

- NHS Lancashire Place Update and Future Arrangements
- NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board – Recovery and Transformation
- Concern was expressed by the Committee about NHS dentist provision in Lancashire.
- Achievements on the work of the Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities – Healthy Hearts, Happier Minds and Best Start in Life. It was noted that Chorley had a particular issue in terms of suicide risk.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

28 Draft 24/25 Budget Update

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) attended the meeting to present the report on the Draft Budget 2024/25 which had been considered and agreed at Executive Cabinet on 18 January 2024. Louise Mattinson, Director of Finance was also in attendance.

The report set out the draft budget position for the council for 2024/25 and the forecast for 2025/26, reflecting the information contained within the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement announced on 18th December 2023.

Councillor Wilson explained that the budget consultation process, which had now started, included the following proposals:

- A proposed 2.99% increase in council tax in 2024/25 with no proposed cuts to services;
- A forecast balanced budget for 2024/25, based on a 2.99% increase in council tax as noted above and the use of £0.365m of reserves;
- A forecast budget shortfall for 2025/26 of £1.575m, to be addressed through the development and delivery of the council's savings programme
- Proposals for the labour administration to invest in the priority areas identified in the report.

Councillor Wilson highlighted the investments referenced on page 58 which generate net income for the Council, such as the Market Walk Shopping Centre, Primrose Gardens, Strawberry Meadows and Tatton Gardens.

It was noted in the report that the figures in the report may be subject to change, pending receipt of the Final Local Government Financial Settlement announcement which is due from Government in early February 2024.

Councillor Wilson highlighted paragraph 27 of the report which stressed the fact that the Council has only received a one year settlement. In the absence of any figures or framework from Government, it is almost impossible to prepare a credible financial strategy beyond 31 March 2025 with any degree of confidence in the underlying assumptions. It was therefore difficult to develop the Medium Term Strategy in this context.

He also referred to financial risks and uncertainties which would have an impact on the Council's budget such as staffing costs following an agreed pay award.

Councillor Wilson addressed a query about Council Tax debt. He stressed that the Council have a very broad package which aims to investigate the reasons for non-payment of council tax, for example mental health issues. Individuals may be referred to services such as social prescribing to help address those issues.

Councillor Wilson responded to two issues raised by the Chair, in relation to energy costs and impact on projects for the area. Councillor Wilson indicated that hopefully energy costs would reduce, however they were unlikely to return to rates of 12 months ago. In relation to projects, e.g. arising from the Levelling Up Funding, these are still on track and would not be adversely impacted.

Finally, Councillor Wilson indicated that due to the financial challenges being faced by the Council, the Executive Cabinet would be looking closely at all areas of the Council in the next twelve months and suggested that scrutiny would have a key role in that process.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

29 Youth Diversionary and Out-Reach Services

Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member (Early Intervention) presented a report of the Director of Communities providing an overview of youth diversionary and outreach support services in the borough, including:

- Tackling anti social behaviour – engagement of the Public Protection Team
- INSPIRE Youth Zone Detached Outreach Programme
- Children and Family Wellbeing Detached Service
- Lancashire Violence Reduction Network
- Preston North End

Councillor Murray responded to questions from the Committee. Arising from the discussions it was agreed that details about the INSPIRE outreach programme (i.e. forthcoming planned activities in which areas) be communicated to members (e.g. via In the Know).

It was also suggested that INSPIRE be invited to jointly participate with the Council in local democracy week to engage with young people outside a school setting.

Resolved –

1. That the report be noted;
2. That planned activities in forthcoming INSPIRE Outreach Programme be communicated to members e.g. via In the Know;
3. That INSPIRE invited to jointly participate with the Council in local democracy week to engage with young people outside a school setting.

30 Reports from Task and Finish Groups

Recruitment and Staff Retention Task Group

Councillor Michelle Beach, Chair of the Recruitment and Staff Retention Task Group introduced and summarised the report, outlining their findings and conclusions, and final recommendations. She thanked all members of the Task Group and the officers for their hard work and support.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Ryan Towers, responded to a query about the Council's apprenticeship scheme. He explained that there had been a substantial increase in the number of apprentices since the first cohort and that a number of improvements had been made e.g. a dedicated training officer to ensure the requisite time allocation was met for completing personal development plans.

Resolved - That the report be recommended to Executive Cabinet.

Suicide Prevention and Bereavement Task Group

It was noted that the next Scrutiny Task Group would look at Suicide Prevention and Bereavement. Members were asked to let Democratic Services know if they were interested.

31 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Chair presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24.

He proposed two amendments to the work programme.

Resolved – That the Overview and Scrutiny work Programme 2023/24 be amended as follows:

1. That the Community Safety Partnership Update report be considered on 14 March 2024;
2. That, arising from discussion on Special Expenses at the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel on 23 November 2023, an update be provided on the outcome of that review as part of the Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring report at the next Panel meeting on 7 March 2024.

32 Any urgent business previously agreed with the Chair

There was no urgent business.

33 Town Centre Action Plan Update

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform), presented a report providing an overview of the matters related to anti-social behaviour (ASB) in connection with Chorley Town Centre.

Arising from the discussion it was agreed in principle that a similar framework be applied to other urban hub areas in the borough, as anti social behaviour can be sporadic and move outside Chorley Town Centre. The Chair suggested that if there were patterns of anti social behaviour which related to the approval of planning applications (retail outlets, eating outlets etc) it may be possible to put something in place at the planning stage.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

34 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded for the following item of business on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

35 Town Centre Action Plan Update - Appendix

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform), presented the appendix to the report.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

Chair

Date