



MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL

MEETING DATE Thursday, 14 June 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillor Alistair Morwood (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Matthew Lynch, June Molyneaux and Greg Morgan

OFFICERS: Asim Khan (Director (Customer and Digital)) and Catherine Hudspith (Performance and Partnerships Manager)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Kim Snape and Adrian Lowe (Executive Member (Customer, Advice and Streetscene Services))

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillor Paul Walmsley

18.OSP.1 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 8 March 2018 of Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel

Decision: That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 8 March 2018 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

18.OSP.2 Declarations of Any Interests

There were no declarations of interest received.

18.OSP.3 Performance Focus - Customer and Digital Context

The Performance Panel received a report from Asim Khan, Director (Customer and Digital), which outlined an update on the performance within the Planning team, an update on the newly created Enforcement team and an update on the ICT strategy.

Planning

Councillor Paul Walmsley, Executive Member (Public Protection), explained that the performance indicators in relation to Planning for 'Major', 'Minor' and 'Other' are all 100%; this includes extensions of time, which is excellent. There has been a great deal of change this year, with Adele Hayes succeeding Paul Whittingham as Planning Manager. A key member of the team is currently on maternity leave.

Members queried if the current staffing levels are sufficient to deal with the case load and noted that staffing levels were in line with national comparators for caseloads.

Staffing levels are reviewed as cases come in and, if required, contractors can be utilised, both at busy times, and when a specialist opinion is required.

Members noted that a new team is currently being recruited to undertake the Central Lancashire Local Plan Review. This team sits within the Business, Development and Growth Directorate. A Member Learning Session will be held in the next few months on this topic.

Enforcement

Councillor Walmsley explained that enforcement services are now together under one Enforcement Team which will be in operation from July 2018 onwards. This will include Building Control, Licensing (including Long term empty properties), Planning Enforcement and Neighbourhood Officers (including dog fouling and fly-tipping).

Enforcement performance is mixed, with positive results against long term empty properties targets. For planning enforcement complaints during quarter two and three there has been a focus on working to close historic cases. Whilst this has reduced the outstanding caseload it has resulted in a dip in performance for this period. Efficiency gains are anticipated through utilising case management software in the future.

Members noted the positive move in bringing enforcement officers together and the improvement in communication and service this should bring.

Members queried the Council Tax discounts given to empty properties. From 0 to 6 months a discount of 50% applies where a property is empty (unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) and runs from the date that the furniture is removed. The discount ends after a six month period or earlier if furniture is placed in the property. If an empty home becomes occupied, or furnished, for a period of less than six weeks and then falls empty again, it will only resume a 50% discount if there is any of the original six months discount period remaining. Occupation of an empty (unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) home for less than six weeks does not give rise to a new discount period.

A discount of 25% applies where a property is empty (unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) and has been for a period of 6-24 months. A property that has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least 24 months is subject to a local premium of 50%, this means the council tax charged is 150%. There are many factors which contribute to a long term empty property, including probate. In addition to the enforcement officer, Council Tax have two inspectors who monitor empty properties.

Members discussed the difficulties in securing convictions for dog fouling as enforcement officers have to catch perpetrators in the act. It was noted that, if the Council were delegated the power to enforce on street parking the same officers could also enforce against dog fouling.

ICT Strategy

Asim Khan explained that in 2017 the Council had agreed an ICT strategy to deliver improved and efficient digital services to the residents and businesses of Chorley. This has required a significant amount of planning to protect the day to day running of the Council and to plan for migration to the new data centre and infrastructure. Staff, members and residents rely heavily on ICT for the provision of services.

Members queried several points relating to the new hyper converged data centre and network which will future proof the Council and enable use of cloud services. The fibre infrastructure within the town centre has been replaced, but it is planned that the redundant corporate network fibre will be reused for CCTV in the future.

Members noted that the current thin client desktops do not facilitate voice over IP, but the new devices will and that the software used within Customer Services is not fully integrated, but ICT are aware of the issues and are working to resolve them.

Asim Khan highlighted that the Council have won the SOCTIM Pioneer Challenge for innovation in embracing cloud technology. The funds received in relation to this will be used to test the disaster recovery plan.

Decision - That the report be noted.

18.OSP.4 Quarter Four Performance Report

The Performance Panel considered a monitoring report from the Director (Policy and Governance) which will be presented at the Executive Cabinet on 21 June.

Cath Hudspith, Performance and Partnerships Manager advised that the report set out performance against the Corporate Strategy and key service delivery measures for the fourth quarter of 2017/18, 1 January – 31 March 2018.

Overall, performance of key projects is good, with nine (75%) of the projects rated as green and one (8%) is currently not started. Two (17%) projects are currently rated amber and actions plans for each of these projects are set out in the report.

Performance of the Corporate Strategy indicators and key service delivery measures is also good. 85% of Corporate Strategy measures are performing on or above target 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 within the report.

On the priority of 'Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all' Members noted the positive performance in relation to volunteering and the bid for Heritage Lottery funding to develop Astley Hall, Coach House and Park. A reminder for Members to complete the survey will be included in the next edition of intheknow.

The 'Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities' priority includes the delivery of Primrose Gardens. The construction contract is on programme and the operational and strategic aspects are progressing well. Work has continued to manage minor delays due to bad weather, with action plans in place to manage any slippage and completion remains to be expected for March 2019. Work around seeking expressions of interest regarding potential café operators has resulted in a number of interested parties and site visits have been arranged.

The Youth Zone is now open and has had fantastic reviews. Information on the numbers of young people using the Youth Zone will be included within the Annual Report. The indicator in relation to the number of young people taking part in 'Get Up and Go' activities is better than the target.

The 'A strong local economy' priority has two projects rated amber: 'Bring forward key sites for development' and 'Market Walk Extension'. Members noted the action required. At the last meeting Members had queried if Eric Wright Construction employ local people, including apprentices. This was confirmed.

In relation to Key Service Delivery Measures Members noted that 'Average working days per employee (FTE) per year lost through sickness absence' is performing worse than target, and outside the threshold. This may be an area for scrutiny to review again.

The overall employment rate is 86.5% which is excellent.

Decision - That the report be noted.

Chair

Date