

Minutes of	Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel
Meeting date	Monday, 22 March 2021
Members present:	Councillors David Howarth (Chair), Colin Coulton, Colin Sharples and Karen Walton
Cabinet members:	Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform) and Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Matthew Tomlinson (Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets))
Officers:	Gary Hall (Chief Executive), James Thomson (Deputy Director of Finance), Victoria Willett (Service Lead - Transformation and Partnerships), Darren Cranshaw (Shared Services Lead - Democratic, Scrutiny & Electoral Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)
Other members:	Councillor Jacky Alty (Member Champion (Social Justice and Equality) and Lead Member (Social Justice and Equality)) and Councillor Michael Green

29 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Will Adams.

30 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

31 Minutes of meeting Monday, 9 November 2020 of Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Monday 9 November 2020, be approved as a correct record.

32 Matters Arising from previous Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel meetings

Members of the Panel received a report which provided updates on the progress of recommendations made at previous meetings of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the matters arising from previous meetings of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel be noted; and
2. those completed actions be removed from the report.

33 Quarter 3 (October - December) Performance Monitoring Report 2020-21

The Panel considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive which outlined the Council's performance against the delivery of the Corporate Strategy projects and objectives during Quarter 3 (October-December 2020).

Overall, performance of the projects was good, with 9 out of 14 projects marked as on-track. 7 out of 9 reported performance indicators (KPIs) were above target and the Panel commended the council's performance.

The Panel queried why delivery of the joint Digital Strategy had not yet commenced and were informed, in response, that resources for the roll-out were still awaited but that IT development remained ongoing in the interim. Delivery of the joint Digital Strategy would be monitored from Quarter 1 of the next financial year and members would see outcomes very quickly after this.

Clarification was sought on the difference between the South Ribble Together Community Hub and My Neighbourhood Community Hubs. It was explained that these are the same and the Panel requested consistency in the use of names and descriptions of the Hubs going forwards.

A query was also raised regarding how the performance of My Neighbourhood Community Hubs would be monitored and it was advised that 7 key indicators had been devised for the Cabinet to monitor. A report would be considered by Cabinet on this in June 2021.

The number of residents benefiting from opportunities created by the council's Communities team was acknowledged as being broad and members requested further information on the definitions and ways of measuring this indicator.

The full data definition for this KPI would be provided following the meeting but it was explained that individuals are contacted through the South Ribble Together Hub as part of a targeted approach using data from the NHS Shielding List.

Members welcomed confirmation that the Community Wealth Building Action Plan would be presented to Full Council in summer 2021.

The costs for refurbishing Penwortham Leisure Centre were requested and would be provided outside of the meeting.

Slight concern was also expressed that both of the two delayed projects related to the council's green agenda. However, the Panel was assured that these were just the projects highlighted as being delayed but that a range of activities to promote a green agenda, such as the roll-out of electric vehicle charging points and tree-planting remained underway.

Members were reassured in the Chief Executive's explanation regarding the deliverability of health and safety within the Civic Centre and that there had been fewer near-miss incidents reported due to homeworking practices.

Although it was acknowledged that some work had been unable to commence due to changing work practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Leader of the Council remained confident in the delivery of the Corporate Strategy.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel:

1. thanks the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Shared Services Lead – Transformation and Partnerships for attending and answering its questions;
2. commends the council's performance at the end of quarter 3;
3. requests consistency in the future use of the name and description of the Community Hubs;
4. asks that further information be provided on the key performance information definition on the number of residents benefiting from opportunities created by the communities team;
5. asks that the costs associated with refurbishing Penwortham Leisure Centre be provided; and
6. welcomes the commitment to review the methodology for collecting customer satisfaction data.

34 Budget Monitoring 2020-21 Quarter 3

The Panel considered a report of the Deputy Director of Finance which provided an update on the Council's overall financial position at the end of Quarter 3 of the 2020-21 financial year.

Members were informed that reasonable progress had been made against several projects and that a net deficit of £9000 was now forecasted for the 2020/21 financial year.

In response to a query regarding the kind of borrowing the council undertakes, assurances were provided that this did not result in cash debt. Although the breakdown of the council's borrowing was not available to hand, members were informed that borrowing is only undertaken internally and that there was no need for external borrowing to fund the capital programme at this time.

The Panel welcomed the addition of staff vacancy information within the report and had several queries on the impact of current vacancies.

With regards to the surplus in staffing costs within the Planning and Property directorate, it was enquired as to whether this was as a result of the number of

planning applications being submitted having decreased within the last quarter. Further discussions would take place with the Planning department to ascertain the causal effect of this.

The impact of the vacant Head of Licensing post on the service was also questioned and the Panel was informed that a member of the council's legal department was managing the licensing department on an interim basis. Assurances were provided that the service was operating well with such measures in place.

In response to an enquiry from a member not on the Panel regarding any risk as a result of two vacancies in IT, members were advised that temporary measures are in place and that the Cabinet Member was confident that all checks and balances were still being adhered to.

The Panel was also informed that the council's reserves would be reviewed on a quarterly basis going forwards, which was welcomed.

Following a query from a member not on the Panel, it was requested that further information on all Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments made to parish councils within the last seven years be provided to members.

Although disappointment was expressed that the Capital Programme would not be delivered in 2020/21 based on the total spends, members welcomed the Cabinet Member's confidence that sufficient capacity and resources were now in place for future delivery.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel:

1. thanks the Cabinet Member and Deputy Director of Finance for attending and answering its questions;
2. commends the inclusion of staff vacancy information within the report;
3. welcomes the reassurance that the capacity and skills required for the future delivery of the capital programme is now in place; and
4. asks that further information on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments to parish/town councils over the last 7 years be provided to members.

Chair

Date