

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. This report summarises the business considered at the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 October, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel meetings held on 8 October and 19 November 2020 and includes an update on the Sustainable Public Transport Task Group.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 October 2020

Health Scrutiny

2. We welcomed Councillor Margaret France, as Chorley Council's representative for Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny, who updated Members on the recent meeting.
3. The meeting on 15 September's focus was on the current situation around the re-opening of Chorley's Emergency Department, the 111 first system, adult social care and winter preparations, test and trace, and the flu vaccine programme.
4. A decision was made on 21 September to not reopen Chorley's Emergency Department due to difficulties in staff recruitment. One consultant and, seven middle grades had also been appointed. A review would take place in December with a view to reopen in the New Year.
5. We were updated about the 111 first system that would assess emergency calls over the phone or through the internet. It was hoped that this service would improve emergency departments productivity, reduce waiting time in A&E Departments, and prevent the further spread of Covid-19.
6. Plans were in place for this to be rolled out in the North West by the end of November. Call-takers would receive mandatory six-week training, followed by supervision from clinical staff at the base in Bolton.
7. With regards to adult social care and winter preparations discussions had been held about preventing the spread of infection within care homes and it was proposed that staff would be tested weekly and residents monthly. Test and Trace was also the subject of a long discussion, in addition to the lack of available testing in the region. The flu vaccination programme for 2021, would be extended to include all adults aged 50-64 however this was highly dependent upon supply.
8. It was clarified to us that most people who were infected with Covid-19 would be managed at home, and the ones that required respiratory care would be admitted to Preston Hospital. We asked if a patient would be notified if their appointment was to be delayed. It was not known if there were any systems in place for this but it was likely that there would be occasions of waiting if there were high prioritised patients in need of care.

9. We condemned the concept of booking an appointment for A and E and recognised that 111 were call handlers not trained in patient care and were without any knowledge of the patient and their background.
10. We thanked Councillor Margaret France for attending and presenting the report. We noted the update.

Air Quality Update

11. We welcomed Zoe Whiteside, Service Lead for Spatial Planning and Carolyn Williams, Central Lancashire Local Plan Co-Ordinator who presented a verbal update on air quality. Members were informed that work was underway for a draft Air Quality Strategy and it was acknowledged that there had been delays due to Covid-19, and staffing.
12. Within the draft Air Quality Strategy, there were links to climate change, measurements for air quality and plans to coordinate across Lancashire to measure and set a baseline for targets.
13. After the Council declared a Climate Emergency in November 2019, work was designed to include a tree planting scheme, address local spaces, and the recruitment of Climate Change Coordinator to implement the strategy and action plan. We were advised that the Draft would be taken to Corporate Leadership Team in November before going out for consultation in the New Year.
14. Carolyn Williams added that the delay of the Environment Bill in the House of Commons also attributed to the delay, but there is the intention to move forward with more specific targets for particulate matter 2.5. Central Government were exploring targets but were not ready to commit to the 10mg target. Existing targets are in place for 2022 to be delivered by 2032. PM 2.5 was 20.2% of emissions related to road transport. At present, Chorley does not have any obligation to create and meet air quality targets, but the Council was voluntarily demonstrating its commitment to the Air Quality Strategy and Climate Change Emergency.
15. The biggest issue facing Chorley was nitrous oxide due to close proximity of the motorways. In 2018, the motorways contributed to 60-70 tons of nitrous oxide.
16. We queried the locations of the monitoring areas in the borough. It was understood that Chorley had six monitoring stations. Three of the stations showed levels slightly above what was desired, but below the levels required for Air Quality Management Areas, and in 2020 three have shown a decrease. The data would be used to help policy, and to be part of future planning applications.
17. We were curious as to whether there would be an impact on outside dining areas close to roads, in particular the A6 bypass in the Town Centre. It was clarified that the distance from the road where it was likely to have outside

dining would result in low levels, and there were also landscaping buffers put in place to create separation.

18. In response to a query from me regarding the role of local schools and the Air Quality Strategy, we were advised that schools would be reflected in the Air Quality Strategy Plan. It was recognised that several authorities had projects in place to encourage more active measures to prevent drop off and pick up air pollution, including no car zones and park and walk, although these had not been popular. It was agreed that community engagement and engagement with schools was required to raise awareness of air quality issues and promote the Air Quality Strategy.
19. We noted the report thanked Zoe Whiteside and Carolyn Williams for attending and presenting the report.

Leisure Contract

20. We welcomed Angela Barrago, Service Lead for Communities, and she provided Members with a verbal update on the Leisure Contract. We were updated of the work that had been undertaken on the Leisure Centre Contract since 2017. The procurement process and award of contract had been delayed due to Covid-19 which resulted in the preferred bidder, Life Leisure reluctantly withdrawing their bid in September.
21. As a result, at the General Purposes Committee on 16 September, Members took the decision to bring the service in house for the short term and prepare for the longer term. Due to the transfer of operator, there needed to be a closure period at the leisure centres from the 30 September to 12 October 2020. This would allow the opportunity to clean up the sites, replace lost equipment and bring in new equipment. A TUPE process had been undertaken as current staff would be employed by the Council going forward. The phone lines were to be reopened, with new software to be developed and commissioned to update the booking system. Letters had been sent to all members to keep them up to date and information issued via social media channels.
22. We were advised that consideration had been given to approach the second and third placed bidders, but the conditions of the procurement had changed, and the process would need to be restarted.
23. Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member for Early Intervention expressed her disappointment at the situation but commended Life Leisure for being open and honest about being unable to take on the contract, and their provision of advice to help get the leisure centres back up and running smoothly.
24. We questioned the plans going forward if there was the possibility that the leisure centres would remain in-house if successful, and if consideration had been given about expanding in-house operations to other management contracts such as Duxbury Golf Club. Officers advised that a minimum period

of six months was required to examine the market and seek professional advice to understand the position the industry was in. we were told that the contract with Glendale at Duxbury Golf Club was slightly different, and comparisons could not be accurately be made.

25. Following concerns with the timescales and the situation exposing the council to risk with other contractors in the future, we were informed that Life Leisure had not signed the contract at the time they withdrew. The procurement process was on schedule until the impact of Covid-19 caused delays which resulted in postponing the award of contract to June. However, we were reassured that this was the most sensible course of action.

26. We thanked Angela Barrago for attending and presenting, we noted the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

27. We considered the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Performance Panel, and task group topic areas for 2020/21.

28. We discussed the work programme and questioned why the Adoption of Estates had not been included on the agenda as indicated on the plan. It was confirmed that it was due to be on the agenda but the relevant LCC Officer was unable to attend, therefore it would be taken to the next meeting in January 2021.

29. We noted the Work Programme

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel 8 October 2020

Performance Focus – Customer and Digital

31. We welcomed Asim Khan, Director of Customer and Digital, and Councillor Adrian Lowe, Executive Member for Customer, Advice and Streetscene Services, to the meeting.
32. Asim Khan 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.
33. 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:
 34. Planning
 35. Customer transformation
 36. Streetscene
 37. ICT
38. We 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 residents of Chorley.
39. 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-19 lockdown, with officers working from home and continuing to respond to demands for services.
40. Since the easing of the first lockdown, Streetscene services had restarted by delivering grass cutting, street sweeping and weed treatments as well as the installation of wildflower meadow sites. The service exceeded targets for the first quarter.
41. Fly-tipping had increased during lockdown, and the cases were being worked through with prosecutions intended.
42. Planning had outperformed their target in quarter one and following our queries, it was explained that the success was due to many factors which included the commitment of the officers, an increase in the demand for new homes, and efficiencies in staffing changes.
43. We were advised that the Council committed to maintaining 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, but the council was reviewing this constantly and regularly addressed concerns of residents. Members reported that the wildflower meadows had been popular and positive feedback had been received 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.

44. We 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.
45. Following further queries regarding precautions in place to mitigate any further issues relating to Covid-19, we 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.
46. We were advised that the decrease in Council Tax collection 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.
47. Councillor Adrian Lowe thanked all the staff for their work during the Covid-19 Crisis. He highlighted that the budget for Customer and Digital had underspent by £32k which created a 0.5% variance against the original budget. He reiterated that the council would adopt a business plan accordingly to Covid-19 throughout the winter period.
48. We thanked Asim Khan and Councillor Adrian Lowe for their attendance and thanked staff for all their work during difficult circumstances. We noted the report.

Progress Update Business Planning 2020/21

49. 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. We welcomed Rebecca Aziz-Brook, Transformation Programme Co-ordinator to present the report.
50. 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:
 51. 130 are ongoing (68.4%)
 52. 18 are complete (9.5%)
 53. 26 are on hold (13.7%)

54. 16 are not started (8.4%)

55. We 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 linked to wider programmes of work.

56. Shared Services Phase 1 was delivered, including the successful creation of new shared Terms and Conditions and the completion of tailored development reviews with all shared services staff.

57. There were 12 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.

58. There were 10 projects that had not been started, this was due to later start dates in the year as they were dependent on other activities being completed. 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.

59. We praised the success of Chorley Live Online and queried the progress of King George V playing field and Primrose Gardens which was recorded as not started. It was agreed that an update would be provided to us and the contractors in relation to the playing fields. 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 delayed.

60. I enquired about the increase of burials at Chorley and Adlington cemeteries and if there had been an increase in demand or if there was a backlog. It was confirmed that contingency plans were in place due to Covid-19 but there had been no surge and demand was in line with previous years.

61. We thanked Rebecca Aziz-Brook for attending and presenting the report. We noted the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel – 19 November 2020

Performance Focus – Policy and Governance

62. We welcomed Chris Sinnott, Deputy Chief Executive, and Councillor Peter Wilson, Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Member (Resources), to the meeting.

63. Councillor Peter Wilson presented the report which provided contextual information with regards to the overall Directorate summary, including the budget position and the key performance summary and key project update for 2020/21.

64. The Policy and Governance directorate was last considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in January 2020. The directorate incorporated a number of services including; governance, shared financial services, transformation and partnerships and communications and visitor economy.
65. We noted that the Policy and Governance directorate has led on delivering phase one of shared services. Shared services commenced working together on 1 April 2020 and have benefitted from the increased resilience offered by a larger, more diverse workforce, particularly when responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.
66. We had previously held concerns regarding the terms and conditions, however we were reassured that there had been numerous consultation opportunities for staff. Shared Service employees had adopted the new terms and conditions which were agreed by both councils in July 2020.
67. Following queries on the terms and conditions, it was reiterated to Members that the new terms and conditions applied only to Shared Service staff at this time, and as more employees entered into the shared service they would also adopt the new terms and conditions. There was no plan for all Chorley Council staff to go under the new terms and conditions but this would be kept under review.
68. Overall performance for 2020/21 had been good. For key corporate projects, there were four projects that fell under the Policy and Governance directorate, with all four of these performing on target for quarter two. For key service level performance, overall, there were 38 indicators; 24 (63%) were performing on or above target, 3 (8%) were performing worse than target but within the threshold and 11 (29%) were performing below target. We recognised the indicators that were off target which related to visitors to events or attractions and website visitors for these events or attractions due to Covid-19.
69. The directorate underspent by £160k, which created a 3.5% variance against the original cash budget. Savings were made as part of the shared services and the events programme as the Covid-19 pandemic meant that many events such as the flower show had been taken online.
70. In response to my questions, we were advised that due to Covid-19 and home working, shared services had commenced differently than planned however staff had adapted well. It was understood that a couple of weeks were lost following this but now all staff were entirely able to work from home.
71. With regards to the HR Policy Framework, we were advised that this was now in place and staff had been consulted with along the process. Good progress had been made to integrate the two HR teams and no redundancies resulted.
72. We recognised a decrease in staff sickness absence and discussed how working from home had affected this. Reassurances were made that managers were monitoring the performance and productivity of their staff under the new ways of working.

73. We thanked Chris Sinnott and Councillor Peter Wilson for their attendance and thanked staff for all their work, in particular with shared services during difficult times. We noted the report.

Quarter Two Performance Report 2020/21

74. We considered a monitoring report from the Deputy Chief Executive which was presented to the Executive Cabinet on 12 November 2020. Councillor Peter Wilson advised that the report demonstrated performance against the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and key performance indicators during the second quarter of 2020/21, 1 July to 30 September 2020.

75. Overall performance of key projects was excellent with 85% of the projects rated green and 15% currently rated amber; there were two action plans for the amber projects which were contained in the report. Performance of the Corporate Strategy indicators and key service delivery measures was good with 67% of Corporate Strategy measures and 86% of key service delivery measures performing on or above target, or within the 5% threshold. Those indicators performing below target had action plans outlined with measures to improve performance.

76. We discussed the report, in particular the delivery of affordable homes within the borough, recognising that a significant amount work had been completed, yet more was required. The current figures for the number of affordable homes under construction were requested and we were advised that a report on the Wholly Owned Company would be brought before Members for consideration in due course.

77. With regards to unemployment and the impact of Covid-19, We were reassured that the situation in Chorley reflected the national picture. The hard work of the Business Engagement Team during this time was recognised and commended.

78. We noted the report.

Reports from the Task and Finish Groups

79. We welcomed Councillor Kim Snape, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group for Sustainable Public Transport, and she provided us with a verbal update.

80. At the first meeting, James Hoskinson (Planning Assistant) delivered a presentation in relation to the Sustainable September Campaign completed by the council last year. This explored the findings of how staff travelled to work and gathered views and opinions about transportation to work. This campaign would be undertaken again to explore the changes in 12 months and how the commute had been impacted with Covid-19. It was expected that the increase in home working would be a significant factor.

81. A Scoping Document would be created to provide focus within the wide-ranging topic to produce realistic aims. There were suggestions about rail provision, bus services, community transport options such as dial-a-ride, as well as recognising the difficulties the council has in enforcing issues around public transport, the cost implications with public transport and what sustainable funding for buses is available. Work also proposed to tackle social isolation across the borough and environmental concerns such as air quality. The scoping document would also include the potential stakeholders for the review and how they would be consulted.
82. Some members attended a Local Government Association webinar on the decarbonisation of transport, and the role of public transport. An update on this would be provided at the next session.
83. We thanked Kim Snape for attending and presenting the verbal update report. We noted the update.

Overview and Scrutiny: Sustainable Public Transport Task Group

85. At the meeting that took place 5 November 2020, members welcomed Lancashire County Councillor Keith Iddon to present to members the role of the County Council in supporting sustainable public transport, and to ease social isolation. Members of the Task Group also discussed the Local Government Association Presentation about Sustainable Public transport.
86. Within this meeting, Members of the Task Group agreed to the Scoping Document.
87. At the meeting that took place 3 December 2020, members welcomed Zoe Whiteside, Service Lead, Spatial Planning, Early Intervention and Support, and she provided an update on the progress of the Green Agenda in relation to Sustainable Public Transport.
88. Members welcomed Matt Davies, Managing Director of Stagecoach, James Mellor, Commercial Director of Stagecoach and Nick Small, Head of Strategic and Built Environment of Stagecoach. The three guests presented to Members about their operation in Chorley, the processes of new, existing and defunct bus routes, their funding streams, the opportunities in place for Chorley Council to influence bus services, their Sustainable Public Transport Initiatives. How Stagecoach aimed to prevent and decrease levels of social isolation and how their operation can coincide with the Local Plan of both Chorley and Lancashire.
89. At meeting that took place 7 January 2021, members welcomed Tracy Keating, manager at Central Lancs Dial-a-Ride and she presented a verbal presentation explaining their operation, how they recruit staff, how they are funded, how and where they operate in Chorley.
90. The Members also welcomed Owain Roberts, Regional Stakeholder Manager at Northern Trains Limited to provide a verbal presentation.
91. Alison Marland, Principal Planning Officer presented a verbal report updating Members of the progress of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Consultation.

Recommendation

To note the report.

COUNCILLOR JOHN WALKER

CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRITUNY COMMITTEE