

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date Thursday, 26 January 2023

Committee Members present: Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillor Roy Lees (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Hasina Khan, Samir Khan, James Nevett, Aidy Riggott, Kim Snape, Jenny Whiffen, Michelle Le Marinel, Dedrah Moss, Alan Platt, Arjun Singh and Ryan Towers

Other Members Present Councillors Peter Wilson, Bev Murray, and Alex Hilton

Officers: Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance), Zoe Whiteside (Head of Spatial Planning), Lindsey Blackstock (Open Space Strategy Officer), Laura-Jean Taylor (Head of Public Protection), and Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Other Attendees Lancashire Police Inspector Michael Moys

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

23 Minutes of Meeting Thursday, 6 October 2022 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

24 Minutes of Meeting Thursday 15 December 2022 of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel

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

25 Minutes of Meeting Thursday 12 January 2023 of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel

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

26 Declarations of Any Interests

No interests were declared.

27 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

28 Executive Cabinet Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Executive Cabinet meetings that took place 8 November 2022, 8 December 2022, and 19 January 2023 were noted.

29 Notice of Executive Decisions

Resolved: The notice of Executive Decisions was noted.

30 Health Scrutiny

Councillor Alex Hilton provided a verbal update that covered Lancashire County Council Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committees that took place 2 November, and 14 December 2022.

The Social Care Reform announced in September 2021 was due to be introduced October 2023 but was delayed to 2025.

New reforms to social care were considered including streamlining the financial and needs assessment online, however, despite assurances that additional support would be available, there were concerns that those with complex needs would be disadvantaged.

The waiting list for low level needs assessments was six months.

Chief Medical Officer of Integrated Care Board (ICB) attended and presented information about virtual wards. Virtual wards were said to be a safe and effective way to care for patients assisted by technology. The care received would be the same as in the ward, with patients monitored from their homes. Contact between health professionals and patients occurred over the phone. In events of deterioration, the ambulance service would be used to transfer the patient to hospital. Cooperation with pharmacists ensured deliveries of medication.

Across Lancashire and South Cumbria, there were 746 virtual beds, acute virtual trusts were created to be responsible for patients, and protocols were in place to ensure that only eligible patients with suitable homes were placed in a virtual ward. The virtual wards would prevent needed beds being blocked by patients that should be, but were unable to be discharged.

Recruitment continued and there was an acknowledged concern about the levels of staff. Sites were still under consideration for the new hospital programme.

Members requested, and the Chair agreed to write to the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee to request the tendering and procurement for the Integrated Care Boards were added to the Work Programme. It was raised that residents were not being consulted in regard to the future of their local GP practices.

For the next Overview and Scrutiny Meeting, members requested information about the mental health update.

Resolved: The update was noted.

31 Budget Scrutiny

Executive Member for Resources Councillor Peter Wilson presented the report.

The report set out the draft budget which had not yet been finalised.

The budget had been impacted by the cost of living crisis, increase in utility cost, staff wages and significant inflation.

The budget deficit was reported at £1.17 million, with an additional £1.1 million the following year.

It was believed that the budget could be balanced without cuts to services or staffing, the council intended to prioritise investment in the borough. Significant income had been gained over the years since purchasing Market Walk in 2013, after borrowing costs, the profit was £834,000. Strawberry Fields and Strawberry Meadows when fully operational would generate further income.

The council aimed to maintain the priorities of the council, to invest in new and affordable homes, provide jobs and skills, invest in providing and supporting the local economy and environment.

There was long term uncertainty around funding from central government, yearly income from central government had decreased despite increased costs and pressures. In 2016, the council received £17 million, the figure for 2023/24 was set at £14 million. The numbers for fair funding and business rates were only known for 2023/24, and the reviews of both were delayed.

The draft budget proposed a 1.99% increase in Council Tax. Consideration was given not to charge more than necessary, however, the future budget gap of £1.3 million was excessive. With the rise, Chorley would still have the second lowest rate of Council Tax in Lancashire

Revenues from the New Homes Bonus, and Services Grant had decreased, however there was the Minimum Guarantee Grant which totaled £1.1 million.

It was confirmed that further information would be provided in relation to the extra £600,000 Shared Prosperity Fund.

In relation to car parks, it was estimated that for the 2022 budget, the council would receive £200,000 from the parking charge changes, the result was better than expected.

It was clarified that special expenses would be increased in line with the 1.99% increase.

Members appreciated the approach the administration held with the rise in tax, but warned that every penny of public money spent was required to be justified and be value for money

There remained empty units at Strawberry Meadows and Strawberry Fields, with optimism that the remaining units would be filled.

It was questioned if the £74,000 (2%) yearly return on investment was considered good against the £4 million investment for Whittle Health Hub. It was confirmed that the council believed that it was, and it was noted that the NHS was a safe and reliable tenant. It was also deemed to be a positive that residents that now had access to a new GP surgery.

Resolved: That the report be noted

32 Community Safety Partnership/Crime and Disorder

Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member for Early Intervention, Lancashire Police Inspector Michael Moys, and Laura-Jean Taylor, Head of Public protection presented the report.

Background information was provided about the Community Safety Partnership, its role and purpose within the community.

The report highlighted an overall decrease in anti-social behaviour, but there was a group of young people that caused concern, with three or four young individuals identified as the ring leaders. In recent surveys, anti-social behaviour was cited as the greatest concern for the residents in Chorley. It was noted that teenage anti-social behaviour accounted for 22% of reported antisocial behaviour, but it was clarified that breaches of Covid restrictions, neighbour disputes, noise complaints, etc, all were collated within the antisocial behaviour figure.

Civil orders and interventions had been taken to prevent the key individuals from engaging in and encouraging antisocial behaviour in other young people. Support was available to direct young people away from that behaviour. Evidence of antisocial behaviour had been used against the perpetrators and their parents. One individual was now banned from entering the town centre, a breach of this condition would result in their arrest.

Other actions taken included a dispersal order enacted at the end of January that encompassed the town centre.

The police were proactively engaged with young people and parents, any evidence of failing or negligent parental oversight and any safeguarding issues would be referred to partner agencies as a child criminal exploitation (CCE) concern.

There was said to be a positive relationship between the police, the council and other partners. Within schools, work was underway to reduce knife possession and crime. Certain rumours were acknowledged and addressed as an incident was understood to have occurred, but exaggeration had taken place. The response taken had been tailored to deal with the problem effectively for the long term.

It was highlighted that although some non-police matters were passed on from the housing associations, they were receptive and were a positive factor within the partnership.

PCSO's and Neighbourhood Officers could be dispatched to any area that would benefit from an increased presence. Roadshows and engagement stalls were also available upon request. Members expressed uncertainty about the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Officers as incidents of drugs and anti-social behaviour were not actioned and was told "there was nothing to be done about it". The inspector was unhappy that this was the experience some Members had faced and reiterated that things could be done, and Members should make contact in the event of a reoccurrence in the response.

The Community Safety Partnership was now meeting again, and relied significantly on voluntary, community and faith organisations. Work was underway with street pastors to provide support during the nighttime economy.

It was queried for clarity, the line at paragraph 15 "Chorley is the only Local Authority within Lancashire in which Vulnerability Present, but no Ideology or Counter Terrorism Risk is not referred as an ideology." It was explained that the figures and information about referrals could not be shared, but it was a low number. The statement was a category within the Prevent program that identified vulnerability, but was not fueled by extreme racial, religious or identity ideology.

Members raised concern that the police station was to move from the Town Centre to Exton Lake Campus. The Inspector agreed with the sentiment given but added that it was still in the early stages and there was consideration for a satellite office with officers in the town centre.

Members believed that it was important for an easy, and clear pathway to be available for those affected by crime, or a witness to come forward

Resolved: The report was noted.

33 Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy & Programme Update

Zoe Whiteside, Head of Spatial Planning and Lindsey Blackstock, Open Space Strategy Officer presented the report.

The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy was approved by Executive Cabinet in 2021.

Appendix 1 of the report highlighted the completed schemes from 2019 onward.

There was currently no project to deliver cycling infrastructure but could come later.

Technical evidence documents were created by external consultants. Their assessment was used to understand the quality, the supply and demand for typologies.

Delays to identified schemes were caused by several issues but was primarily due to sourcing and securing funding.

There had been locations identified for five potential green bus stops, a decision was to be made by executive decision by the end of February. The Cabinet awarded £26,000 to repair the worst sections of towpaths in the borough.

It was confirmed that for the urban wildflower corridors, there was no spread risk of invasive species or damage to the local ecology. Due to the location, particularly Eaves Lane, there was little chance for seeds to migrate to other areas of the borough. The wild flower corridors were in place to provide colour and attract insects.

Members queried into the spending of £189,000 from a Section 106 for the community centre. It was explained that the fund was for the extension of the community centre and was used to drain the mini pitch.

The decision around the designs of open spaces came from local residents that live in the area of the open space, but it was acknowledged that there was a need for more diverse and dynamic equipment for all ages, as the focus appeared to be on young children.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

34 Period Poverty Update

This item was deferred to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee due to take place 16 March 2023.

35 Reports from the Task and Finish Groups

Councillor Sarah Ainsworth provided an update on the progress of the Empty Property Task Group.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

36 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

Resolved: That the Work Programme be noted.

Chair

Date