

Overview and Scrutiny – Report to Council

1. This report summarises the business considered at the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 October 2023; the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 23 November 2023; and an update on the Task Group: Recruitment and Staff Retention which met in October and November with its final meeting taking place in December 2023.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5 October 2023

Empty Properties Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Update

2. Councillor Sarah Ainsworth provided an update on the Final Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Empty Properties. She reported that following the helpful discussion and feedback at the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the review of Empty Properties, the Task Group met again last Thursday.
3. The Task Group carefully considered the feedback and decided to remove the table on page 9 of the report breaking the number of empty properties down by parish. It was felt that the table did not add anything additional to the report and that more detailed information broken down by ward would be provided as part of implementing recommendation 5 in the report (information to be provided to Neighbourhood Area Meetings).
4. The report would now be considered at Executive Cabinet in the usual way.

Health Scrutiny

5. Councillor Margaret France provided a written update on the Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee on 13 September 2023.
6. She gave an update on the NHS Community Mental Health Transformation Programme as follows:
 - Community Mental Health Teams or hubs mirroring the 'Place' model in preparation for a go live date of 16/10/23
 - Introducing Mental Health Practitioners into Primary Care
 - Lancashire MIND working with VCFS agencies to map out provision of services
 - Easy access to specialist mental health services - no 'wrong door' approach
 - Multidisciplinary assessments - the right help at the right time
7. She also gave an update as follows on Happier Minds, the work of LCC Public Health team around alcohol, drugs, self-harm and suicide across Lancashire. She indicated that the 5 key strands of work were:
 - Emotional Health and Well-being

- Loneliness and Social Isolation
- Dementia
- Alcohol and Drug use
- Self-harm and suicide

Cost of Living Action Plan – Update

8. Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member (Early Intervention) presented a report of the Director of Communities updating members on the Cost of Living Action Plan. Councillor Murray conveyed her thanks to the Communities team and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector network.
9. There were still some gaps, however. She highlighted page 45 of the report, which outlined a proposal to address furniture poverty by creating a new and recycled white goods and furniture scheme.
10. The Director of Communities, Jennifer Mullin, indicated that people could access information about support available such as food clubs via the Council website / social media, via telephone, leaflets, partner/ voluntary organisations, and postcards delivered to households. She agreed to provide members with data about recipients of the Household Support Fund.
11. One member highlighted the difficulty of getting support to groups such as pensioners, some of whom just miss qualifying for pension credit but were still on very modest incomes. Councillor Murray agreed vulnerable pensioners were one of the hard to reach groups; in such cases the Council works with partner organisations to identify people who use food banks and will hopefully reach people not accessing information digitally by distributing postcards. It was suggested that these postcards be distributed in community venues such as GP surgeries and libraries. It was also suggested that as winter approaches information about the location of warm hubs be included.

First Monitoring Report - Select Move Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Oct 2023

12. Councillor Terry Howarth, Executive Member (Homes and Housing) presented a report of the Director of Communities providing the first update of the work undertaken to deliver the 18 recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group for Select Move.
13. One member informed the Committee that they had met with the housing team last week and found it useful to have information about the properties available to bid on such as the waiting times. The Director Communities indicated that this was available via the Select Move system. It was agreed that a note be provided to new members on the Select Move system.

Wheelchair Accessibility

14. Adam Nickson, Head of Property and Development presented a report of the Deputy Chief Executive updating members regarding wheelchair accessibility across Council buildings and externally in Chorley.
15. The work which had recently been carried out at the back of the town hall to provide access to meetings for wheelchair users was commended.
16. Members raised a number of issues arising from the report which Adam Nickson agreed to follow up.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

17. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 was presented for information. The Chair gave updates to the Committee as follows:
18. As regards the Water Safety training session requested by members, the organiser Beckie Ramsay has been contacted, and she will be available to come to the Committee on 14 March next year.
19. As regards the Suicide Prevention and Bereavement Support Task Group, this is due to commence early next year.

Update from the Recruitment and Retention Overview and scrutiny Task Group

20. Councillor Ryan Towers gave an update to the Committee regarding the Recruitment and Staff Retention Task Group.
21. He informed members that the Task Group had considered a range of policies and detailed information in areas such as apprenticeships, staff surveys and exit interviews. He highlighted that the Task Group had requested further investigation into the Council obtaining the Living Wage Accreditation. He explained that at present although the Council paid the Living Wage to all its directly employed staff, its sub-contractors were not all meeting that criteria. The Task Group had requested that options be explored to address this e.g. via the procurement route.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel – 23 November 2023

Business Plan Update 2023/24

22. Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform and Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented a report providing an update on the delivery of service level projects outlined in the business plans.
23. Councillor Bradley highlighted that of the total 81 projects:
 - 54 were rated as **Green (67%)**
 - 10 were considered **Completed (12%)**

- 16 were rated as **Amber (20%)**
- 1 was rated as **Red (1%)**

24. He explained that the project rated red was in relation to the finance system project, which had been delayed for the reasons explained in paragraph 14, i.e. to ensure a stable environment before proceeding with the purchase of a new system.

25. A number of questions were asked by the Panel and the responses were as follows:

2023 Events Programme – It was clarified that some of the overspend related to South Ribble (i.e. Worden Park / South Ribble Museum). In respect of Chorley Council, there had been additional spend on the Flower Show. It was noted, however, that the events programme ran from Jan – Dec whereas performance reporting year runs April – April. For future performance reports it was requested that officers look at addressing that discrepancy and also the disaggregation of Chorley Council matters so it is clearer for Members.

Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy – an update to be provided to members after the meeting.

Finance systems project delay – The Director of Finance, Louise Mattinson explained the position as regards the finance systems project. She stressed that it was important for systems to be able to interface with each other; therefore measures had been taken to ensure stability and integrity of existing systems by renewing the contract with the existing provider for one year with the option to extend for a further two years at an agreed price. In the meantime, progress can be made into purchasing a newer and better systems on the market to deliver best value for the Council.

The Director of Finance confirmed that the project was now on track for implementing the new systems in April 2025.

Long term empty property checks – latest figures to be provided to the Neighbourhood Area Meetings and an update be given to the next Panel meeting.

Special Expenses – Councillor Wilson stressed it was important to ensure that the detailed costs were apportioned as accurately as possible across parishes (e.g. for grass cutting); however there will inevitably be some grey areas. The Chair stressed that it was important to clarify for the benefit of local residents.

Louise Mattinson, Director of Finance indicated that the checks as to how the costs are apportioned would be covered as part of a review. Councillor Wilson proposed to undertake detailed checks to ensure costs are apportioned as accurately as possible.

It was proposed, subsequent to the meeting, that the outcome be reported back to the Committee as part of the Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring Report on 7 March 2024 (subject to Committee approval on 25 January 2024).

UKSPF programme – update report to the next meeting on the Council’s proposals to monitor the delivery of the programme.

Exploration of joint district health scrutiny – That an update be provided to members

Performance Focus – Policy and Governance

26. Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform and Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented a report providing a performance update for the Policy and Governance Directorate. This included:

- a) An overall directorate summary and budget position,
- b) An overview of performance at quarter two 2023/2024
- c) An update on the Corporate Strategy projects.

27. Chris Moister, Director of Governance and Louise Mattinson, Director of Finance were also in attendance.

28. A number of questions / queries were raised by the Panel, and the responses were as follows:

- Overall employment rate – members queried the figure as it differed significantly from the rest of the region average. Councillor Bradley agreed that the figure needed to be investigated further, and if accurate to identify the reasons.
- Corporate projects – Improve our Council buildings – Councillor Bradley explained the delays were related to the decarbonisation scheme and the need to meet government criteria which was very strict.
- Internal audit reviews – Chris Moister explained that all management actions had been agreed with the service. It may be that work in some areas was complete, however, if they had yet to be ticked off in the system (.i.e at the deadline of end of the month or the quarter), the action would still be shown as outstanding in the report. He stressed that overall, things were moving in the right direction.
- Astley Hall Bookings – Councillor Wilson agreed to provide a breakdown of footfall figures split into local residents and visitors.
- Digital connectivity in rural areas - Rural England Prosperity Fund grants – Cllr Bradley indicated that the take up had been very good. He would be receiving a full report in due course and an update would subsequently be provided to the Panel.
- Council business networking / events – Councillor Bradley indicated we are now taking a different approach – it is working well but there is more we can do.
- Response times for complaints to the Chief Executive and MP - identify what is the issue / reason for delay and review the appropriateness of the target if necessary.

Recruitment and Retention Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Meetings held on 3 and 19 October, 30 November, and 14 December 2023

29. Following the scoping of the review on 6 September 2023, The Task Group received presentations, conducted interviews, and gathered relevant information to complete this piece of work over the next three months.
30. The Task Group held its final meeting on 14 December 2023, and agreed its final report which is now to be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2024.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel 11 January 2024

Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring

31. The Executive Member (Resources), Councillor Peter Wilson, presented a report setting out the performance against the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and key performance indicators during the second quarter on 2023/24, covering 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023.
32. Councillor Wilson referred to the performance indicator showing a lower than expected rate of employment for Chorley (64%) compared to the regional average. He stressed that the reasons were being investigated although he was not convinced the figure was an accurate given that it did not accord with other indicators (e.g. which showed Chorley had a lower than average unemployment rate). It would next be reported in the Executive Cabinet's quarter 4 monitoring report in March. The Chair requested that if there was an issue of note or concern, to bring it to the attention of the Scrutiny Panel (earlier than July if possible).
33. Cllr Snape referred to page 12 - "Tempo Time Credits" - Celebration Event for the 10 year anniversary due to take place in November. The Director of Communities informed the Panel that unfortunately the celebration event had to be postponed however it will be taking place in the next couple of months and communications will be going out to all members.
34. Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member (Early Intervention), who was also in attendance, responded to queries relating to leisure centres following the appointment of the new activities manager in post. With regard to the equipment in the leisure centres she indicated that a survey had been done and options were being looked at.
35. Further to a query regarding the NEET (Not in education, employment or training) figure, the Panel were informed that the data had now been obtained from Lancashire County Council. The figure for Chorley was 1.7% which was within target.
36. The Chair highlighted the delays in the adoption of the Local Plan and the resulting performance indicator going from amber to red. He suggested that, once the Local Plan had gained traction and was closer to adoption, the Panel

may wish to scrutinise the background as to how the Council arrived in this position.

Performance Focus: Communities and Leisure

37. Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member (Early Intervention), presented a report providing members with a performance update for the Communities and Leisure Directorate which included:

- a. An overall directorate summary and budget position at September 2023,
- b. An overview of key performance measures at quarter two 2023/24, and
- c. An update on the Corporate Strategy projects.

38. The report also indicated that the Leisure Company transferred over to the Communities Directorate in September 2023, therefore, this is the first time that a report on the Company has come to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel. It was clarified that the Board met on a regular basis (formally four times a year) and held informal meetings / briefings inbetween to discuss any issues.

39. Jennifer Mullin, Director of Communities stressed that demand in the area was being looked at with a view to targeting resources to increase leisure centre membership.

40. Councillor Murray indicated that Cosy Homes Lancashire Scheme was benefiting local residents.

41. A question was asked regarding promotion of the Home Energy Support Scheme and availability of information for members. Cllr Murray indicated that the postholder running the scheme had only recently been appointed, however she would circulate information to members.

42. A question was asked regarding the Anti Social Behaviour action plan. The Director of Communities explained that Chorley INSPIRE were assisting the Council with their outreach work, which would be the subject of a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2024.

UKSPF Programme Monitoring and Performance

43. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources), presented a report providing an overview of the framework and approach for monitoring delivery of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) with a particular focus on capturing programme outputs and outcomes.

44. Councillor Wilson clarified that although the Government requirements were for monitoring delivery every six months, in practice this will be more often.

45. He also confirmed that it was expected that the full amount of the funding would be spent.

46. The Panel Resolved:

1. That the monitoring requirements set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as part of the UKSPF Programme be noted; and
2. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee plays a key role in the future monitoring of the Council's UKSPF programme and that it is incorporated into the committee's future workplan with updates aligned to the formal reporting schedule for the Council's UKSPF returns. It is anticipated that this will be on a six-monthly basis.

Recommendation: Council is requested to note the report.

Councillor Aidy Riggott

Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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