



Minutes of	Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel
Meeting date	Thursday, 28 October 2021
Members present:	Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillor Roy Lees (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Julia Berry, and Aidy Riggott,
Officers:	Jonathan Noad (Director of Planning and Development), Howard Anthony (Performance & Partnerships Team Leader), Jon-James Martin (Performance and Transformation Officer), and Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer)
Apologies:	Councillor James Nevett
Other Members:	Councillors Alistair Bradley and Alistair Morwood

21.OSP.9 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 24 June 2021 of Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel

Decision: The minutes were approved as a correct record.

21.OSP.10 Declarations of Any Interests

No declarations were made.

21.OSP.11 Planning and Development

The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel welcomed Councillor Bradley, Executive Leader, and Executive Member - Economic Development and Public Service Reform, Councillor Morwood, Executive Member - Planning and Development and Jonathan Noad, Director of Planning and Development.

Councillor Morwood highlighted areas of the report to Members.

There was an overspend of £56,000 due to the national shortage of building control officers. The Council hired from the private sector. Two separate unsuccessful attempts were made to recruit. The decision was made to focus on training officers internally with support provided by an external consultant. The expenditure towards the external consultant was deemed to be value for money. The two officers being trained were currently working at 50% and 75% while working towards levels 4 and 5

diplomas in building control. It was confirmed that despite lacking a named Enforcement Officer, enforcement continued.

The Council had been awarded the ISO 9001 Quality Assurance certification, and was seeking to gain a greater market share, which was 30% and overcome issues that had been caused by Covid-19.

The number of empty properties had decreased and was now below target.

Due to Covid-19, employment rates and the number of projected jobs created were below target.

Covid also impacted the business engagement service. Many businesses had struggled to maintain their position and survive.

Within the Enforcement Service, 100% of building control applications, both major and minor were decided within the time frame or granted extensions.

A correction was raised, paragraph 26, should read "*the work noted in the report impacts climate change and sustainability targets of the Council's Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place*".

Councillor Bradley stressed that Covid had significantly impacted the economy during the time frame of the report and noted that many businesses focused on survival. Concurrently, the Council had a duty of care towards its staff and implemented 'working from home' and 'hybrid working' which impacted the efficiency of the Council.

It was emphasised that the shortage of staff was not unique to Chorley Council, councils and businesses across the country faced similar issues.

In response to a question from Members, it was confirmed that the employment target rate of 80% had been met, but had not been sustained for significant periods of time.

It was clarified that some targets were aspirational, and others were interventional.

Jonathan Noad explained to Members that he would return with a figure of planning applications that had agreed extensions, and to return with a figure of tree planting by ward.

It was highlighted that Planning and Development was two sovereign services at Chorley and South Ribble, but resilience had been shared when required.

A report that related to the Local Plan was to be presented at the next full Council meeting. The preferred option stage was expected in February 2022.

Over the duration of six months, the Council's Licensing enforcement had granted 102 premises licenses, 132 Temporary Event Notices, 61 Taxi Licenses, and 198 vehicle licenses.

Decision: The report was noted

21.OSP.12 Business Plans

The Committee welcomed Howard Anthony, Performance and Partnerships Team Leader to present the Business Plans across all departments of the Council and Shared Service developments since February 2021.

There were 15 Business plans containing 170 projects.

On page 19, a colour coded graph visualised progress of projects. A significant bar of Housing Solutions was red, but it was to be rectified with the appointment of the Housing Solutions Manager.

'Accommodation, Property Services, and Town Centre Development', was a large plan, and covered three separate services, the number of red projects did not reflect the volume of projects that the service was delivering.

For many projects in the red, the correlated factor was resources and capacity of certain teams.

Key actions to reduce the risk included the recruitment drive in ICT to fill shared and vacant positions. This would also decrease the skills gap and increase ICT capacity to support the delivery of projects.

There were additional issues with the Council taking control of the leisure facilities. The decision impacted the finance team, which caused a delay to their Business Plan. It was noted that all spending towards the leisure centre was budgeted and no additional resources were directed to the service. Time and effort costs were required to implement payment and related systems.

Members raised that they were concerned with ICT and recruitment. ICT was a key service that crucially related to other services. Councillor Bradley added that ICT was being restructured on the back of Shared Services.

It was acknowledged that alongside many businesses, the Council was short of staff at every level, and it was an amalgamation of Brexit, the pandemic, and changing lifestyles. There was a shortage of viable applicants, with increased wage demands of qualified applicants. There was the investment risk of training staff to the level which enabled them to leave for higher wages in the private sector.

It was clarified that Northgate were paid to digitised records, which was a long running programme.

In response to a query by the Chair which related to the purchase of 9 bungalows, it was confirmed that the decision was made by Council due to the short supply of bungalows in the borough. It was expected that the coming months, matters that related to housing would improve, and a presentation was to be given to Councillors at the end of November.

Decision: The report was noted

Chair

Date