



MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL

MEETING DATE Thursday, 8 October 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillor (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Roy Lees, Alex Hilton, Marion Lowe and June Molyneaux

OFFICERS: Asim Khan (Director (Customer and Digital)), Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer), Nina Neisser and Rebecca Aziz-Brook (Transformation Programme Coordinator)

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillor Adrian Lowe

20.OSP.33 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 5 March 2020 of Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel

Decision – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 5 March 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

20.OSP.34 Declarations of Any Interests

There were no declarations of interest received.

20.OSP.35 Performance Focus - Customer and Digital

The Chair welcomed Asim Khan, Director of Customer and Digital and Councillor Adrian Lowe, Executive Member for Customer, Advice and Streetscene Services to the meeting.

Asim Khan thanked members for the invitation to the Performance Panel and presented his report which provided contextual information with regards to the overall Directorate summary including the budget position, the key performance summary for 2020/21 and an update on key projects within the directorate.

The performance of the Customer and Digital directorate was last considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel in June 2019. The Customer and Digital directorate portfolio included the following council service areas:

- Planning
- Customer transformation
- Streetscene
- ICT

Members noted that due to Covid-19, the first quarter had been challenging but the council continued to transform and improve its services for residents. Under the circumstances, Quarter 1 was a good performance, which reflected the hard work and dedication of all officers who completed day to day service for the people of Chorley.

There had been significant investment into ICT in 2019 and 75% of the Digital Strategy had been delivered. This allowed the council to operate successfully during the Covid lockdown, with officers working from home and continuing to respond to demands for services.

Since the lifting of lockdown, Streetscene services have restarted by successfully delivering grass cutting, street sweeping and weed treatments as well as the installation of wildflower meadow sites. The service was exceeding targets for the first Quarter. There had also been an increase in fly tipping during lockdown, and the cases were being worked through with prosecutions intended.

Planning had outperformed their target in quarter one and following Member queries, it was advised that the success was due to a combination of factors which included the commitment of the officers, more demand to build homes, and efficiencies in staffing changes.

In response to a question by the Chair, Members were advised that the Council have committed to more green space, with more wildflower and wildlife corridors to support biodiversity and to provide more colour and greenery to the borough. These had been successful in the main, but the council was reviewing this constantly and addressing residents' concerns. Councillor Molyneaux reported that the wildflower meadows had been popular in her ward and she had received a lot of positive feedback from residents. It was suggested that notices be put in place to inform residents that the area had not been abandoned and that the growth was for the purpose of wildlife.

Members queried if the change in service of the bins was made by the Council or the contractor. It was explained that the service contractor was committed to undertake a review and alongside a third-party route optimisation provider came up with the best routes for efficiency.

Following further queries regarding precautions in place to mitigate any further issues relating to Covid-19, Members were reassured that the Council was well placed to respond to Covid-19 and the investment in ICT enabled communication with residents, Officers and Members. It was recognised, however, that the overall response was highly dependent on the national government position.

In response to a query from the Chair regarding the decrease in Council Tax collection, Members were advised that this was due to a combination of factors. The Council suspended recovery action during the first three months of the pandemic to assist those residents struggling financially which subsequently resulted in a decrease in collections compared to 2019.

Councillor Adrian Lowe thanked all the staff for their work during the Covid Crisis. He highlighted that the budget for Customer and Digital was underspending by £32k which created a 0.5% variance against the original cash budget. He reiterated that the council would adopt a business plan accordingly to Covid-19 throughout the winter period.

The Chair thanked Asim Khan and Councillor Adrian Lowe for their attendance and thanked staff for all of their work during difficult circumstances.

Decision: That the Report be noted.

20.OSP.36 Progress Update Business Planning 2020/21

The Performance Panel considered a monitoring report from the Deputy Chief Executive which provided an update on the progress of the delivery of service level projects outlined in the service business plans. Rebecca Aziz-Brook, Transformation Programme Co-ordinator presented the report.

A review of 15 business plans produced earlier in the year had been completed based on the information provided within the MyProjects system as well as meetings with officers and managers across services. The plans identified an overall total of 190 projects and of those:

- 130 are ongoing (68.4%)
- 18 are complete (9.5%)
- 26 are on hold (13.7%)
- 16 are not started (8.4%)

Members noted that the majority of the projects across all service areas were ongoing. Most of these had identified completion dates for the end of the financial year or would continue to be delivered over the next year as they were inked to wider programmes of work. Highlights of the work included;

- Service recovery following the Covid-19 outbreak e.g. grass cutting, street sweeping, weed treatments
- Business Grant Scheme and Hardship Fund have been completed.
- An online tool to manage time credits has been commissioned
- Phase two of Making Tax Digital was finalised.
- Shared Services Phase 1 was delivered, including the successful creation of new shard Terms and Conditions and the completion of tailored development reviews with all shared services staff.

There were twelve projects that had been put on hold due to delays with decision making, funding issues and external factors delaying progress. Actions were in place to ensure delivery recommenced as soon as possible.

There were ten projects that had not been started, this was mainly due to having start dates that commence later in the year as they were dependent on other activities being completed first. It was anticipated that all projects were to be completed March 2021 and so there would be no detrimental impact on overall business improvement delivery.

Members praised the success of Chorley Live online. They queried the progress of King George V Playing field as well as the status of Primrose Gardens which was recorded as not started. It was agreed that an update would be provided to both Members and the contractors in relation to the playing fields and the status of

Primrose Gardens was in relation to the open days for new residents which due to social distancing measures meant that the process had been put on hold.

The Chair enquired about the increase of burials at Chorley and Adlington cemeteries, in particular, if there was an increase in demand or if there was a backlog. It was confirmed that contingency plans were in place due to Covid which had managed to keep this in the threshold meaning there had been no surge and demand was in line with previous years.

Decision: That the report be noted.

20.OSP.37 Any urgent business previously agreed with the Chair

There was no urgent business.

Chair

Date