

Council

Tuesday, 25th January 2022, 6.30 pm

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Chorley and YouTube

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the above meeting of the Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was published.

Agenda No	Item	
5	Executive Cabinet	(Pages 99 - 102)
	To receive and consider the general report of the Executive Cabinet meeting held on 20 January.	
6	Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Groups	(Pages 103 - 106)
	To receive and consider the general report of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting held on 13 January.	
7	Governance Committee	(Pages 107 - 110)
	To receive and consider the general report of the Governance Committee meeting held on 19 January.	

Gary Hall
Chief Executive

Electronic agendas sent to Members of the Council

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Executive Cabinet

1. Any Cabinet recommendations on the reports that require Council decisions appear as separate items on the agenda.

General Report of the Meeting Held on 20 January 2022

Fees and Charges 2022/23

2. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources), presented the report of the Director of Finance which sets out the current position around fees and charges and proposals for 2022/23.
3. We noted the appendix which details the key fees and charges budgets across a number of different categories. Although not exhaustive, the list gives an indication of the core fees involved.
4. We supported the increase to the garden waste collection charge recognising that this was designed to cover an increase in costs and not for profit. We discussed a commitment to not seek to make significant profit from this service going forward but understood that some degree of flexibility was required to cover any potential additional costs throughout the year. It was agreed that a breakdown of costs to deliver the garden waste collection service could be provided, as requested. We approved the recommendations within the report.

Draft Budget 2022/23

5. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) presented the report of the Director of Finance which sets out the budget position for 2022/23 including the forecast for the following 2 years to 2024/25 and also presents the relevant proposals in respect of the use of forecast resources identified for 2022/23 and the budget consultation.
6. We noted the proposed council tax increase of 1.99% for 2022/23 and the assumption of a 1.99% increase in 2023/24 and 2024/25; this assumption will be revisited every year and will be dependent on the outcome of the future Government funding announcements. It was also noted that continued investment is reflected in ongoing revenue budgets to ensure delivery of corporate strategy priorities, alongside capital investments of over £48m and strategies to reduce the budget deficit over the medium term.
7. Consultation on the proposed budget for 2022/23 will commence following approval of the proposals by Executive Cabinet. We approved the recommendations in the report.

Chorley Council Climate Change Strategy; Approval to Consult

8. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) presented the report of the Director of Planning and Development which seeks approval to undertake a process of consultation on the draft Climate Change Strategy.

9. The Draft Climate Change Strategy sets out the Council's vision, strategic aims, priorities, and action plan for climate change for the period 2022-24. It is intentionally a non-technical document which aims to set out in an accessible format what we want to deliver for Chorley and how we will go about it.
10. It is anticipated that a public consultation will run for 8 weeks from early February 2022 to the end of March 2022, before taking to the Executive Member (Resources) for approval to adopt.
11. We welcomed the report and draft strategy and recognised the importance of partnership working to enable the delivery of the council's climate change vision, aims and action plan. We approved the recommendations in the report.

Shared Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits Review

12. Councillor Adrian Lowe, Executive Member (Streetscene and Customer Services) presented the report of the Director of Customer Services which outlines the background, approach and findings of the service review for Chorley and South Ribble Councils' Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits, setting out recommendations for the service restructure and service development plan.
13. This report also includes feedback and changes made through presenting the proposals to Shared Services Joint Committee and formal consultation. This has included increasing the number of posts from 84 to 90 to allow for extra capacity for the service.
14. We welcomed the report and discussed the additional six apprenticeship posts to take the number of posts from 84 to 90 and recognised that the annual contribution from reserves towards the apprentices will be £91k for Chorley; although this was part of a saving of £206k overall. We approved the recommendations in the report.

Key Contracts and Partnerships

15. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) presented the confidential report of the Deputy Chief Executive which provides an update on the performance of the council's key partnership arrangements. We approved the recommendations within the report.

Surrender of Existing Lease and Grant of a New Lease – Unit 31-33 Market Walk – Peacock Stores Limited

16. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) presented the confidential report of the Director of Commercial Services which seeks approval to the terms provisionally agreed by the Council's Consultant Surveyor for the surrender and renewal of the lease of unit 31-33 Market Walk to Peacocks Stores Properties Ltd., who have been holding over on the original lease term which expired on the 31 December 2020. It also seeks authorisation for the Council's Legal Officers to draw up the necessary lease documentation as per

the approved Heads of Terms. We approved the recommendations within the report.

Shared Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits Review

17. We noted the confidential appendices.

Recommendations

18. To note the report.

Councillor Alistair Bradley
Executive Leader

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Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel – 13 January 2022

Performance Focus – Communities

1. We welcomed Councillor Beverley Murray, Executive Member – Early Intervention and Jennifer Mullin, Director of Communities to present the report.
2. The directorate is underspending this quarter due to vacancies in several areas.
3. The leisure centre is performing well, visitor number is increasing. Like other areas of the Council, there are issues with recruitment.
4. The leisure centre, as a separate company has its own budget. It is expected that by the end of March 2022, without the addition or continuation of Covid-19 restrictions, opening times will be as they were before the pandemic.
5. The Council is not currently planning to sell the leisure centre, as facilities have been upgraded and modernised. Further information about the leisure centre and its operation will be at a Member Learning Session at the end of March 2022.
6. The completion of Disabled Facilities Grants is worse than the previous quarter, although delivery is under the baseline of 10 weeks at 6.8 weeks.
7. To decrease waiting times for occupational therapist assessments the council is considering recruiting its own. It is difficult to predict how long it will take to complete the outstanding 262 assessments due to the variety of potential needs, with substantial adjustments including building extensions and wet rooms will take significantly longer than installing handrails and stairlifts.
8. New and existing community groups continue to be supported. It is uncertain when activity will return to pre-pandemic levels. The number of residents that benefitted from opportunities created by the Communities Team is better than expected but below target.
9. There is a decline in the Housing Solutions' performance indicators. The new Housing Manager is currently reviewing the processes, procedure, and work delivered. Once completed, it is expected that there will be a change in what is monitored.
10. The Public Protection Team increased on the number of food establishments inspected, the current inspection programme is expected to be completed in March 2022.
11. All Corporate Projects are on track, there is a significant amount of work remaining to be completed by the end of March, including the homeless and rough sleeping plan.
12. A new Animal Welfare Officer is in post and is working closely with South Ribble's equivalent and is undertaking inspections of boarding and breeding centres.

13. Neighbourhood Area Meetings have resumed, with varying levels of success. An issue highlighted was the short amount of time to decide projects. The next round of meetings is in January 2022. We noted the report.

Any Urgent Business Previously Agreed with the Chair

14. We welcomed Adele Hayes, Service Lead – Planning to add additional context and clarity to the Planning process and how performance is recorded.
15. The Government set the target to determine planning applications which are either 8 or 13 weeks.
16. The Planning Department at Chorley Council has a culture of good performance. Communication is good with applicants and agents. The process of Planning and Development is predicated on the presumption of sustainable development and the starting point is to approve.
17. There are numerous reasons why extra time is needed for an application, but time extensions are never used to simply prolong the process. Reasons can include the application going to committee, awaiting technical responses, the application requires amendments, or the applicant wishes to make a change to the application.
18. The time limit for applications does not start until the application has been accepted. It is not uncommon for miscommunication to occur between agent and applicant. Inadequate applications that are not accepted could require significant amount of time to resubmit and the clock will not start until the application is accepted.
19. The customer of the Planning Department is the applicant, third parties, including residents are notified to make comments.
20. Response times can vary from external consultants. The volume of applications has increased significantly in the last 18 months. There is a vacancy in the department which has been difficult to fill due to competition from the private sector.
21. Applications that are non-determined are not counted in the figures of determined applications. Over the pandemic there were three appeals made against non-determination. Two were safeguarded sites with applicants not agreeing to a time extension. One was an appeal against a non-determination on a certificate of lawfulness.
22. There are two parallel systems providing figures, performance management and outside the scope.
23. Applications are categorised as minor or major, major applications are not always controversial, the erection of a garden shed is considered a major application.
24. There is no update to relating to the appeals from August, consideration is still underway, and a decision is not expected until the completion of the upcoming planning inquiry in February 2022. Adele is happy to meet with residents to discuss

any concerns held relating to applications, understanding that the process is long and anxiety inducing.

25. We noted the update and thanked Adele for attending the Committee.

Councillor John Walker
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Governance Committee

1. This report summarises the business undertaken at the Governance Committee meeting held on 19 January 2022.

General Report of the Meeting Held on 19 January 2022

External Audit Progress Update Report

2. We welcomed Matt Derrick from Grant Thornton who presented the External Audit Progress Update Report which provides and update on progress of delivery from the external auditors, a summary of emerging national issues and developments and includes a number of challenge questions in respect to these emerging issues.
3. We noted the financial statements audit, value for money and audit fees as well as certification of claims and returns. It was reported that the certification work for the Housing Benefit Subsidy claim, in accordance with procedures agreed with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is underway with the deadline for the completed certification being 31 January 2022.
4. Work is ongoing on the audit of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts and this is hoped to be completed in a couple of weeks. We were advised the Annual Findings Report was on schedule to report at the March Committee meeting along with the audit opinion on the financial statements. Following this, the Value for Money work will conclude and the draft annual auditors report will be submitted at a later date, within the allowed three months.
5. Gary Hall noted the significant number of delays and the potential impact of this running into the next audit. Following queries on the likelihood of getting all the work completed prior to the 2021/22 audits and closure of accounts, Grant Thornton provided reassurances that they would be reporting the AFR at the next Committee meeting in March and tentatively reporting the Value for Money at this point. They were confident that the 2020/21 audits would be completed by the financial year end to mitigate any risk of this affecting the 2021/22 accounts preparation. We noted the update.

Annual Audit Letter 2019-20

6. Matt Derrick, Grant Thornton, presented the Annual Audit Letter 2019/20 for Chorley Borough Council. We previously considered the contents of this in the audit findings report at the Committee Meeting in November.
7. The letter formally issues the final annual audit report on the 19/20 audit and confirms that the opinion and certificate on the financial statements was issued on 30 November 2021.
8. We noted the letter and questioned whether a dispute around some of the

valuations had been resolved. It was reported that the dispute had been resolved and concluded as part of the financial audit opinion. Following this, council officers were working ahead of time to prepare for the 2021/22 accounts in the new financial year whilst completing the 2020/21 accounts.

9. Following queries on a difference of opinion with regards to Value for Money risk as noted in the report, we were advised that the council did not agree with the external auditors published view but would accept it and address it. Officers highlighted the reasons for this and clarified that the external auditors were not making a judgement on the investment but on the processes. We noted the Annual Audit Letter for Chorley Borough Council 2019.

Internal Audit Interim Report as at 31st December 2021

10. Dawn Highton, Service Lead for Audit and Risk presented her report which advised us of the work undertaken in respect of the Internal Audit Plan from November 2021 to December 2021 and provides an appraisal of the Internal Audit Service's performance to date. It also seeks Committee approval of the amendments to the Audit Plan 2021/22.
11. The nine reviews that have been completed are outlined in the report; four of which have received a substantial assurance rating, four an adequate assurance rating and one limited report awarded.
12. We were reminded that the internal audit plan for 2021/22 is an extremely challenging plan which involved additional resource being bought in to meet the 489 days to allow the Service to successfully deliver the plan. The recruitment exercise to fill the additional posts took longer than originally anticipated which has impacted performance. In addition, two members of the team resigned and left the Service at the end of December. Whilst successfully appointing a temporary auditor to fulfil one of the roles, there will be a residual impact on the delivery of the plan. To that extent, we were asked to approve the deferral of the following 4 reviews to 22/23. These have been selected taking into consideration the risks to the system and our knowledge of the working practices:
 - Plant inventories/contract management
 - Community infrastructure levy
 - Safeguarding
 - Health and Safety
13. Whilst requesting the deferral of 4 reviews, Officers are confident that assurances will be provided to the senior management and members on a total of 23 different audit reviews. This is a significant increase than provided in previous years.
14. We discussed the selection process for the deferral of the above four reviews and were satisfied with the reasons for their selection.
15. We noted that going forward, performance for the remainder of the year will be impacted due to previous the recruitment issues. Internal Audit will shortly

commence the process for compiling the Annual Audit Plan for 2022/23. Members are invited to suggest any topics they wish to be included in the next Audit Plan. These will be considered and form part of the overall risk assessment. We noted the report and approved the amendments to the Internal Audit Plan 2021/22.

2021/22 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan – Update

16. Dave Whelan, Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report of the Monitoring Officer which provides an update on the progress of the implementation of the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement action plan.
17. As part of the Annual Governance Statement, the council identified areas of improvement and provided actions to progress the improvements. This action plan was previously approved by the Governance Committee. It is approximately six months since the action plan was approved and it is therefore appropriate to review the implementation of the actions.
18. The key themes include Induction/Recruitment, The Loop, Risk Management, GDPR, Key Corporate Policies, Value for Money, Inventories, Transparency Act. We noted the substantial work undertaken with regards to updating the new online induction, a comprehensive review of HR policies, and the development of a transformation strategy which has been approved and detailed information has been published in accordance with the transparency code.
19. We were advised that overall good progress has been made but further work needs to be undertaken. The Council remain on track to deliver the action plan. We noted the report.

RIPA Application Update

20. Dave Whelan, Deputy Monitoring Officer, reported that no RIPA applications had been made.

Recommendations

21. To note the report.

Councillor Debra Platt
Chair of the Governance Committee

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