

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th July 2023, 6.30 pm

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Chorley and [YouTube](#)

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

Agenda No	Item	
4	Executive Cabinet Minutes	(Pages 93 - 96)
	To consider the Executive Cabinet minutes of the meeting held on 30 March (enclosed), and 15 June (to follow).	
8	Scrutiny Reporting Back - Chorley Council's Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny 2022/23	(Pages 97 - 106)

Chris Sinnott
Chief Executive

Electronic agendas sent to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Minutes of **Executive Cabinet**

Meeting date **Thursday, 15 June 2023**

Members present: Councillor Alistair Bradley (Chair), Councillor Peter Wilson (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Terry Howarth, Alistair Morwood and Adrian Lowe

Officers: Chris Sinnott (Chief Executive), Chris Moister (Director (Governance)), Louise Mattinson (Director (Finance)), Howard Anthony (Performance and Partnerships Team Leader), Jo Motteram (Senior Communications Officer) and Nina Neisser-Burke (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Beverley Murray and Margaret France

Other Members: Councillors Julia Berry, Mark Clifford, Alan Cullens, Danny Gee, Tommy Gray, Alex Hilton, Hasina Khan, Samantha Martin, June Molyneaux, Jean Sherwood and Craig Southern

23.EC.81 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 30 March 2023 of Executive Cabinet

Decision: That the minutes of the Executive Cabinet meeting held on 30 March 2023 be confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

23.EC.82 Declarations of Any Interests

There were no declarations of any interests.

23.EC.83 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

23.EC.84 Revenue Budget Outturn 2022/23

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Finance which sets out the revenue and reserves provisional outturn for 2022/23 for the Council, based on the position as at 31 March 2023.

In summary, the provisional outturn would have been an underspend of £0.728m however as previously reported, the £0.597m unfunded cost pressure in respect of the 22/23 pay award, i.e. the cost over and above the 2% budgeted pay award, has resulted in a provisional underspend of £0.131m. The Council's Medium-Term

Financial Strategy recommends that General Reserves are maintained at a minimum of £4.0m to mitigate against any unforeseen financial risks that may present in the future. Based on the above and the amalgamation of reserves, the level of general fund balance is £4.271m at 31st March 2023.

Members discussed staffing costs and were provided with an update on current vacancies and the impact of not filling those vacancies. It was recognised that the staffing overspend was based on the above anticipated pay increase and a national shortage in certain professions which has led to the increased appointment of agency staff over the last year. Members noted the increased cost of agency staff but also recognised the need for this, particularly in regards to ensuring the progression of the Local Plan. Although the use of agency staff was likely to continue the council was moving in the right direction and would continue to try and recruit but also consider other options if required.

Decision:

- 1. To note the 2022/23 provisional outturn for revenue and the level of reserves, based on the position as at 31 March 2023.**
- 2. To note the virements made to and from the revenue budget during the period, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.**

Reasons for recommendations:

To ensure the Council's budgetary targets are achieved.

Other options considered and rejected:

None.

23.EC.85 Capital and Balance Sheet Outturn 2022-23

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Finance which outlines the financial position of the Council in respect of the capital programme at 31 March 2023, highlighting key issues and explaining key variances, and to provide an overview of various elements of the Council's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2023.

The capital budget for 2022/23 was set at £24.2m at Council in February 2022. This was increased following approval of the 2021/22 outturn to £32.2m, then further amended in subsequent quarterly Capital Monitoring Reports through to Quarter 3 at 31 December 2022 to £15.8m. Following the changes detailed in this report, the total programme for 22/23 now stands at £13.5m. Members noted that the total cost of the Council's capital investment programme for 2022/23 has decreased since the Quarter 3 report approved by Executive Cabinet, from £15.8m to £13.5m as at 31 March 2023.

Members requested an update on progress at Brinscall Baths, including when it was likely to be fully open and the potential impact on the capital programme. Members were advised that the required structural improvement works were not as significant as initially anticipated following a further assessment on the structure of the pool. It was therefore being proposed that some of the surplus budget be used to improve the user experience at the site. Following commissioning of the work and going out to tender it was hoped that the works will be completed later this year.

Decision:

1. To approve the revised capital programme as attached at Appendix A, which includes approved amendments to the programme, as detailed in point 12 to 14 of this report, since the last Capital Monitoring report was approved by Cabinet in February 2023.
2. To note the variations to the programme (which are detailed by scheme at Appendix B and referenced within the body of the report);
3. To note the position in the Balance Sheet monitoring section of the report, in respect of cash, investment and loan balances and debtors, at 31 March 2023.

Reasons for recommendations

To ensure the Council's Capital Programme is monitored effectively.

Other options considered and rejected

None.

23.EC.86 Quarter Four Performance Report 2022/23

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Change and Delivery which sets out the performance against the delivery of the Corporate Strategy during the fourth quarter of 2022/23, covering 1st January 2023 to 31 March 2023.

The overall performance of the Corporate Strategy projects is good with 11% (2) classified as complete and 84% (16) of projects rated green, meaning they are progressing according to schedule. One project (5%) has been rated amber, which provides an early warning sign of potential delays. An action plan for this project is contained within this report. Performance of the Corporate Strategy indicators and key service delivery measures continues to be closely monitored with four (67%) performing on or above target, one (17%) is performing below target but within the 5% threshold, and one (17%) is performing below target and outside of threshold.

Members discussed the five key projects in relation to the green and sustainable borough corporate priority and the progress in the council's commitment to Chorley becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

To ensure the effective performance monitoring of the Corporate Strategy and safeguard its delivery across 2022/23.

Other options considered and rejected

No other options have been considered or rejected. This is because the report does not present any items for decision.

Chair

Date

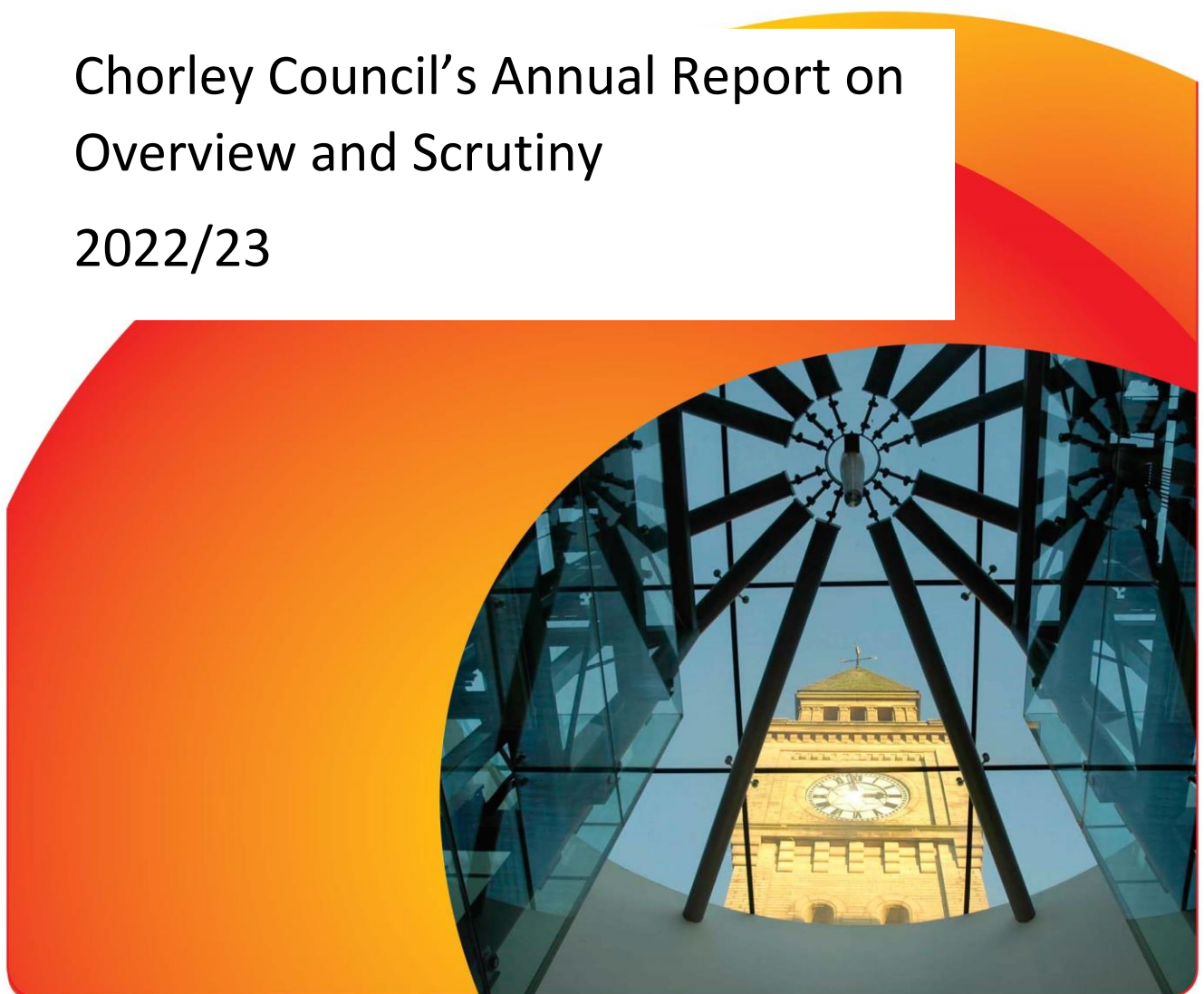
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Scrutiny Reporting Back

Chorley Council's Annual Report on
Overview and Scrutiny

2022/23



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1. Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Councillor John Walker

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Councillor Roy Lees

Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23

Councillors:

- Sarah Ainsworth
- Hasina Khan
- Samir Khan
- James Nevett
- Aidy Riggott
- Kim Snape
- Jenny Whiffen
- Michelle Le Marinel
- Dedrah Moss
- Alan Platt
- Arjun Singh
- Ryan Towers

2. Introduction by the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a busy year undertaking a varied and extensive work programme that featured two task group reviews. Councillor John Walker and Roy Lees were re-appointed Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the year. There were also several new members welcomed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel, which consisted of six members and met five times monitored the business planning and performance of the council along with a focus on each of the Directorates in turn.

Over the year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee observed the completion of the Select Move and Empty Properties Task Group.

Following the approval at Executive Cabinet, the committee continued to receive six monthly monitoring reports which included information about implementation and success of previous scrutiny reviews, these were:

- Quality of Housing Provided by Social Landlords
- Sustainable Public Transport

3. Challenging Performance

The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel scrutinised the performance of the council with all monitoring information considered. Scrutinising performance is essential to ensure key details are examined, questioned and that consistency prevailed.

The panel for the 2022/23 consisted of:

- Councillor John Walker (Chair)
- Councillor Roy Lees (Vice Chair)
- Councillor Sarah Ainsworth
- Councillor Michelle Le Marinel
- Councillor Arjun Singh
- Councillor Kim Snape (replaced Councillor James Nevett December 2022)

Customer and Digital

The Customer and Digital portfolio covered Chorley's Neighbourhoods, Streetscene, and Waste Services Teams, in addition to the shared services of ICT and Customer Services. Three quarters of the corporate service level performance measures performed at or above target at the end of Quarter Four. Of the eight business plan projects, five were completed, and three were amber. The reason for the amber was due to challenges faced by ICT and customer services.

Good performance led to increased targets for street cleaning and ground maintenance. There were acknowledged issues with customer services and the contact centre, but efforts were underway to correct and improve.

Covid-19 did not result in a decrease in staff, but there were ongoing difficulties with recruitment, however 12 apprenticeships were created. Financially, the directorate had 1.6% variance in the budget.

Commercial and Property

The cost of living crisis, and increase cost of staffing, energy and construction caused considerable challenge and delays to the directorate. The financial position of the directorate was a concern with a 165% overspend. It was hoped that the Shared Services arrangement with South Ribble would assist with recruitment. It was noted that there was a concern that the council could face succession issues with the large number of staff at the start or the end of their careers.

A significant loss of income came from the delay with Tatton Gardens following the fire and subsequent fungal contamination. Income from car parks were down due to the continuation of the Covid charges, but a new car park strategy was due to be introduced.

Town centre and market footfall, in addition to visiting coaches started to indicate a return to normality following the pandemic. Voids on the covered market met the target. Actions were in place to collect outstanding rent.

Thirty-five projects were green, four amber and five rated red. Some of the red rated projects were due to the pandemic and implemented supportive measures.

Policy and Governance

The directorate covered five services, Communications and Visitor Economy, Finance, Governance, Transformation and Partnerships and Business Support.

The directorate had a variance in the budget of 0.6% equalling £33,000, and the overspend was due to the increase in the cost of utilities, the increase in audit fees and the pay award against the budgeted 2%. Half of the indicators were at or above target and better than Quarter 2 2021/22.

Work was ongoing with the Youth Zone and the Department for Work and Pensions to identify the barriers in place causing young people to not be in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

All four of the Communications and Visitor Economy indicators were at or above targets. Two thirds of the finance performance indicators were at or better than target. 80% of Governance indicators were on or above target. Of the twelve indicators for Transformation and Partnership, eight were on or above target, one was within the 5% threshold and three were below target.

The percentage of shared services staff satisfied was below target and worse than Quarter 2 2021/22. It was understood that organisation change of any kind created uncertainty, roles were changed, and workplace culture adjusted. The council frequently held opportunities for feedback, discussion and offered support to staff.

Vacancies remained throughout the council, and the vacancy rate had decreased, but there were ongoing recruitment issues. Interim appointments were made to fill required roles.

The typical council employee worked on a hybrid basis with an average of two to three days a week in the office, but this was dependent on role and levels of productivity with management discretion. The council understood that there were advantages to office working, particularly for younger and more inexperienced staff, as training and mentoring was more successful in an office environment while surrounded by experience. The council also appreciated the appeal of flexibility and was aware that they were competing in a more

flexible labour market. The health and wellbeing of employees was taken seriously with a high value placed on employees maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Communities

The directorate included Communities, Housing Solutions and Public Protection.

The directorate overspent £135,000 which was a 7.27% variance against the budget. This was due to the proposed pay award for 2022/23, an increase in the allocated amount towards Bed and Breakfasts, and an overall reduced income from the NHS and Lancashire Constabulary.

There were difficulties with recruitment and staffing capacity, but there was the recruitment of a Housing Standards Officer.

The performance indicators were reviewed, with positive performance related to percentage of families in B&B's for less than six weeks, and the percentage of positive outcomes in prevention and relief cases.

Planning and Development

Financially, there was an overspend of £37,346 due to the increased costs of professional fees, statutory notices, legal fees and staffing.

Covid witnessed the suspension of the pre-application advice service that was replaced with improvements made to the planning portal and supplementary guidance.

Staffing remained a challenge within the council, failed recruitment attempts required the use of agency staff. Efforts to train staff from within risked departure to the private sector.

As the Local Plan neared its conclusion and the process underway for the new one, there were fewer allocated housing sites. The council was negotiating with a developer to purchase a number of affordable homes in its role as a registered provider.

Of the three projects within the directorate, two were on target, with one slightly off track.

4. The Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups

Select Move – Chaired by Councillor June Molyneux

The final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Select Move was presented to the Committee in October 2022. The Task Group was formed due to concerns that the recommendations made in the 2014 Task Group were no longer being adhered to.

Throughout the process, the Task Group engaged with Local Authorities within the partnership, users of Select Move via a survey, Registered Providers within the partnership, the Allocations Policy Consultant, the MP, the Select Move Coordinator and Officers within the Council.

The recommendations within the report were identified over the duration of the investigation, and it was hoped that the recommendations provide positive momentum and change within the partnership.

The first monitoring report to update Members of the progress of the recommendations will be due at the October Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Empty Properties – Chaired by Councillor Sarah Ainsworth

The final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Empty Properties was presented to the Committee in July. The Task Group formed as a result of the Overview and Scrutiny agenda setting workshop as the committee felt a task group would be more effective in building and developing understanding of long term empty properties in the borough instead of an officer report.

The task group engaged with various officers within the local authority and reached out to neighbouring authorities to compare and contrast figures.

The recommendations within the report were identified over the duration of the Task Group and hoped that the investigation, report and recommendations will enable a greater and more accessible understanding of long term empty properties in the borough.

The first monitoring report to update Members of the progress of the recommendations will be due at Committee in 2024.

5. Budget Scrutiny

At the time of the Scrutiny review, the budget deficit was reported to be £1.17m, and it was believed that the budget could be balanced without cuts to services or staffing. Significant income had been gained since the purchase of Market Walk in 2014, and there was optimism for Strawberry Fields and Strawberry Meadows, in addition to future investments.

The priorities of the council were considered during the creation of the budget.

There was long term uncertainty around the funding from central government, due to the decreased figure received and the increased costs and pressures.

Council tax and special expenses proposed to increase by 1.99%, at this figure, Chorley would have the second lowest rate of Council Tax in Lancashire.

6. Topics presented to the Committee

Chorley Leisure Company

Following a procurement exercise in 2019, the preferred bidder withdrew their bid due to the challenge caused by Covid. The decision was made for the council to take on the operation of the leisure facilities.

The Leisure Company was established in April 2021, and operation commenced August 2021. The entity was separate from the council and held its own objectives. The governance structure of the company included the board of directors made up from the Directors of Chorley Council. The position of Managing Director would be the Director of Commercial Services, but due to vacancy, the Director of Governance held this position.

Chorley Council was the sole shareholder in the Leisure Company, and the functions were fulfilled by the Executive Cabinet.

To deliver the objectives of the Leisure Company, a single year business plan was adopted to reflect the imminent priorities of the council.

The Leisure Company faced a challenge financially, despite this, to ensure accessibility and affordability for the community, the decision was made not increase the price of membership.

Following the single year business plan, a five-year business development strategy was to be introduced with the objective to become financially self-sustained. Surplus and profits would be reinvested into the company and facilities.

Turnover of staff was high, but this was not unusual for the leisure industry.

Renovations of Brinscall Baths was not yet underway, although £600,000 was allocated for work as additional surveys were required. All three of the Leisure Company buildings required investment and modernisation.

Crime and Disorder – Community Safety Partnership

Background information, the role and purpose of the Community Safety Partnership was shared. Key topics included youth anti-social behaviour and the actions, interventions and support available to alleviate the issues present.

There were good working relationships within the Partnership. The Inspector was happy for Members to reach out and report any concerns or issues. Resources were available to increase presence of PCSO's and Neighbourhood Officers, in addition to providing roadshow and engagement stalls as required.

Concern was raised with the proposed move of the police station from the Town Centre to Exton Lake Campus, however, there was consideration for a satellite office with Officers still stationed within the town centre.

Open Space, Sports and recreation Strategy

The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy was approved by Executive Cabinet in 2021.

The presentation provided highlighted the scope and remit of the work that was undertaken with the programme in addition to the issues that caused delays, which were primarily due to sourcing and securing funding.

Locations were identified for five green bus stops in the borough, and funds were made available to repair the worst sections of towpaths in the Borough.

The urban wildflower corridors were highlighted, and it as reiterated that there was no risk of introducing invasive species or damaging the local ecology due to their location.

Period Poverty

The borough was said to have a good provision of products available. Students in school were offered a good supply, but there were noted additional opportunities to expand the scope and range, and was acknowledged that there were gaps in what was provided in council owned buildings for staff and visitors.

Only Morrisons provided free products. Provisions that were available were not localised within the town centre, but wide across the borough, and were provided by a range of charities and groups.

Cycling

Work was being completed to gain the views of cycling and promote the activity in the borough.

A consultation was completed to manage expectations and to sign post the councils needs to the County Council. 180 responses were received, and comments from social media were collated and included. The results of the consultation would be incorporated into the objectives going forward.

There was also interest in gaining an understanding into the cycling habits of staff, it was noted that the cycle pods at Bengal Street were not being used as much as desired.

Work was underway with Lancashire County Council to ensure that Chorley was well represented within the Lancashire Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Partnership, it was noted that District Councils were not eligible for active travel funds.

The forthcoming Local Plan was believed to contain an emphasis on walking and wheeling for new developments.

Updates from the Lancashire County Council's Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Over the course of the year, the Committee were periodically provided updates from the Lancashire County Council's Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee that was attended by Councillor Alex Hilton or Councillor Margaret France.

The Government directive was to build 40 new fit for purpose, and state of the art hospitals. Both the Royal Preston Hospital and Lancaster Royal Infirmary were identified as having aged infrastructure, increased maintenance costs and struggled to meet the demands of modern health care.

A shortlist of four options was published, and it was decided for two brand new hospitals to be built, one in Preston and one in Lancaster. It was estimated that construction would start in 2025 with plans to open in 2030.

Chorley Hospital was to continue to receive investment by Lancashire Teaching Hospital Trust and there were no plans to close Chorley Hospital.

The Social Care Reform that was announced in September 2021 and due to be introduced in October 2023 was now delayed to 2025.

Reforms considered to streamline the financial and needs assessment online and despite assurances, there were concerns that those with complex needs would be disadvantaged

Information around virtual wards was provided, their use, purpose, and eligibility.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to write to the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee to request the addition of tender and procurement for the Integrated Care Boards to the work programme.

Monitoring Reports

Quality of Housing provided by Social Landlords

Member Learning Sessions had been held around housing issues. Work was undertaken with various housing providers in the borough to increase the uptake of disabled facilities grants. The County Council employed additional occupational therapists to work across Central Lancashire to ease the backlog caused by Covid 19. The Select Move Coordinator was in post at Chorley Borough Council to work with registered providers, the Steering Group and the partnership to progress improvements and assist with implementation of the Charter

The Good Homes Charter had been delayed due to the pandemic and new legislation.

Two recommendations had not progressed, and they were for a residents association and a social housing sector, it was believed that due to the delays caused by the pandemic, and with the placement of the Select Move Coordinator, the aims of both recommendations would be met.

Sustainable Public Transport

The final monitoring report observed that 18 of the recommendations were completed, five were in progress and a number were ongoing with the development of the new Local Plan, which would be monitored at the Local Plan Working Group and the Central Lancashire Strategic Planning joint Advisory Committee.

7. Conclusion and the Year Ahead

It had been an interesting year for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, scrutinising, reviewing, and exploring topics that were of interest and concern to Members and to the public.

The Committee is committed to working closely with Members, partners, Officers, and the Executive and will continue to challenge and hold the Executive to account while remaining a critical friend to ensure positive outcomes.

In the forthcoming municipal year, there will be four meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and four meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel.

A third of the Council is up for election in May 2023, four of the fourteen members of the Committee are either standing down or contesting their seats. There is to be a significant change to the Committee's Membership, with Councillor John Walker standing down after 25 years on the Council.

In late June, the Committee will partake in a workshop to draft the upcoming work programme, which will be presented and confirmed at the first Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the year.