

Minutes of **Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel**

Meeting date **Thursday, 7 March 2024**

Committee Members present: Councillor Aidy Riggott (Chair), Councillor Roy Lees (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Michelle Brown, Arjun Singh and Kim Snape

Guest present: Councillor Alistair Morwood, Executive Member for Planning;
Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Sector Reform; and
Councillor Peter Wilson (attended virtually)

Officers: Gayle Wootton (Director of Planning and Property), Michelle Horrocks (Head of Economic Growth), Polly Patel (Performance and Partnerships Manager) and Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Jennifer Mullin, Directro of Communities and Leisure (attending virtually)

Apologies: Councillor Sarah Ainsworth

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

16 **Declarations of Any Interests**

There were no such declarations.

17 **Minutes of meeting Thursday, 11 January 2024 of Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel**

Resolved: The minutes of the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on Thursday, 11 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

18 **Performance Focus: Planning and Property**

The Executive Member for Planning, Councillor Alistair Morwood, and the Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Sector Reform, Councillor Alistair Bradley, presented a report providing a performance update for the Planning and Property Update which included:

- An overall directorate summary and budget position

- An overview of key performance measures at quarter three 2023/24
- An update on the Corporate Strategy projects.

The Directorate was noted to be unusual due to covering several Executive Portfolios.

Councillor Morwood referred to the Local Plan which had been moved from red to amber status since the Business Plan Update had been considered. Councillor Morwood explained that the Local Plan had previously been in red due to the delays in progress i.e. needing to be considered at the Local Plan Working Group and then Council. Now that the matter is moving forward it has been moved up to amber.

Councillor Bradley addressed the performance indicators in respect of property services. It was noted that there was an 80% overspend. He indicated that the council was still catching up on repairs and maintenance on properties dating back to COVID. He also stressed that some slippage was related to underspend rather than overspend.

Councillor Bradley informed the Committee that he did not expect the significant overspend to be recurrent in future years as it was largely due to factors such as outstanding property repairs and utility costs (which are expected to be lower in subsequent years).

As regards bad debt provision, he explained that some businesses had built up bad debts during COVID and were still trying to get back on track. The Council's approach was to take long term view to encourage businesses to stay in the town centre. The council has a good record of dealing with debt recovery for both residents and businesses.

It was also noted that Levelling Up Funding and projects considered at the Development and Assets Working Group would be subject to scrutiny in future.

During the course of the discussion members raised the following queries / requests for information:

- Town Centre Footfall – how is it measured?
- No. voids in Union St Offices
- Query on Tables on pages 9/10 – variance should show underspend rather than overspend? *
- Development Assets Working Group – dashboard report from latest meeting to be circulated

Resolved:

- i) That the report be noted;
- ii) That Levelling Up Funding and projects considered at the Development and Assets Working Group to be included in the future Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

*Postscript: Louise Mattinson, Director of Finance clarified the information in the report after the meeting as follows:

Both Property and Major Projects have overspent.

From a general finance and accounting perspective brackets are used in 3 forms;

- To denote underspends.
- To denote income.
- Also to denote a reduction in expenditure or an increase in income.

She provided the tables with additional narrative to explain the figures.

19 Chorley Quarter Three Performance Monitoring Report 2023/24

The Executive Member for Resources, Councillor Peter Wilson, and Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Sector Reform, presented a report setting out the performance against the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and key performance indicators during the third quarter of 2023/24, covering 1 October 2023 – 31 December 2023.

Councillor Wilson indicated that the Council was in a good position and delivering on its Corporate Strategy.

He referred to the need to make leisure centres more sustainable and the lower than national average Employment Rate, which was initially queried on 11 January 2024 (Minute 12). He confirmed that the figure was correct and therefore needs to be addressed.

A query was made about the Household Support Fund. Jennifer Mullin, the Director of Communities and Leisure explained that Central Government were only going to provide funding for a further six months beyond 31 March 2024.

As regards the performance indicator for percentage of 16-17 year old NEETs (Not in education, employment or training), it was highlighted that there were several reasons for this post COVID trend, including increased mental health issues, however steps were being taken to address it via place/space/care partnerships, Chorley and South Ribble Partnership, and early intervention work for 13-14 year olds.

The Chair expressed concern about the Local Plan and timescale slippage but accepted that the position had now changed.

The Committee also discussed economic activity in Chorley, which was linked to NEETs. It was noted that apprenticeships were in decline, however Chorley was offering grants for apprenticeships.

Resolved –

- i) That the report be noted;
- ii) That the following areas be included in the 2024/25 Overview and Scrutiny work Programme:
 - Local Plan
 - NEETs and Economic activity – October / November 2024.

20 Any urgent business previously agreed with the Chair

There was no urgent business.

Chair

Date