

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 30 September 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 28 October 2021, 16 December 2021, 13 January 2022, and an update on the task group review.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 30 September 2021

Customer and Digital Directorate Update

2. We were provided and noted an update by the Executive Member following the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel that took place 24 June 2021.

Health Scrutiny

3. We expressed interest in creating a Committee to explore health scrutiny to meet twice a year in partnership with South Ribble.
4. Members shared that some residents had difficulty accessing vaccinations although there are yellow cars that transport residents to appointments, and Community Nurses visit those that struggled to travel.
5. We noted the update.

First Aid at Chorley Council

6. We welcomed Chris Moister, Director of Governance to update the Committee about first aid at Chorley Council.
7. The key points of the presentation included:
 - The relevant first aid health and safety regulations the Council adheres to.
 - The calculator tool used to decide required provisions.
 - The Town Hall contains 13 members of staff first aid trained, in addition to all Lancastrian Attendants.
 - The frequency, availability and monitoring of first aid training.
 - Risk management and the impact of Covid-19 with staff returning to the office.
 - The distribution of responsibility, required assessments, and insurance when external parties use Council buildings.
8. First aiders and the locations of automated external defibrillators (AED) is widely available, and first aid kits and AED's are maintained by the Health and Safety Team Leader.
9. We agreed that first aid information should be incorporated in the new member inductions with additional information distributed via Member Learning Sessions and IntheKnow.
10. We noted the update.

Sustainable Public Transport Monitoring Report

11. We welcomed Zoe Whiteside, Service Lead for Spatial Planning to update the Committee on Sustainable Public Transport following the completion of the Task Group.
12. The Task Group made 21 recommendations.
13. Key points from the report include:
 - Canal and Rivers Trust progressed with work since the publication of the report with arrangements made to improve certain tow paths in Chorley, including bridge 74 and 85a.
 - Funding methods explored including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), but the Council would not fully fund projects and expects matching funds.
 - The Council engaged positively with Andrew Barley, Public Transport Manager at Lancashire County Council and on behalf of the Council was consulting on the bus strategy.
 - Chorley preparation is further ahead of South Ribble's and Preston's in for the County Council's new Highway Master Plan expected in Spring of 2022.
 - The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted public transport.
 - The proposed Cycling Task Group stalled due to lack of response from Members.
14. As Chair of the Task Group, Councillor Kim Snape praised the work of Alison Marland and Zoe Whiteside. She felt positive about the working relationship with the County Council but desires the Council's activity to be more proactive instead of reactive.
15. There is uncertainty relating to the aspirations of Coppull's rail station development as information received differed between Councillor Kim Snape and Zoe Whiteside. It was highlighted that Coppull Station was in the third round of the Department for Transport Restoring Railways Fund, but there are 89 other stations that sought funding.
16. We noted the report.

Developing the Council's Green Agenda – Monitoring Report 2

17. We welcomed Sally Green, Climate Change Programme Officer to present the Monitoring Report.
18. Key points of the report included:
 - The Climate Change Programme Officer is in the role.
 - Recommendations are split into strategic themes and each has a responsible officer.
 - 5 recommendations have been completed.
 - The Climate Change Working Group convenes 10 times a year.
 - The Council's carbon footprint has been mapped across 250 assets, a roadmap and action plan commissioned to start decarbonising the largest site first.
 - Dialogue with the County Council started for electric charging points. Policy change is expected which will enable more power and information to be delegated. An electric charging consultation was underway.
 - Green burial sites stalled, there is ongoing demand for traditional burial but the Council possessed no suitable land. An alternative option presented was for post cremation ashes to be used to fertilise a tree in place of a gravestone.

- Work is ongoing with local housing providers to improve the efficiency of Chorley's housing stock. The current target is for all homes to be rated C by 2030.
 - Climate change information on the Council's website is updated bi-monthly, social media is being used to raise knowledge and awareness.
 - 26 climate based events planned for all age groups.
19. Members were keen to encourage electric charging to be installed in school car parks in conjunction with climate education.
 20. We noted the Monitoring Report.

Select Move Review

21. We welcomed Jennifer Mullin, Director of Communities to present a verbal update with a written report to follow.
22. Select Move is a partnership Chorley Council is in with Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council and a large number of social landlords. Chorley took the Chair of the partnership in March 2021 and planned to upgrade the current system, improve coordination of the partnership and adjust tiers and costings.
23. The system used is outdated and incompatible with modern accessibility guidelines, a new system to be provided by Civica. The new system will allow greater detailed information for both user and operator.
24. The Council is to employ a 'Select Move Coordinator' to be responsible for the partnership operating fairly and in accordance with the agreement.
25. The introduction of a tiered costing system will allow smaller housing associations to enter the partnership and be regulated fairly.
26. During the pandemic, the user experience of Select Move deteriorated, although there is optimism that with ongoing improvements a better user experience will be experienced.
27. The verbal update was noted.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel 28 October 2021

Performance Focus - Planning and Development

28. We 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 to the Performance Panel to present the report.
29. Councillor Morwood highlighted areas of the report to the Committee
30. There was an overspend of £56,000 due to the national shortage of building control officers, the Council hired from the private sector after two unsuccessful attempts were made to recruit.
31. The Council is to focus on training Officers internally with the support of an external consultant. The expenditure towards this was deemed to be value for money as the two Officers being trained were working at 50% and 75% while working towards levels 4 and 5 diplomas in building control.
32. The Council was awarded the ISO 9001 Quality Assurance Certification and is seeking to gain a greater market share which is currently 30%.

33. The number of empty properties in the borough decreased and is below target.
34. Due to Covid-19, employment rates and the number of projected jobs created is below target.
35. Covid-19 impacted the business engagement services, many businesses struggled to maintain their position and survive.
36. Within the Enforcement Service, 100% of building control applications, both minor and major were decided within the time frame or granted extensions.
37. The shortage of staff impacting Chorley was not a unique issue for the Council, council's and businesses across the country faced similar issues.
38. In response to a question from Members, it was confirmed that the employment target rate of 80% has been met, but was not sustained for a significant period of time, it was noted that some targets were aspirational where as others were interventional.
39. Planning and Development is not part of Shared Services but resilience is shared when required.
40. In a period of six months, the Council's Licensing Enforcement Team granted 102 premises licenses, 132 Temporary Event Notices, 61 taxi licenses and 198 vehicle licenses.
41. We noted the report.

Business Plans

42. We 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.
43. 15 business plans contained 170 projects.
44. On the colour coded graph, a significant bar of Housing Solutions was red. This is due to be rectified with the appointment of the Housings Solutions Manager.
45. 'Accommodation, Property Services and Town Centre Development' is a large plan, and covered three sperate services, and the number of projects coded red did not reflect the volume of projects the service delivered.
46. Many projects coded red has the correlating factor of resources and capacity.
47. Key actions taken to reduce the risk is to recruit in ICT to fill shared and vacant positions.
48. The decision for the Council to take control of the leisure facilities impacted the finance team which caused a delay to their Business Plan. All the spending towards the leisure centre was budgeted, and no additional resources has been directed to the service.
49. Members expressed concern with ICT's need for recruitment considering the crucial service provided across the Council.
50. Across the country, due to an amalgamation of Brexit, Covid-19 and changing lifestyles there was a shortage of viable applicants, wage demands have increased for qualified applicants, and there is greater investment risk in training staff only for them to seek higher wages in the private sector.
51. It was clarified that Northgate were paid to digitise records and is a long running programme.
52. It was explained to the Committee that the purchase of 9 bungalows was made by Council due to the short supply in the borough.
53. We noted the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel 16 December 2021

Performance Focus – Policy and Governance

54. We welcomed Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources to present the report.
55. The overall performance of the directorate is good, 11 projects are rated green, 1 amber and 1 completed. Covid-19 continues to impact performance.
56. There is a slight overspend on the budget, the largest is the Lancastrian event space, Covid-19 restrictions limited the potential for revenue although as restrictions eased, bookings increased.
57. There was a decrease in engagement with the Council's social media and views to the Chorley Live website, it was concluded that it is the result of fewer events held. Members sought further figures related to site visitors to 'Check Out Chorley' as it was the default page users were navigated to when they connected to the free Wi-Fi, and questions if users immediately navigated away or clicked links on the page.
58. Complaints to the Chief Executive responded to within 10 working days is lower than Quarter Two, but was still above target.
59. Transformation and Partnerships' performance is good, with one or two targets off track.
60. Work at Astley Hall is progressing, although additional structural issues have been discovered which will require additional work.
61. The figures of 16 and 17 year old's not in education, employment or training (NEET) came from the County Council and the Department for Education. There is no personalised, broken down data available. Members believed that further investigation is required into the numbers at ward level, in addition to understanding the barriers in place for those that are NEET. Members proposed that future work can be completed at individual Neighbourhood Area Meetings and at Scrutiny.
62. Some Members feel there has been too much training offered with 23 sessions in three months with varying levels of attendance, it was noted that the training sessions are the result of suggestions and requests made by Members. The World Café Event held to allow Members and Directors to interact was positive and Members want the event to repeat in future.

Quarter Two Performance Monitoring Report

63. We welcomed Howard Anthony, Performance & Partnerships Team Leader to present the report.
64. 67% of Corporate Strategy indicators are on target or within threshold. 33% are below or not on target, each have action plan in place.
65. Issues remain with capacity and unfilled vacancies.
66. A highlighted off target indicator is the number of people that completed the Basic Digital Skills training. Sessions are postponed until early 2022. Consideration given on how to develop and run the training taking into account the subject matter.
67. The number of projected jobs created through the Council's support or intervention is below target due to the pandemic's impact on the local economy. The Council transitioned from supporting businesses with advice and grants to grow to providing advice and grants for them to survive. The indicator reflects this rather than the work readiness of the local population. The overall employment rate is provided by the

- Office of National Statistics, and although below the target of 80%, is ahead of the steadily decreasing figures regionally and nationally.
68. Phase 2 of Shared Services is progressing. The partnership between Chorley and South Ribble is advancing. The first annual Partnership Summit was held in November 2021 with a focus on Economic Reform. Part of the discussions held included the with large numbers of vacancies and difficulties with recruitment. Competition has increased from London and internationally, with the increase in familiarity and utilisation of remote working.
69. Town centre vacancies are off track, but work is progressing to resolve any issue that prevents the promotion of Chorley as a place to do business. The vacancy rate of 10% is considered a good performance for towns in the North West of England.
70. We noted the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel 13 January 2022

71. To follow

Reports from the Task and Finish Groups

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Select Move

72. The Task Group on Select Move commenced in December 2021 with Councillor June Molyneux appointed Chair and Councillor Sarah Ainsworth appointed Vice Chair. The Task Group received a presentation by Lead Officer Rachel Stewart, Housing Solutions Manager providing background information. Members considered the Scope of the inquiry and discussed their objectives, outcomes and who they wanted to interview as part of the review. Members set out by recognising the current position of the Council, identifying what the council could influence and the resources that may be required.
73. The Task Group has met once since December and invited non task group Members to share their experiences, thoughts, and views on Select Move in their role as a Councillor.

Recommendation

74. That the report be noted

Councillor John Walker
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MP