

Minutes of	Scrutiny Committee
Meeting date	Thursday, 17 March 2022
Committee members present:	Councillors David Howarth (Chair), Will Adams, Jacky Alty, Julie Buttery, Matt Campbell, Colin Coulton, Mal Donoghue, Jacqui Mort, Colin Sharples, Kath Unsworth and Karen Walton
Committee members attended virtually (non-voting):	None
Officers present:	Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Chris Sinnott (Deputy Chief Executive), Darren Cranshaw (Shared Services Lead - Democratic, Scrutiny & Electoral Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)
Other attendees:	Councillors Paul Foster, Margaret Smith, Phil Smith, Mick Titherington, Matthew Tomlinson, Angela Turner and Carol Wooldridge (attended virtually)
Public:	0

42 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Michael Green.

Councillor Jacqui Mort attended as substitute.

43 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

44 Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 8 February 2022 of Scrutiny Committee

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on Tuesday, 8 February 2022, be approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

45 Matters Arising from previous Scrutiny Committee meetings

Members received an update on recommendations made at previous meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.

Further information on the progress of the Penwortham Masterplan was requested and an update would be provided to members outside of the meeting.

Members also requested that the Section 106 monies used to partially fund the building of affordable housing in the borough be broken down by development contributions.

A query was also raised with regards to the £150 council tax rebate scheme and how this would be paid to residents who did not pay council tax by direct debit. In response, members were advised that the council was in the process of contacting those residents for payment details in order to provide the rebate.

Members noted progress on previous recommendations and unanimously **resolved** to remove any completed actions from the Matters Arising sheet.

46 Shared Services Update

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Paul Foster) and the Deputy Chief Executive (Chris Sinnott) presented an update on the shared services arrangements with Chorley Council, which also highlighted savings made, staff satisfaction levels and the risk register.

Members noted the progress made since the expansion of shared services in 2019 but queried if the Council would consider sharing services with other authorities than Chorley where applicable. In response, the Leader confirmed that the administration would be open to this and that discussions with other local authorities are constantly underway to discuss further sharing opportunities.

In response to a query regarding how the different cultures of each authority are recognised and maintained, it was emphasised that each council maintains its own sovereignty and there was a need to understand the priorities for each authority. Work such as aligning policies, organisational development and networking had also been undertaken to bring each authority together.

The committee was keen to note any challenges experienced through shared services and what lessons had been learnt.

Challenges in the reorganisation of the Council's IT and Gateway services were acknowledged and lessons around communication to and with staff were recognised.

Members queried what measures were being taken to improve these services. It was explained that an additional £1.2 million had been allocated to improve IT hardware and that extra resourcing within Gateway had recently improved the call waiting time to an average of 1 minute.

Assurances were also provided that there were no direct issues with competing priorities and demands and that mitigating measures such as annual business planning and extra resource allocation were in place to deal with such issue.

The committee suggested undertaking joint scrutiny of shared services with Chorley Council's Scrutiny Committee, which the Leader supported.

Members welcomed confirmation that a review of management capacity was underway with a report expected within the coming months.

Queries were also raised with regard to capacity at other levels and assurances were provided that this is constantly monitored through business planning, monthly Directorate Management Teams (DMT) meetings and weekly Senior Management Team meetings.

It was questioned as to which services were earmarked for the next phase of shared services, to which the Leader and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that no decision had been made on this yet.

The total savings through shared services were identified within the appendix to the report and members sought confirmation as to when these savings would be made.

It was confirmed that the savings identified had already been achieved.

Members also noted that all risks within the Risk Register were marked as either amber or green and queried whether this was realistic given the significance of the shared services programme.

In response, the committee was advised that the Risk Register reflected the view of the Council's Risk team and that amber represented a medium-level risk.

The committee thanked the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive for their report and attendance.

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

1. thanks the Leader and Deputy Chief Executive for attending, presenting their detailed report and answering questions;
2. welcomes the achievement, progress and improvements made as a result of Shared Services;
3. asks that the individual examples of issues concerning ICT systems be investigated further;
4. feels re-assured that the Council is aware of the issues with the Customer Services and ICT review and that steps are being taken to resolve these as soon as possible; and
5. explores further the opportunities of joint Scrutiny of Shared Services with Chorley Council.

47 Community Wealth Building

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

48 Urgent Decisions

The committee received a report of the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer which outlined a number of urgent decisions taken since 7 January 2022 in accordance with the urgency procedures outlined within the Council's Constitution.

The report highlighted that 6 urgent decisions had been submitted during this period, which required agreement from either the Mayor or the Chair of Scrutiny Committee to be taken using urgency procedures.

A query was raised as to why 3 decisions on Mutual Agreements had been taken under the General Exception Procedure. It was explained that this was due to the confidential nature and personal information contained within the report, but assurances were provided that such process is lawful and is discussed with union representatives.

Members reiterated concerns made previously over the number of urgent decisions taken and requested information on the use of urgent decisions at other authorities.

Resolved: (unanimously)

That the Scrutiny Committee

1. notes the report and
2. requests further information on the use of urgent decisions at comparative local authorities.

49 Scrutiny Matters

49a Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update

The Council's representative on Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, Councillor David Howarth, provided an update on the work of the committee.

The next meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for later in March 2022 and would consider the Lancashire and South Cumbria New Hospitals Programme, which included a proposed option of restructuring Royal Preston Hospital.

49b Meetings and training attended by Scrutiny Committee members

There had been no recent meetings or training attended by members of the committee.

49c Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted.

Chair

Date