

Minutes of	Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel
Meeting date	Thursday, 15 December 2022
Committee Members present:	Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillor Roy Lees (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Michelle Le Marinel, Arjun Singh and Kim Snape
Officers:	Victoria Willett (Director of Change and Delivery), Howard Anthony (Interim Head of Policy and Performance), Robert Langford (Performance and Partnerships Officer), and Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer).
Other Members:	Councillor Alistair Bradley (Executive Leader, and Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform, and Councillor Peter Wilson (Executive Member for Resources.

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

9 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 22 September 2022 of Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel

Following the last Performance Panel, an update was circulated to Members at the end of September 2022 with updates on Primrose Gardens Café, flood defences for the River Chor at Astley Park, the pilot project for occupational therapy presence within communities and the public protection projects on hold.

Resolved: That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

10 Declarations of Any Interests

No interests were declared.

11 Performance Focus - Policy and Governance

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources, and Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform presented the Policy and Governance Performance Focus.

The directorate covered five services,

- Communications and Visitor Economy,
- Finance,
- Governance,

- Transformation and Partnerships,
- Business Support.

Financially, the directorate had a variance in the budget of 0.6% equating £33,000. The overspend was due to the increase in the cost of utilities, the increase in audit fees and the pay award against the budgeted 2%.

The performance of the indicators within the corporate strategy was strong. Two of the four indicators were at or above target and better than Quarter 2 2021/22. A highlighted indicator was 'the % of 16 – 17 year old's who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)'. Performance was above target at 1.5% but performance was down against Quarter 2 2021/22. Work was ongoing with the Youth Zone and the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure training, information and assistance could be provided. Members raised that there was to be an analysis identifying the barriers in place in wards with the highest percentage of NEET such as Adlington and Anderton. Action was ongoing, but further information could be provided following the Committee.

All four of the Communications and Visitor Economy indicators were at or above target, with two new baseline targets in place which focused on the performance of Astley Hall. It was not certain if the ticket sales of 4694 included the annual or family ticket, and if it included return figures with those tickets.

Social media engagement was considered to be the culmination of views, comments, clicks, and followers. The Council had access to a compiled dashboard, and more information could be returned to Members. The most popular post in November 2022 featured the Santa Express returning with 29,000 engagements.

Two thirds of the finance performance indicators were at or better than target. The underperforming indicator was 'supplier payment within 30 days'. It was the view of the council that anything below the target of 99% was unacceptable. Covid, changes to the workforce and the change in payment processing software impacted this result.

80% of Governance indicators were on or above target. The two indicators that were below were '% complaints to the Chief Executive responded to within 10 working days', and the 'Number of external Lancastrian bookings'. It was highlighted that there was not a similar target for Councillors due to the difficulty to analyse and assess, and Covid impacted the bookings to the Lancastrian.

It was added that the Lancastrian was not actively promoted, and garnered custom through repeat bookings and word of mouth. The Council did not wish to have the Lancastrian fully booked, as the venue was used as a community space for many groups that were impacted by Covid. The council often provided the hall at discount rates for some charitable groups and events. The number of external bookings was below target, but was better than Quarter 2 2021/22, however the revenue generated was above target, and also better than Quarter 2 2021/22.

There were 12 indicators for Transformation and Partnership. eight were on or above target, one was within the 5% threshold and three were below target. The worse than target indicators included the Corporate Strategy Projects and were discussed and explained at Executive Cabinet and Council. The Council maintained confidence that when both were completed, they will deliver excellent services for the Council.

The ‘% of shared services staff satisfied’ was below target and worse than Quarter 2 2021/22. This was highlighted at the Shared Services Joint Committee and it was understood that organisational change of any kind created uncertainty, roles were changed, and workplace culture adjusted. The process was ongoing and a learning experience for both councils. It was understood that some Covid relief measures created additional work for some shared departments, such as customer services. The Council frequently held opportunities for feedback, discussion and offered support to staff.

Customer Services was highlighted as an area that frequently witnessed staff move to other departments due to the skills developed working within the role. A positive for staff development, but caused a need for further recruitment.

Members praised the decrease in the number of ‘FTE (full time equivalent) days lost through long term sickness or absence’. A previous Overview and Scrutiny Task Group was undertaken when the average was 8 days.

Vacancies remained throughout the council, however, the vacancy rate had decreased from the previous 9 months but there were ongoing recruitment difficulties. Interim appointments had been made temporarily to fill the required roles. The Council used the opportunity to train apprentices and graduates in addition to utilising freelance, consultants and short-term temporary contracts.

The average council employee worked on a hybrid basis with an average of two to three days a week in the office, however, this was dependent on the type of role, levels of productivity, and management discretion. The council understood that office working had advantages, particularly for younger and more inexperienced staff as training and mentoring was more successful in the office. The Council appreciated the appeal of flexibility and were competing in a more flexible labour market. The Council took the health and wellbeing of its employees seriously and placed a high value on employees maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Resolved: That the update be noted

12 Quarter Two Performance Monitoring Report 2022/23

Howard Anthony, Interim Head of Policy and Performance presented the Quarter Two Performance Monitoring Report 2022/23.

Overall, performance was positive, with eleven (79%) rated as complete and green, two (14%) rated as amber, and one (7%) rated as red.

At Strawberry Meadows, 24 units opened, however there were issues with utilities. A number of issues remained at Tatton Gardens, but the handover was due imminently with the nursery and GP surgery.

The indicator for the digital skills was below target, however, with a new course provider enabled a more flexible and tailored approach.

Members questioned if the number of affordable homes would be impacted by the economy, but it was stated that with the new proposed local plan, 25 – 30% of new developments would be affordable.

Despite the current economic impact, Chorley's performance for town centre vacancy and employment rate was above the regional average, and in light of the circumstances, five new businesses recently opened in the town centre.

In response to a query from Members, it was confirmed that the Council offered shop front and shop floor grants. There was also a grant that incentivised employing additional staff.

The tree giveaway was ongoing, however, Members expressed concern that Lancashire County Council forbade tree planting on highway verges. Despite this, the council continued to work with partners to encourage the tree planting efforts.

An update was given about the process of the new telephony system. Training was underway to familiarise staff. The change would be gradual to ensure a smooth transition. The system should allow the right calls go to the right officer. It was acknowledged that there was continued work required to improve the rate of dropped calls, missed calls and that customer services provided a positive first impression for customers.

Two indicators were raised for explanation by Members, 'Percentage of customers dissatisfied with the service they received from the council', and 'major planning applications decided within 13 (16 for EIA) weeks or agreed time extension'.

The Council measured those dissatisfied with the service to be more self-critical and aware of service. 15% was considered good against the 20% target. Planning applications were a challenge. The Council felt it was important to ensure the right decisions were made.

Resolved: The update be noted.

13 Exclusion of Public and Press

The Chair, Councillor John Walker proposed and the Vice Chair Councillor Roy Lees seconded, and it was **resolved (unanimously) That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act.**

14 Recruitment Update

An update was provided related to the ongoing recruitment and organisational structure within the council. It was confirmed that any appointment to a Directorship would be subject to the Appointments Panel.

Chair

Date