

Overview and Scrutiny

1. This report summarises the business considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 6 October, and the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held 15 December 2022, and an update on the Task Group Review of Empty Properties.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6 October 2022

Health Scrutiny

2. Written reports were provided to us by Councillor Alex Hilton and Councillor Margaret France.
3. We heard that it is likely that two new hospitals will be built, one in Preston and the other in Lancaster, however, it is not known when the work will begin, it is estimated work will take six years to complete.
4. We are all in agreement that it is positive that there are no plans to close Chorley Hospital.
5. We noted the report.

Sustainable Public Transport Third Monitoring Report

6. We welcomed Zoe Whiteside, now Head of Spatial Planning to present the Third Monitoring Report from the Sustainable Public Transport Task Group.
7. 18 recommendations are completed or close to completion. 5 are in progress, and a number of the recommendations are ongoing alongside the development of the Local Plan.
8. Key recommendations were highlighted, and progress discussed.
9. Instead of a Task Group, the cycling work is now to be developed and reported to the Climate Change Working Group. Four bike shelters installed in Bengal street are underused despite the high demand. Promotion to increase uptake is underway, if they remain underused, they will be relocated into the town centre.

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Select Move Final Report

10. We welcomed the Chair of the Select Move Overview and Scrutiny Task Group, Councillor June Molyneaux to present the final report.
11. We heard the background and reasoning for the formation of the task group, which included recommendations from a previous Task Group not being adhered to.
12. The Task Group engaged with a number of internal and external partners. Users of Select Move were surveyed, and although the response rate was low, the exercise provided valuable insight into Select Move
13. The recommendations provided within the final report were identified throughout the duration of the investigation and aim to provide positive change and forward

momentum within the partnership. We believe that frequent questionnaires to users would be positive, however an incentive would be needed to increase the response rate.

14. We noted the Task Group Final Report.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel – 15 December 2022

Performance Focus – Policy and Governance

15. We welcomed Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources, and Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform to present the Policy and Governance Performance Focus.
16. The performance indicators are broken down into the five services of the directorate.
17. All four of the 'Communications and Visitor Economy' indicators are at or above target, with two new baseline targets in place for Astley Hall. Social media engagement is considered to be the culmination of views, comments, clicks and followers on the council's social media pages. The most popular post in November 2022 features the Santa Express returning with 29,000 engagements.
18. Two thirds of the 'Finance' performance indicators are at or better than target. The underperforming indicator is 'supplier payment within 30 days'. It is the view of the council that this figure being below 99%, is unacceptable. This has been impacted by Covid, changes to the workforce and change in software.
19. Financially, the directorate has a variance in the budget of 0.6%, which equals £33,000. The overspend is in part due to the increase in the cost of utilities, the increase in audit fees and the pay award against the budgeted 2%.
20. 90% of the 'Governance' indicators are on or above target. The indicators that are below include '% complaints to the Chief Executive responded to within 10 working days', and the 'Number of external Lancastrian bookings'. There is not an equivalent target for complaints to Councillors due to the difficulty to analyse and assess such a target.
21. We understood that the Lancastrian event space is not actively promoted, but it attracts custom through repeat bookings and word of mouth. It is not the desire of the council to fully book the Lancastrian, as the venue is used as a community space for many groups, and often provided at a discount for some charitable groups and events.
22. The number of external bookings for the Lancastrian is below target but better than Quarter 2 2021/22. The revenue generated is above target and better than Quarter 2 2021/22.
23. Eight of twelve 'Transformation and Partnerships' indicators are on or above target. One is within the 5% threshold and three are below target. The indicators that are below includes the Corporate Strategy Projects and they have been discussed and explained at Executive Cabinet and Council. The council is confident that when both Tatton and Strawberry Fields projects are completed, they will deliver excellent services.

24. Staff satisfaction is below target and worse than Quarter 2 2021/22. This has been highlighted at the Shared Services Joint Committee and is understood that organisational change creates uncertainty, roles have changed, and the culture of the workplace has been adjusted. The process of shared services is ongoing and a learning experience for both councils.
25. Customer Services is an area that witness staff move to other departments due to the skills cultivated working in the role, this is viewed to be a positive for staff development, but it does cause a need for additional recruitment.
26. Vacancies remained throughout the council, but the rate has decreased from the previous 9 months. Interim appointments are in place to temporary fill required roles. The council is training apprentices and recruiting graduates in addition to freelance consultants and short-term temporary contacts.
27. The average council employee works in a hybrid capacity, with an average of two or three days a week in the office, but this is dependent on the type of role, levels of productivity and management discretion.
28. Business Support has one indicator that measures 'client satisfaction with the service received from Chorley Council and is at 100%, against the target of 85%.
29. The corporate strategy indicators are strong, with two of the four indicators at or above target and better than Quarter 2 2021/22. In relation to the '% of 16 – 17 year old's who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)' indicator, it is better than target, but underperformed compared to Quarter 2 2021/22.
30. We noted the report.

Quarter Two Performance Monitoring Report 2022/23

31. We welcomed Howard Anthony, Interim Head of Policy and Performance to present the Quarter Two Performance Monitoring Report 2022/23.
32. Overall performance is positive with eleven (79%) rated as complete and green, two (14%) rated as amber, and one (7%) rated as red.
33. 24 units have opened at Strawberry Meadows, however issues persist with utilities. A number of issues remain at Tatton Gardens, but the handover is due imminently for the nursery and GP surgery.
34. In light of the current economic difficulty, Chorley is performing above the regional average for town centre vacancies and five new businesses recently opened in the town centre. Howard confirmed that the council offered shop front and shop floor grants, and incentives to increase the number of employees.
35. The tree giveaway is ongoing, but we expressed our concern that Lancashire County Council policy restricts tree planting on highway verges, but cooperation is still ongoing with partners to further encourage tree planting in the borough.
36. The new telephone system is in the process of implementation, training is underway to familiarise staff, and a process of gradual change is being undertaken to ensure a smooth transition. The new system aims to direct calls to the right officer. It is acknowledged that further work is required to reduce the number of calls dropped or missed.

37. The council measures dissatisfaction with service received to enable feedback that is more critical. 15% is considered good against the target of 20%. With planning applications, the council took the position that the right decision needs to be made over a quick one.

38. We noted the report.

Recruitment Update

39. We were provided an update that relates to the ongoing recruitment and organisational structure within the council. It is confirmed that any appointment to a Directorship is subject to the Appointments Panel.

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Update

40. The first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group: Empty Properties took place Wednesday 14 December 2022. The Task Group appointed Councillor Sarah Ainsworth as the Chair and Councillor Le Marinel as Vice Chair.

41. The Task Group scoped the project and heard background information on empty properties provided by Adele Hayes, Head of Planning and Enforcement, and Nathan Howson, Enforcement Team Leader. This covered the definition, the number of current empty properties, and what powers the council has according to its Empty Property Policy.

Recommendations

42. To note the report.

Councillor John Walker
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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