

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. This report summarises the business considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January, 7 March and 21 March 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 21 March 2019 and includes an update on the task group review.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24 JANUARY

Budget Scrutiny

2. The Executive Member (Resources), Councillor Peter Wilson, presented the report which sets out the budget position for 2019/20 including the forecast for the following two years to 2021/22 and also presents proposals for the use of forecast resources identified in 2019/20 and consultation on the Budget.
3. Chorley Council has experienced, and may continue to experience in the coming three years, large reductions in its major funding sources, in particular the Revenue Support Grant and income from Lancashire County Council.
4. The Council's gross budget deficit is based upon the reductions in funding and some key budget assumptions, including growth in the Council Tax Base, and relating to Business Rates Retention and the New Homes Bonus. It should be noted that some of the assumptions are still potentially subject to change that may impact positively or negatively on the budget. The Chief Finance Officer is comfortable with the assumptions made.
5. A key influencing factor on the forthcoming budget is the effective management of the budget in the preceding financial year. Reductions in funding and ongoing expenditure budget pressures have resulted in a budget gap of £1.716m in 2019/20.
6. To bridge this immediate budget gap the Executive Cabinet has achieved and identified proposals for immediate permanent budget savings of £1.484m in preparation for 2019/20. This is in addition to a total of £3.574m savings already achieved in prior years, including efficiency savings, reviews of contracts, base budgets and income streams. Through freezing or reducing council tax in previous years, Chorley Council has one of the lowest precepts (excluding Parish precepts) in Lancashire.
7. Through savings achieved to date, additional income identified, a review of net financing and increases in council tax the Council is able to set a balanced budget in 2019/20 whilst still investing in corporate strategy priorities.
8. Despite the budget savings identified there remain large forecast budget deficits of £1.196m in 2020/21 and £1.672m in 2021/22. To achieve a sufficient reduction in net expenditure the Council's strategy will be:
 - To realise savings through the procurement of its contracts.
 - To identify the efficiencies through investment in infrastructure, ICT and through exploring alternative delivery models that will enable the Council to balance the budget whilst seeking to minimise the impact on front line service users.
 - To make the Council more financially self-sufficient with specific emphasis on creating investment that generates income. This includes identifying future resources to support income generating schemes.

9. The latest three-year Capital Programme can be found in the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2018/19 Report 2 approved at November Executive Cabinet 2018. Further changes to the capital programme include £1.3m for investment in council offices, at Union Street and the Town Hall, £1.750m investment in Astley Hall and Park and £2.7m investment in a new sports facility at West Way playing fields. Balances remain at £4m.
10. The proposals are currently out for public consultation and feedback received will be fed into the report considered by Council in February. The consultation seeks residents' views on whether the Council should continue to fund PSCO's or if the budget should be allocated to something else such as supporting individuals with complex needs by working with partners to provide help sooner or alternatively investing further in our streetscene service to improve street cleansing.
11. We raised queries on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the investment in infrastructure and ICT. The investment enables customers to undertake more transactions electronically, but also increase the security of the Council's infrastructure.
12. We discussed the report and noted the following:
 - Shared services will be taken forwards following the elections in May. South Ribble have all out elections this time.
 - It is anticipated that the outcome of the Business Rates review and impact on the Council will be known before the Council meeting in February.
 - The figures setting out the income generated from Market Walk are contained within the base budget.
 - The figures relating to the income generation targets for the extension of Market Walk shopping centre are £125k net income in 2019/20 and £300k net income from 2020/21 onwards.
 - Customers will be inconvenienced as little as possible during the works to Customer Services at Union Street.
 - The Housing Company is a medium to long-term project. It is not anticipated that the Housing Revenue Account will be reopened.
 - The Council is resisting pressure from central Government to continue to build houses at recent rates. This will have an impact on the amount of New Homes Bonus received by the Council.
 - The Council has been able to borrow less than anticipated, due to the lower rates the Council is able to access.
 - A bid has been made to the Football Foundation to fund the new sports facility at West Way playing fields.
 - The acoustics of the Lancastrian will be considered during the proposed capital works to the Town Hall.

13. I thanked Councillor Wilson for his attendance.

Review of communications with Councillors

14. Rebecca Huddleston, Director (Policy and Governance), presented the report which updates on the improvements made to communication mechanisms with Councillors following the review in March 2018.
15. We noted the different communication mechanisms utilised, including intheknow, Member Learning Sessions and briefings. The iPad is fundamental to the role of a Councillor, and to ensure Members are fully trained on their iPads the Member Support Working Group has agreed

to offer all Members an iPad 121 as part of their Personal Development Plan review in the summer.

16. Following the feedback relating to My Account additional staff training has taken place in order to reduce the instances of service requests closed before work has been completed. ICT will work with the Member Support Working Group to identify and implement enhancements to My Account over the next twelve months. Investigations are also ongoing for an app to provide officer contact details, as requested by Member Support Working Group, within existing Office 365 functionality.
17. In the coming months the Council is rolling out Yammer (an internal social networking tool) across the organisation and Members will have the opportunity to be involved, following the trial by staff. We noted the report.

Health Scrutiny

18. Councillor Alistair Morwood updated the meeting on the items considered by Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee.
19. In November the Committee considered the delayed transfers of care in Lancashire. Councillor Morwood advised that concerns had been raised about the increase in delayed transfers of care across the Trusts from April 2018 to August 2018. It was reported that the increase in delays was in part due to the long heatwave over the summer months.
20. Councillor Morwood invited Councillor Steve Holgate to update the Committee for the December meeting as he was unable to attend. The matter under consideration was the Integrated Care Partnership. Councillor Holgate raised his concerns about the proposed closure of Calderstones in 2020 and whether new facilities would be open by that time.

Update on Mobilisation for the New Waste and Recycling Collection Contract

21. Asim Khan, Director (Customer and Digital), presented a confidential report which updates on progress with mobilisation for the new waste and recycling collection contract which starts on 1 April 2019. The award of the new contract has made a significant contribution to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
22. We noted that the Council has a duty to collect clinical waste from households. We noted the report.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7 MARCH

Approach to Dealing with Unauthorised Encampments on Land not owned by Gypsy Travellers

23. A special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was requested by Councillor Marion Lowe I invited her to address the Committee.
24. Councillor Marion Lowe explained that she felt the current approach to dealing with unauthorised encampments on land not owned by Gypsy Travellers is in need of review. The time and costs required to remove unauthorised encampments are also a factor, especially for those residents affected. Delays have been experienced in the provision of a transient site.

25. Chris Sinnott, Director (Early Intervention and Support), explained that the current approach involves different teams across the Council, including Environmental Health, Legal, Communications, Public Protection and Animal Welfare.
26. Lesley Miller, Regulatory Services Manager, advised that a great deal of interventions are actioned in the hours after notification is received that an unauthorised encampment is on Council land. This includes liaison with the Police, commencement of the legal processes, communication with all interested parties and welfare visits for the Gypsy Travellers and any animals they have. Experience has shown that it is best to positively engage with the Gypsy Travellers. The Council also gives advice to private landowners when there are encampments on their property.
27. Stefanie Leach, Solicitor, outlined the legal processes required, including a Section 77 Direction specifying a time and date that vehicles must be removed by. If this is not successful, the Council applies for a Court Order which enables bailiffs to remove the Gypsy Travellers if they have not left within 24 hours. Following the closure of Chorley Magistrates Court officers will have to travel to Preston Magistrates Court for this.
28. Chief Inspector Gary Crowe advised that Gypsy Travellers have the right to a family and to a private life under the Human Rights Act. The Police can act under specific circumstances, for example, if a private land owner has taken reasonable steps to request an unauthorised encampment to leave their land, and threats had been made or a crime committed. If an encampment is impeding a business the Police have powers to act. It is difficult when an encampment moves around several times within the same area.
29. Members queried several points including the issues of Penalty Charge Notices when an encampment is on a car park, the case of the Thwaites brewery in Blackburn, planning for Bank Holidays, the need to communicate with the residents of Chorley, the potential to modify the entrances to Council car parks and when it is appropriate to scan dogs for microchips.
30. Zoe Whiteside, Planning Policy, Housing and Open Space Strategy Manager, advised that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the 2015 Planning Policy for Traveller Site (PPTS) require a local needs assessment and 'ensure that their Local Plan includes a fair, realistic and inclusive policies to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply'.
31. The last Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in 2015 established a need for 33 additional pitches over the period to 2026, with Chorley requiring 10 pitches, Preston 22 and South Ribble 1 pitch. A 10 plot shortfall of Travelling Show person provision was also identified. Further assessment of need resulted in 5 permanent pitches being allocated at Cowling Farm in the Chorley Local Plan.
32. The current GTAA Review will cover the period to 2036 for the new Central Lancashire Local Plan. Arc4 are carrying out an assessment of Gypsy and Traveller, and Travelling Show people accommodation needs (including houseboat dwellers) over the plan period for each of the respective Councils in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
33. Specifically, the study will identify any 5 year shortfall (2018/19 to 2022/23) and shortfalls over the remainder of the plan period to 2036 (broken down into 5 year periods) for each local authority of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble. The study will also identify any transit/stop over provision based on evidence of unauthorised encampment activity.

34. Zoe Whiteside gave an update on the development of Cowling Farm. The Council has been working in collaboration with Homes England on the master planning for the site as whole. This work has involved technical works and a period of consultation (with the public and LCC) to agree the access arrangements for the housing, employment and the Gypsy and Traveller allocation.
35. The team have worked closely with the Gypsy and Traveller family to agree the location of the site. The allocation is for the Gypsy and Traveller family only.
36. The timescales for construction works will be dependent on further technical assessment of the earthworks and drainage and the phasing of these works, but aiming for July 2021 completion.
37. I thanked Chief Inspector Gary Crowe and the officers for their contribution to the discussion.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21 MARCH

Monitoring Report of Inquiry Recommendations: Adoption of Estates Review

38. Mark Lester, Director of Business, Development and Growth, presented the report which updates on progress with the recommendations of the Task Group review into the Adoption of Estates.
39. Following the consideration of the Task Group's recommendations into the Adoption of Estates by the Executive Cabinet in 2013, all recommendations were agreed, and there have been three follow up progress reports, the last in January 2016.
40. Each Neighbourhood Area receives a report on the progress of adoptions including adoptions of roads and public open space for their Neighbourhood Area Meetings (NAMs) twice a year. The NAM reports list current information held on sites, progress and responds to queries received.
41. We noted the difficulties faced by the Council due to the triangular relationship between LCC and developers. Issues of record keeping by LCC were discussed in relation to a number of cases. I suggested that a representative from LCC be invited to a future meeting. We noted the report.

Health Scrutiny

42. Councillor Alistair Morwood updated the meeting on the items considered by Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee.
43. At the meeting in February the Committee considered the Lancashire and South Cumbria - Integrated Care System update. The Committee received an overview of the partnership in Lancashire and South Cumbria working as an Integrated Care System (ICS) which covered five local areas.
44. Concerns had been expressed in relation to recent issues in relation to mental health service provision in accident and emergency departments and the lack of baseline figures in the report necessary to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of expenditure.

45. An update on the Stroke Programme was also given. Stroke is not an older person's disease and disabilities are lifelong. Stroke is the fourth major cause of death and the principal cause of disability in the UK and lifestyle is a major contributing factor.
46. A considerable number of patients are not being appropriately treated for Atrial Fibrillation and hypertension, and approximately 30% of patients are discharged from hospital with no plan. We noted the update.

Leisure Contract Review

47. Angela Barrago, Health and Wellbeing Manager, presented the confidential report of the Director (Early Intervention and Support) which had been considered by Executive Cabinet on 14 March. We were pleased with the focus on encouraging residents to be healthy. We noted the update.

Update on approach to Dealing with Unauthorised Encampments on Land not owned by Gypsy Travellers

48. Angela Barrago, Health and Wellbeing Manager, presented the confidential report of the Director (Early Intervention and Support) which updates on the plans to review the protocol for managing temporary Gypsy and Traveller encampments in the borough. We noted the update.
49. I thanked officers for their work and Members for their attendance at the Performance Panel meetings throughout the year.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL – 21 MARCH

Performance context paper - Business, Growth and Development

50. I welcomed Mark Lester, Director (Business, Development and Growth) and Alistair Bradley, Executive Leader and Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform) to the meeting.
51. Vicky Willett, Performance and Partnerships Manager, presented the report. The services within the Directorate are;
 - Land and Property Services
 - Development and Regeneration
 - Market Walk, Markets and Town Centre
 - Employment, Skills and Business Support
52. We noted some of the corporate projects being delivered by the Directorate which include bringing forward key sites for development, the delivery of Primrose Gardens, the Market Walk extension and the Digital Office Park, amongst other projects.
53. Performance against two of the corporate strategy indicators is good. The overall employment rate for Chorley continuing to increase, and the percentage of 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training continuing to decrease, meaning overall there are more people in employment across the Borough. Unemployment is at 2.8% in Chorley, the second lowest rate across Lancashire.
54. Performance is lower than anticipated for the number of projected jobs created through the Council's support schemes (job grants, investments and direct business support) this quarter

with 64 jobs created against a target of 90. This is due to the current offer for businesses (Choose Chorley grant and the BIG grant) having restrictive criteria. As a result, the criteria for grants will be reviewed.

55. Following vacancies during quarter three, changes within the team mean that officers are able to proactively develop relationships with local businesses and deliver business events.
56. There are four new measures for Property Services. Performance against three of the local indicators is good, with all three performing above target. The percentage of land ownership replied to within 3 working days was off target due to one enquiry exceeding the deadline.

Market Walk Extension

57. Mark Lester advised that every unit has received interest or an offer. We were reassured that these things take time as there were lots of different negotiations and conditions to consider and officers want to ensure the best deal for Chorley.
58. Logistically, it is unlikely that all units will be signed up by the time the building work is complete, but assurances were given that M&S and REEL Cinema will be in the units for Christmas.
59. At present, construction progress is ahead of schedule. It is hoped that REEL will have access in June, followed by M&S in August. M&S have been on site this week and provided positive feedback, they are happy with current progress and able begin planning detailed designs.

Primrose Gardens

60. Mark Lester advised that Chorley Council Building Control have issued a practical completion certificate in time for the required Homes England, deadline. Following this, officers will be submitting a final grant claims to LCC and Homes England.
61. Subsequent to the handover there will be two weeks of snagging with increased resources to complete this in time. There are also a number of potential cost items still to be added at the site, such as additional mobility scooter charging points and additional signage. At this stage all commissioned works are within budget.
62. The development has received a lot of interest and it is anticipated that the first tenants will be moved in by the end of summer. Cllr Bradley advised that the first 40 offer letters have been sent out to potential occupiers.

Strawberry Fields Digital Office Hub

63. Mark Lester advised that construction is ahead of schedule and the majority of the building work is complete. There had been difficulties outside of the Council's control, such as the delivery of the spine road and services to the site, however these have not significantly delayed progress of the development.
64. The S278 works and the development of the junction to access the site has been a long process as a result of technical issues regarding ownership, however, it is understood that these are close to being resolved. It is hoped that the junction will be completed in time for the site opening however, temporary access options have also been explored as a backstop.

65. Positive levels of interest have been received from businesses and the c.30% of the building is under offer or negotiation with a lot of interest in the remaining units. Phil Owen, Senior Business Engagement Officer, will be providing monthly updates on occupancies.
66. We queried the green performance rating at Cowling Farm and whether the project should have been further ahead at this stage. We were reassured that the masterplan criteria had been adhered to for quarter three and the main milestone for quarter four is the submission of a planning application. Officers advised that Homes England are reviewing their strategy on the submission of an application, however a joint application is the preference of the Council.
67. With regards to a Housing Company update, detailed analysis is taking place and a paper outlining the potential structures and a business case will be produced.
68. I thanked Mark Lester and Councillor Bradley for their attendance.

Business planning update

69. Vicky Willett, Performance and Partnerships Manager, presented an update report on the progress of delivery for the service level projects outlined in the service business plans.
70. A review of 16 business plans produced last year have been completed. The plan identifies an overall total of 133 projects and of those, 105 are ongoing (79%), 21 are complete (16%), 4 are closed (3%) and 3 had not started (2%).
71. It is anticipated that many of the ongoing projects will run over one year and therefore are not of major concern. We were reassured that officers undertake regular quality assurance checks and are confident that most, if not all teams' projects will be completed.
72. It is proposed that the approach for 19/20 will follow a similar format to previous years. All services have received a briefing from their Directors and teams will subsequently be identifying the key activities that they will deliver over the next 12 months. This year's process will provide a greater focus on developing staff and team engagement, and skills analysis.
73. We requested that going forward, the projects be broken down into Directorates and a portfolio be brought to each relevant performance panel meeting.
74. I thanked officers for their work and Members for their attendance at the Performance Panel meetings throughout the year.

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

75. Councillor Matthew Lynch, Chair of the Task Group, reported that in 2017 the Council had recognized the need for the issue of the quality of housing provided by social landlords to be investigated.
76. Funding was secured by the Chair, Councillor Jane Fitzsimons, to undertake a survey of around two thirds of tenants. Following her appointment to the Executive Cabinet in May 2018 Councillor Lynch became the Chair. The Task Group interviewed representatives from the two largest Registered Providers in Chorley, Chorley Community Housing and Places for People.

77. The recommendations put forward by the Task Group are in line with the Housing green paper. There are clear patterns in the results regarding the performance of social landlords within Chorley. The recommendations will be taken forward as the Council sets up a Housing Company.
78. Councillor Lynch thanked Councillors and officers for their contribution to the inquiry and advised that the report will be considered by Executive Cabinet in June.

Recommendation

79. That the report be noted.

COUNCILLOR JOHN WALKER
CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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