

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

This report summarises the business considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 January 2017 and 30 March 2017, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 9 March 2017, and includes an update on the Task Group reviews.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THURSDAY, 26 JANUARY 2017

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair welcomed Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources to the meeting.

Executive Cabinet meeting on 19 January minute number 17.EC.53 – Community Infrastructure Governance Arrangements and Allocation of Funding to Infrastructure.

In response to queries raised by the Committee, the Executive Member for Resources confirmed that once the outcome of the review had been presented at Executive Cabinet and a resolution made, the report would be made available to the Neighbourhood Area Meetings taking place in June and July 2017.

PCSO deployment and funding

At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 1 December, the Committee considered a report which detailed PCSO funding arrangements across Lancashire.

The report highlighted that the Chorley Council's contribution to part-funding PCSO posts was the highest across the county, and significantly higher than other district councils. It was reported that the Council part-funded 27 PCSO posts out of the total 47 part-funded posts across Lancashire. It was also reported that of the 51 posts fully funded by Lancashire Police none were deployed within the borough. It was therefore reasonable to assume that the fully funded posts were deployed elsewhere in the county were partner contributions were much lower.

Lancashire Police had been represented on a number of occasions at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide an explanation of how the council's contribution was spent. On each occasion based on the response received, members did not consider that the Council was receiving value for money. As a result, members of the Committee considered that the amount of funding for the provision of PCSOs should be reviewed as part of the budget setting proposals.

Budget Scrutiny - 2017/18 draft budget and summary position over the medium term

The Executive Member for Resources presented a report on the 2017/18 draft budget and summary budget position over the medium term which was received at the Executive Cabinet meeting on 19 January 2017.

It was reported that the budget forecasts over the next three years had been updated to take account of a number of issues which included -

- Council tax to be increased by 2% in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/2020
- The Draft Local Government Finance Settlement 2017/18 to 2020/21 published on 15 December 2016.
- Progress against the current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) budget efficiency objectives including staffing reviews, contract savings and base budget reviews.

Despite the unprecedented decline in government funding, the Council had maintained effective budgetary planning and continued delivering investment in its priorities while maintaining low Council Tax levels.

It was further reported that the Local Government Finance Settlement 2016 included core grant allocations for the forthcoming four years, from 2016/17 to 2019/20. To aid its medium term budget planning the Council opted to accept the government's offer of four year RSG allocations. In accordance with government requirements an Efficiency Plan was agreed at the Council meeting in September 2016.

During debate, members of the Committee acknowledged that difficult decisions had to be made and that it was important that a contingency plan be in place in anticipation of any further government announcement which would affect Council funding. Members of the Committee noted that there was some budget saving potential in procurement and shared service arrangements. The Executive Member for Resources also impressed the importance of the Council continuing to invest in major projects and events to generate income and attract businesses and home owners to the borough to ensure the Council's stability.

Any other business agreed by the Chair - Effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements in England

The Committee agreed to submit written evidence on a number of different aspects of the overview and scrutiny process to the Communities and Local Government Committee in response to their inquiry into the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny arrangements in England.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINTY COMMITTEE – 30 MARCH 2017

Final Monitoring Report – Overview and Scrutiny Task Group (Staff Sickness Absence)

The Committee received the final monitoring report from the Director of Policy and Governance which provided an update of progress made against the recommendations of the Staff Sickness Absence task group review, which were agreed at the Executive Cabinet on 20 June 2016.

It was reported that the biggest proportion of sickness absence was within the Customer and Digital Directorate, which was to be expected as it had the greatest number of staff and also contained the majority of the manual workforce.

The highest number of sickness absence days lost throughout the Council was due to stress/depression. The Director of Policy and Governance explained that a person suffering from this type of condition would often require a significant period of sickness absence, as the cause needed to be identified before a remedy could be found. However, members were reassured that the Council was proactive in trying to identifying instances of stress/depression in its workforce to prevent absences occurring and had a number of support initiatives that would be activated as soon as this type of condition was reported.

Members of the Committee also received a summary of the results of the sickness absence surveys which was detailed in the appendix to the report. The purpose of the surveys (which was a recommendation from the review), was to gain an understanding on how the sickness absence policy was being received by employees. The majority of employees felt that the

staff sickness policy was fair and that they felt supported by their manager and the Human Resources team while absent from work and on their return.

Final Monitoring Report – Overview and Scrutiny Task Group (Single Front Office)

The Committee received the final monitoring report from the Director of Customer and Digital which provided an update of progress made against the recommendations of the Single Front Office Task Group review.

All of the recommendations have been implemented, the progress of which included -

- On-line forms were continuing to be developed
- Further digital training being planned as part of the Chorley inner East project.
- Further engagement was due to take place with parish clerk to improve digital access and support for more parishes. Support would also be made available to partners exploring Cyber Cafés opportunities throughout the borough.
- A general review of software would be conducted to ensure information made available to customers as part of the workflows and processes stages, was clear and accurate.

Final Monitoring Report – Overview and Scrutiny Task Group (Public Transport Issues in Chorley)

Since the Executive Cabinet accepted the task group recommendations in November 2015, there had been significant changes to transport provision within the borough, mainly due to Lancashire County Council's budget review.

The Director of Policy and Governance informed the Committee that the Council had continued to subsidise the 109A/24A and 6/6A services covered in the first monitoring report. In addition the Council was funding a temporary new service (7C), and was working with Lancashire County Council to provide a permanent solution.

A number of the recommendations required the Council to lobby transport service providers, and work with other organisations to improve resident access across the borough were still ongoing. In addition, the Committee was informed that a Chorley transport plan would be considered as part of the Economic Development refresh.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL – 9 MARCH 2017

Performance Focus - Business, Development and Growth

The Director of Business, Development and Growth attended the meeting to answer questions in relation to the Business, Development and Growth directorate. The directorate, which was formed as part of the organisational restructure in May 2016, was primarily focused on driving economic growth and building the business rate base through the delivery of the Economic Development Strategy, and was responsible for delivering a number of the Council's strategic projects.

Future priorities for the directorate included –

- A refresh of the Economic Development Strategy.
- Identifying and bringing forward employment sites

Performance Monitoring - Third Quarter 2016/17

Overall performance of 2015/16 key projects was good, with 81% of the projects on track or complete. The projects to 'Deliver the Westway Integrated Sports facility' and 'Deliver the Chorley Skills framework' were rated amber. Actions to address the issues had been identified in both cases and were being implemented.

The 'Progress of the delivery of Friday Street Health Centre' was rated red due to external factors. It was reported that the Project Team was in regular dialogue with the Clinical Commissioning Group and continued to work with them to ensure this project was recognised as a high priority in support of the funding submission to the NHS England Estate and Technology Fund. At the point where confirmation to proceed with this project was given, all elements of the project would need to be refreshed. This would include scope, costs and timescales. For this reason it was reported that the project had been put on hold and would be removed from the monitoring report until the Council received confirmation to proceed.

In relation to the performance of key service delivery measures, there were ten indicators that were reported at the end of the third quarter. Six of the key service delivery measures were performing on or above target. Two key service delivery measures were performing worse than target, but within the 5% threshold. However, two key service delivery measures were below target at the end of quarter three –

- Time taken to process all new claims and change events for Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit.
- Number of missed collections per 100, 000 collections of household waste;

Plans had been developed which outlined actions to be taken to improve performance.

CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REVIEW - CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

Members of the Committee received the final report of the CSE task group review.

Overall the task group was pleased with the work undertaken by the Council. However, it considered that the authority could do more in regards to training and raising awareness both internally and externally. As a result the task group put forward ten recommendations to be considered by the Executive Cabinet on 16 February, which included –

- Continued support and delivery of awareness raising initiatives with partner organisations
- Continuing to deliver training to specific officers
- Invite a representative from a high school and primary school to join the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership
- Extend the current training delivered to member of the taxi trade to the wider licensing community.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP – ROLLOUT OF SUPERFAST BROADBAND BY BT

The Rollout of Superfast Broadband Task Group met on 22 March and appointed Councillor Kim Snape as the Chairperson. Members received a presentation from the Lancashire

Superfast Broadband team, which included an update from BT. Members requested further information from Lancashire Superfast Broadband and BT and was able to consider several potential recommendations during the meeting. The next meeting will be held early April, with a view to reporting before the end of the Municipal Year.

COUNCILLOR JOHN WALKER
CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE