

Minutes of	Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel
Meeting date	Monday, 14 June 2021
Members present:	Councillors Will Adams (Chair) and Colin Sharples
Cabinet members:	Councillor Foster, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform); Councillor M Tomlinson, Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets) and Councillor Titherington, Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing); Councillor Evans, Cabinet Member (Planning, Regeneration and Business Support)
Officers:	Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer), James Thomson (Deputy Director of Finance), Victoria Willett (Service Lead - Transformation and Partnerships), Howard Anthony (South Ribble Partnership Manager), Darren Cranshaw (Shared Services Lead - Democratic, Scrutiny & Electoral Services), Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer) and Ben Storey (Democratic Services Assistant)
Other members:	Councillors Bell, Hancock, and P Smith
Public:	0

35 Appointment of Chair

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, the Shared Services Lead - Democratic, Scrutiny & Electoral Services requested nominations for the Chair of this meeting.

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Adams be appointed Chair of this meeting.

36 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Howarth, Coulton and Walton.

37 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

38 Minutes of meeting Monday, 22 March 2021 of Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel

RESOLVED:-

That the minutes of the Budget Scrutiny and Performance Panel held on Monday 22 March 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

39 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:-

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

40 Quarter 4 (January- March) Performance Monitoring Report 2020-21

The Panel considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive which outlined the Council's performance during quarter 4 (January – March 2021). The Leader and Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform), attended the meeting and presented the report. He highlighted the Leisure Centres and the delay on some of works however this was so that they tied in to the Council's green agenda by ensuring energy efficiencies. He also stressed the Council's concern regarding the impact of the pandemic on young people. It was a key priority for the Council which it would be discussing with partners.

Members of the Panel asked a number of questions to which the following responses were provided by Councillor Foster supported by the Chief Executive:

- South Ribble Together Hubs – this project had been delayed due to the Council's inability to engage with the public due to the pandemic. The Chief Executive indicated that the Council would follow Government guidance and progress the project as soon as possible.
- Borough food bank network – Councillor Foster said there is still a high demand for foodbanks throughout the borough. We are looking at bringing foodbank providers together through partnership working so that the service can be delivered via shops and other service outlets. Further to this the Chief Executive indicated that long term solutions were needed to address issues such as unemployment, initially intended to be targeted by the Hubs. There now needs clarity on who is driving the issue e.g. Hubs, Council, Local Strategic Partnership.
- Community Wealth Building Action Plan – the Shared Service Lead – Transformation and Partnerships gave examples of progress on actions such as the South Ribble Credit Union to be launched this month and the Social

Value Portal. Further to this we will be looking at embedding the social value element into the Town Deal.

- 3 month delay of Leisure Centres decarbonisation work – The Chief Executive indicated that delay this was driven by funding opportunities – time was required to submit the bids.
- Long term strategy for leisure centre provision – Councillor Foster said that he looked forward to bringing this before Cabinet in due course.
- The creation of more affordable housing – Councillor Foster said that land and sustainability had been issues in regard to this. However, it was a top priority for the Cabinet. They were actively pursuing new sites and he hoped to make an announcement on Lostock Hall soon. There had been huge demand for Tom Hanson House, with 150 applications being received per property. He confirmed that management of the properties will be in-house. Current regulations state that the Council can only manage a maximum of 200 houses but we are looking at alternative options with our partners.
- Length of time to approve Disabled Facilities Grants – Councillor Foster explained that unfortunately one particular case had skewed the performance indicator; the Chief Executive indicated we were currently awaiting the occupational therapist's assessment. In terms of reducing the waiting time generally, partnership working would be required.
- Staff health and wellbeing – Vicky Willett, Shared Service Lead - Transformation and Partnerships reported on a number of ways the Council is being proactive to support staff health and wellbeing, particularly during the pandemic, including regular 121s with line managers, the staff wellbeing survey, and management development training for managers.

RESOLVED:-

That the Panel:

1. Thanks the Leader, Chief Executive and Shared Service Lead for attending and their detailed report.
2. Welcomes the Council's performance and the progress made in quarter 4.
3. Commends the face to face community engagement planned for the Community Hubs when it is safe post-COVID.
4. Looks forward to the long-term future strategy for the leisure centres being considered by the Council.
5. Wishes the Council well in the partnership discussions to expedite disabled facilities grants and asks to be kept updated progress.
6. Thanks all employees for the essential services they provide to the community.

41 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring 20-21 Outturn

The Panel considered a report of the Director of Finance which explained the Council's overall financial position at the end of the financial year 2020-21.

The Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets), attended the meeting and presented the report. He highlighted the staffing costs to be paid by Government COVID funding, the now completed Asset Review of Council buildings, the Extra Care Scheme and additional £168,000 to go in the COVID recovery fund.

Members of the Panel asked a number of questions to which the following responses were provided by Councillor Matthew Tomlinson supported by the Director of Finance:

- Staff vacancies (particularly 2 engineering posts) – the Chief Executive informed the Panel that the Capital Programme had expanded to a larger programme of work and therefore different skills needed to be bought in. Longer term the Council needed to consider what core skills it needed, e.g. a 'hybrid' approach strengthening the client side, with some skills being bought in.

Planning Enforcement – future plans to fill vacant post and develop the area further. The Chief Executive explained that it was difficult to source certain skills as the private sector is able to offer higher salaries. A hybrid model was being implemented, with local staff carrying out the more straightforward enforcement work and the Council buying in specialist skills for more complex cases.

Increase in provision for bad debt - Councillor Tomlinson indicated that the Council was being prudent and making provision in response to the uncertainties created by the pandemic.

The process of setting the level of reserves (which is planned for significant increase) – Councillor Tomlinson stressed this has been at the request of the Cabinet and that senior staff are robustly challenged and have to justify the figures. The Director of Finance indicated that a substantial element of the increase in reserves over the course of the year comes from Government funding for business rates.

Leisure Centre repair and maintenance budget – Councillor Tomlinson indicated that the budget had been planned, the work was required and would be followed through and delivered.

Capital Programme underspend of £2.5m – what is being to deliver the capital programme as planned. Councillor Tomlinson explained that the Capital Programme has been affected by the pandemic and some projects will need to be reprofiled. We will need to look at capacity, some supplies are difficult to resource e.g. there is a national shortage of hexagonal sheets needed for the Worden Overflow Car park should they need to be replaced.

That the Panel:

1. Thanks the Cabinet Member and Director for attending and their detailed report.

2. Notes the revenue and capital budget monitoring outturn.
3. Welcomes the reassurance that staff vacancies are not impacting on service delivery in key areas.
4. Asks the Cabinet Member to ensure the capital programme is deliverable in future years.

Chair

Date