

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

This report summarises the business considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 January and 22 March, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 8 March and includes an update on the task group review.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JANUARY 2018

Update on the integrated community wellbeing service

The Committee received an update on progress made in implementing the integrated community wellbeing service in partnership with Lancashire Care Foundation Trust (LCFT).

In April last year staff from Chorley Council and LCFT co located at the council's Union Street offices to focus on prevention and early intervention. Ensuring that teams and individuals are content and confident in their jobs, and in the new arrangements has been an important focus of the past six months. A series of service-wide events have been held to encourage interaction and establish the culture and focus of the service.

The Integrated Referral Hub has achieved some positive outcomes for residents. 78 cases have been considered, with the main reasons for referral being emotion/wellbeing support, requests for adaptations, moderate mental health issues and housing/homelessness issues. Some key learning points from the referral hub were set out in the report. It has recently been agreed to focus on mental health, homelessness and employability for service improvements.

Services within LCFT are commissioned and this is the biggest risk facing the integrated service. The 0-19 contract has recently been awarded to Virgin Healthcare, but this is the subject of a current legal challenge.

Members raised several queries, including the direct supervision of Chorley Council and LCFT staff and how referrals are made into the service, including GP's. Some residents did not wish to receive assistance, although the response from the service will depend on the severity of the case. Improvements have been made with the implementation of disabled facilities grants, through the use of occupation therapists from LCFHT, rather than LCC. Further negotiation with the CCG is needed in this area.

Budget Scrutiny

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) presented the report of the Chief Finance Officer which set out the budget position for 2018/19 including the forecast for the following two years to 2020/21 and also presented the relevant proposals in respect of the use of forecast resources identified in 2018/19 and budget consultation.

Chorley Council has experienced, and will continue to experience in the coming three years, large reductions in its major funding sources, including Revenue Support Grant, Retained Business Rates, New Homes Bonus and income from LCC. The forecast budget deficit for 2019/20 is £1.6m and £2.2 in 2020/21.

Councillor Wilson explained that, in addition to a balanced budget, there are proposals for investment to support the Corporate Strategy. This includes the delivery of the Digital Office Park, Primrose Gardens extra care facility and the delivery of the Market Walk extension. The Council is working with partners to deliver some of these projects.

It is proposed that council tax be increased by 2.99%. There are areas for investment and one off spends within the proposed budget. There are a range of methods by which the financial challenge will be met, including a review of contracts, implementation of shared services, productivity reviews, income generation, the development of employment land and options relating to creating a housing company.

The proposed budget was out for consultation and Councillor Wilson encouraged the submission of feedback by Councillors and residents of Chorley. Consultation received is reviewed and changes can be made, and the feedback will be used to inform the priorities for the budget in future years.

Members clarified that the Chorley Council claims only a portion of the council tax bill, with the rest being claimed by Lancashire County Council (LCC), the Police and Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. LCC had indicated that their portion will increase by up to 6%.

Councillor Wilson clarified that a large risk associated with business rates income relates to two applications for mandatory charitable relief received from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. If successful, the application would be back dated to 2010 and therefore have a significant impact on the Council's revenue budget. The LGA is representing affected councils nationwide and retain the view that NHS trusts and foundation trusts are not charities, and therefore, not eligible for mandatory non domestic rate reliefs.

Councillor Wilson advised that a figure is within the budget to address crime and disorder within the borough and that it could be used to fund PCSO's, but this can be reviewed if a more effective means of reducing crime is proposed.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22 March 2018

Health and Safety presentation

Denise Fisher, Health and Safety Advisor, attended the meeting and delivered a short presentation on health and safety.

Members raised several points and noted that if a task took longer, but it was being done safely, this would be accepted by management and supported.

Asim Khan, Director (Customer and Digital) noted that Chorley Council has a responsibility to keep staff safe, and that, as the new approach has been implemented alongside the modernisation strategy overall efficiencies have been gained.

Members noted that a pilot had been undertaken on the A674 in Wheelton to cut the edgings, in addition to the grass. Due to health and safety there had been a need to engage a traffic management company. The pilot will be evaluated and the findings and recommendations presented back to Members.

Review of communication with Councillors

Rebecca Huddleston, Director (Policy and Governance), presented a report which reviewed communications with Councillors, as requested at the meeting in October.

Members receive information in different ways, including intheknow (fortnightly), intheboro (monthly), Member Learning Sessions, agenda papers, undertaking overview and scrutiny inquiries, briefings (for Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, Executive Member and portfolio briefings, Opposition briefing etc), press releases and social media.

Member Support Working Group had reviewed intheknow as a communication tool in September 2017 and discussed the effectiveness of the publication, which they felt continued to be a useful tool. It was agreed that no changes to the publication were required. However, Democratic Services will promote the use of intheknow with officers, especially in relation to ward information and neighbourhood preferred project updates.

Members noted that the document detailing officer contact telephone numbers and the officer management structure in the Members' Room will be updated. Asim Khan advised that ICT are looking to create a dynamic application on the iPads to provide officer contact information and will consult the Member Support Working Group on the development of this.

Flooding position statement

The Committee received a report which informed Members of the current position of the Chorley Council Flood Relief Scheme, including volumes of applications, amounts of monies pending and already paid out. The report gave an overview of wider flooding issues in the borough and the action taken to address these.

A total of 426 properties in the borough were confirmed as flooded as a result of Storm Eva on 26 December 2015. Chorley Council's flood relief scheme was made up of a number of different elements based upon guidance.

There were other funds and schemes available, including a local discretionary relief fund, the Lancashire Flood Appeal and Property Level Resilience Grants (PLRG). Details of claims were set out in the report.

Members noted that the council closed its scheme to new applications on 30 November 2017. There are currently 28 outstanding applications. There have been some lengthy delays in work being completed due to the fact that many flood doors and barriers are bespoke and as such have a long lead time for manufacture.

Recent information has indicated that the MHCLG are intending to close the scheme on 31 March 2018 with final payments for reimbursement to the council being made in June 2018. The council are seeking confirmation that any grants paid out after this time will still be reimbursed.

The report set out totals, including unclaimed grants for properties in Croston where a grant application has not been made by homeowners despite a number of reminders being issued. The council made a significant financial contribution of £1M to the Croston Flood Risk Management Scheme which is vital in reducing the risk of flooding to the community.

The council is endeavouring to secure grant funding which the government has already earmarked for the protection of the community of Croston and has been in correspondence with ministers over a number of months regarding this.

Since the extensive flooding in December, there has been work taking place in a number of specific areas where flooding is a known issue, including The Common (Adlington), Town Lane and Waterhouse Green (Whittle-le-Woods), Hurst Brook (Coppull), Clematis Close (Euxton) and Weldbank Lane (Chorley).

The Croston Flood Risk Management Scheme is now complete. This scheme decreases the river level through Croston during a flood event by restricting the amount of water flowing through the new structure and embankment, holding back the water in a flood storage basin upstream. The defences were put into operation for the first time over the weekend of 21 and 22 October 2017, successfully protecting the residents and the community.

It is expected the likelihood and severity of flooding will be significantly reduced. There may still be some issues with surface water flooding which will be duly considered and investigated once we have a heavy rainfall event.

The report set out other work the council is undertaking in this area, including the Making Space For Water multi-agency group, input into the Lancashire County Council Section 19 Investigation, Community Resilience and the Chorley Council Flood Plan.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL – 21 SEPTEMBER 2017

Performance focus - Business, Development and Growth

The Panel received a report from Mark Lester, Director (Business, Development and Growth), which outlined performance at quarter three 2017/18.

The services within the Directorate are

- Land and Property Services

- Development and Regeneration
- Market Walk, Markets and Town Centre
- Employment, Skills and Business Support

The Panel noted some of the corporate projects are being delivered by the Directorate, including the delivery of Primrose Gardens, the Market Walk extension and the Digital Office Park, amongst Directorate other projects.

Two of the Corporate Strategy indicators are performing off target at quarter three – the number of jobs created by council interventions and the number of jobs created through inward investment. The number of empty shops has reduced, resulting in lack of grant applications for the councils grant schemes and less than anticipated number of jobs created. Discussions are ongoing to change the nature of this indicator for next year.

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Leader, explained that there is an under supply of commercial premises in Chorley and that the new focus is on bringing forward major sites. Work has started on site at Strawberry Fields, master planning is underway for Cowling and will start shortly on Shady Lane. An access road is now being constructed adjacent to the Digital Office Park which will accelerate the progress on the Alker Lane site.

The Primrose Gardens project is one week behind schedule - this is due to the recent inclement weather and there are no cost implications to this.

The Steeley Lane Gateway project has an amber rating as other projects have an impact on the timescales for delivery, including the Youth Zone. The Market Walk extension project has a red rating. However, this project was considered at Full Council in January 2018 and the decision was taken to progress the option to commission a partial redesign of the layout to increase flexibility in lettings and then to continue the build at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Bradley explained that the project is a complex one, and to assist with this some of the interdependencies and risks have been re-evaluated. As part of this a parking solution to deliver more spaces in the short term is being implemented on Friday Street car park. In addition, there is now flexibility in terms of unit sizes. He noted there are always lessons to learn when undertaken projects of this nature.

Progress is being made on the demolition of Oak House in terms of stripping the building and a planning application is in progress to approve the change of use of the site. The number of car parking spaces on the Flat Iron will also be maximised. Members noted that discussions are ongoing with the United Reform Church, but at this stage, the outcome of the discussions is not known.

A restructure is underway within the Directorate, with a proposal having been considered at the Executive Cabinet in December 2017. There is a target date of 1 April for the new structure to be in place.

A new Economic Development Strategy is being commissioned by South Ribble on behalf of Central Lancashire authorities to build the evidence base. The Chorley

section of the Strategy will be drafted by Chorley Council, but there are strong reasons to share the evidence base with Central Lancashire authorities, including the City deal and existing work relating to the Local Plan. A grant has been received towards this work on the strength of the Strategy being delivered together.

Members discussed the performance indicators and noted that these are reviewed each year, in fact, the local indicators are currently under review. New indicators will reflect the new corporate priorities. It was suggested that indicators be grouped into, those that the council can have an impact on and indicators which are collected for information, but the council cannot influence.

Members noted that the Westway Integrated sports facility is closed in its current format due to complex interdependencies within the project and conditions linked to planning, funding and partnership arrangements. However, the Football Foundation has assisted the Council to re-scope the project and delivery of the facility will now be re-scoped and will be a project next year.

Chorley Council Performance Monitoring Report - Quarter Three 2017/18

The Panel considered a monitoring report from the Director (Policy and Governance) which was presented at the Executive Cabinet on 15 February. The report set out performance against the Corporate Strategy and key service delivery measures for the third quarter of 2017/18, 1 October – 31 December 2017.

Overall, performance of key projects is good, with eleven (78%) of the projects rated as green, complete or closed. Two (14%) projects are currently rated amber and one (8%) is currently rated red; actions plans for each of these projects are contained within the report.

Performance of the Corporate Strategy indicators and key service delivery measures is also good. 83% of Corporate Strategy measures are performing on or above target or within the 5% threshold and 80% of key service delivery measures are performing on or above target or within the 5% threshold. Those indicators performing below target have action plans outlined with measures to improve performance.

Members queried whether the Council contracts with Eric Wright Group required that a percentage of local people are employed to deliver the contract. The details of this will be reported back to Members.

In response to a query, it was noted that there have been performance issues with Veolia and the missed collection indicator. Veolia are being monitored, although Members noted that residents sometimes presented the wrong bin.

Members highlighted the indicator relating to sickness absence, but noted that performance was during the October to December period when sickness absence tends to be higher.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

Executive Cabinet Response to the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group on the Rollout of Superfast Broadband

The Committee noted that the Executive Cabinet had agreed to implement the recommendations of the Task Group and to forward the recommendations made for LCC and BT.

A report giving an update on the implementation of the recommendations will be presented in the new municipal year.

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Council's Leisure Contract

Councillor Morwood presented the final report and gave a summary of the recommendations.

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Quality of housing provided by social landlords

The Task Group have scoped the inquiry and set out the information they would like to review and witnesses to interview.

A draft survey has been considered and should be sent out to a random sample of tenants in April.

COUNCILLOR JOHN WALKER
CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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