

**Minutes of** **Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting date** **Monday, 11 March 2024**

**Members present:** Councillors Will Adams (Chair), Michael Green (Vice-Chair), David Howarth, Will King, Pete Pillinger and Haydn Williams

**Officers:** Darren Cranshaw (Head of Democratic Services) and Ben Storey (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

**Guests:** Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member – Strategy and Reform), Caroline Wolfenden (Director of Change and Delivery) and Elizabeth Hindle (Head of Planning and Enforcement)

**Other members:** Councillor Colin Sharples and attending virtually, Councillors Keith Martin, Matthew Tomlinson, Phil Smith and Angela Turner

**Public:** 0

#### **45 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nicky Peet.

#### **46 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Michael Green declared a personal interest in item 5 - Quarter Three Performance Monitoring Report 2023-24 as the Lancashire County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

#### **47 Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 20 February 2024 of Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee**

##### **Resolved: (Unanimously)**

That the minutes of the last meeting, held on Tuesday 20 February 2024, be agreed as an accurate record for signing by the Chair, subject to a minor amendment to note the attendance of Councillor Paul Foster at the meeting.

#### **48 Recommendations Update**

The Committee noted progress updates outlined within the report and agreed to remove completed recommendations from the tracking document.

#### **49 Quarter Three Performance Monitoring Report 2023-24**

The Chair invited the Leader of the Council, supported by the Director of Change and Delivery, to present the quarterly performance monitoring report.

Key points highlighted to the Committee included the two 'amber' rated projects within the report, the Leyland Town Deal and improvement works to local play areas. Significant progress on site acquisitions had been made since this reporting period with a confidential update provided as part of the last Cabinet meeting. Likewise, Cabinet had recently approved the procurement process for both play areas with King George V in Penwortham expected to be completed in the next month and the play area in Longton scheduled to open by the Summer.

On the embedding of the social prescribing team referenced within the report, the Committee heard that the team had successfully embedded with key stakeholders such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Department for Work and Pensions, NHS and the councils housing and homelessness team and were already delivering positive outcomes for residents. It was acknowledged that further demand for this service was expected in the future, would be monitored closely, and that the need for additional resources would be reviewed as and when required.

It was confirmed that the Family Wellbeing Centre in Lostock Hall had been completed and leases agreed. A key aim of the project was not only to provide early intervention service to benefit the local community but to ensure that the facility was sustainable, with the Council subsidising the lease on a short-term basis to support the self-sustainability of the centre and assisting with accessing additional grant funding.

Questions were asked about the Community Asset Framework and its aims. The framework's aim was to achieve the best utilisation of the council's assets through either income generation or community use and was part of a wider review of assets currently underway.

Further clarification was sought over the sustainability of funding that supports the delivery of the Cost of Living Action Plan, and whether there was adequate funding to meet demand. In response, the Committee heard that there was increasing demand which presented challenges to the council in bridging the gap between external funding provided and the cost of delivering services, as demonstrated by additional resources being used to support the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

In relation to performance indicators on the basic digital skills training scheme it was noted that this was underperforming, however, issues around monitoring and reporting from an external partner delivering the training did partially account for this with work ongoing to make improvements. The Committee were reassured that more training had been delivered that did not appear within the report.

The Committee welcomed further information on the timescales involved in procuring the new Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) and the benefits that it will bring to residents' experience.

Questions were asked about the print strategy recently approved by Cabinet, what it has achieved to date and whether future performance monitoring reports include updates in this area. Given it had only been adopted in November 2023, it was too early to provide a clear indication of its impact though this could be incorporated into the quarter four monitoring report. The aim of the strategy was to reduce paper usage, thus supporting the council's wider ambition of carbon neutrality and better utilise ICT equipment and software available to both staff and elected members.

Members noted the aims and objectives of the early years task group and heard that this had been a result of a gap identified in this area by the data collated by the Chorley and South Ribble Partnership, bringing together key partners such as Lancashire County Council and the NHS. Members were also reminded that a session designed to demonstrate the data system was arranged for Monday 18 March, with all members welcome to attend.

Following questions regarding progress on improvements to the Civic Centre, members hear that the aim was to maximise the use and income generation of the whole building. As part of the project, proposals to create a fixed council chamber were being considered, something that would provide a dedicated venue for all council and committee meetings with upgraded audio visual systems and free up the banqueting suite throughout the year for external bookings. Other alterations around the building, and also the potential to rent out other parts of the building to partner organisations was being reviewed.

On questions asked as part of the customer satisfaction survey, and more widely how the views of residents are captured, Members heard that it was a new survey with further improvements to encourage more detailed responses already identified. Complaints and negative feedback were also reviewed. The Council also undertake a resident's survey every two years. The Committee welcomed the offer to circulate the findings of the draft report of the most recent survey carried out. Additionally on results of customer satisfaction surveys being below target – improvements were expected in the next quarter with new performance indicators agreed following new telephony and other changes being implemented.

Queries were raised about the Business Energy Efficiency (BEE) scheme and the challenges in getting businesses to access these grants. Members noted the work of business development team in proactively promoting the scheme and also once applications are received, the governance procedures in place before grants can be issued. A more detailed update was welcomed by the Committee.

In response to questions about the Skills Factory and engaging more with residents not in education, employment or training, members heard that more collaborative working with key stakeholders was essential in addressing this issue. Post pandemic there had been an increase nationally of inactive young people and was an area the Chorley and South Ribble Partnership was monitoring and looking to identify opportunities to better support residents.

The Committee were reassured that negotiations were at an advanced stage on agreements for a temporary relocation of Leyland Market traders during improvement works, with traders and local residents kept informed throughout the process. Subject to negotiations being concluded soon, it was expected that the relocation would commence by late Summer with works starting in the Autumn. It was confirmed that March 2026 remained the anticipated completion date for the Leyland Town Deal project, with the committee noting the complex governance structure in place and welcoming additional performance data being included in future reports for this project and other major council projects such as the Jubilee Gardens extra care facility.

The Committee heard that delays in play area procurement and delivery, particularly for the two play areas in Longton were due to concerns around the procurement

process that needed addressing before it could progress. These were subsequently resolved and approved at the Cabinet meeting in January with completion of the projects expected in the coming months.

On the health screening performance indicator, the committee were informed that due to external funding for the programme ending and the accountable body, Active Lancashire, no longer making referrals to the council's active health team the indicator would be removed from the refreshed Corporate Strategy, as agreed by Full Council in November 2023. It was also noted that obesity and weight loss was now a priority for Lancashire County Council with grant funding made available to South Ribble for initiatives and schemes in this area.

The Committee were informed that the council had significant overspends in meeting the growing homelessness problem which has impacted on local authorities across the country. Wider contributing factors such as increasing mortgage rates and a lack of housing supply has compounded the problem during a period of economic challenges, as has a rise in the number of people granted asylum presenting as homeless. It was noted that this performance indicator fluctuates on a weekly basis and therefore the quarterly reports can only provide a snapshot at the given time the report is produced.

It was acknowledged that waiting times for disabled facilities grants to be processed were still higher than hoped, despite performance being better than the target and having seen significant improvements since the council allocated funding for occupational health assessments to expedite the process.

Further clarity regarding the cumulative council tax and business rates collection rates was welcomed by the Committee.

It was subsequently;

**Resolved: (Unanimously)**

That the Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee;

1. Thanks the Leader and Director for their detailed report and answering the Committee's questions;
2. Welcomes the report and performance of the Council during Quarter Three;
3. Asks for further information to be provided on the Community Assets Framework;
4. Looks forward to receiving more robust information on the digital skills training indicator, customer relationship management system project and the printing strategy;
5. Encourages all members to attend a learning session on the partnership data dashboard arranged for Monday, 18 March 2024;
6. Commends the work of the skills factory project;

7. Asks that further reports include more detailed progress information on the council's major projects, such as the Leyland Town Deal and Jubilee Gardens, and also the number of people in temporary accommodation; and
8. Welcomes the offer of more information being provided on the council tax and business rates collection rate indicator.

## **50 Scrutiny Review of Building Better Homes and Neighbourhoods Update**

The Chair invited the Leader of the Council, supported by the Head of Planning and Enforcement, to present the update report on recommendations made by the Building Better Homes and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Task Group.

The work of Councillor James Flannery, as former Cabinet Member for Planning, Business Support and Economic Development over the last few years was commended after recently stepping down due to work commitments.

On the re-constitution of the Local Plan Working Group and more widely around ensuring members are fully informed and engaged as the new Local Plan progresses, the Committee were re-assured that although a decision had not yet been made about a member working group, all members would be kept informed on the development of the emerging Local Plan. Further clarification over future consultation to be undertaken as part of the plan-making process was provided. The Committee welcomed the offer of confidential briefing sessions being arranged in the future to provide a detailed update on progress of the Local Plan.

In response to a query over South Ribble's influence on developing design policies with Preston leading on this piece of work, Members were informed that all three authorities fed into policy development with around half of the policies that the new Local Plan will contain already being drafted. Once final amendments had been agreed then they would be available for members.

Members reflected on the benefits that the Charter accreditation scheme could and would bring in raising housing standards, though it was acknowledged that without being legally enforceable, it would require buy-in from partners and developers.

The Committee questioned whether there remained a commitment to including provision within the new Local Plan for achieving carbon neutrality for all new dwellings. In response, changing government policy and legislation had presented challenges for the teams in developing policies for the new Local Plan.

The Committee welcomed the offer of a further update on achieving the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Task Group, and additionally a wider update on the progress of the Local Plan, in six months time.

It was subsequently;

### **Resolved: (Unanimously)**

That the Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee:

1. Thanks the Leader and Head of Service for attending and answering questions;
2. Asks that further consideration be given to engaging members more in the development of the Local Plan;
3. Welcomes the progress being made on implementing recommendations; and
4. Asks that a further progress report be provided in 6 months time.

## **51 Committee Matters**

### **51a Task Group Update**

An update on the establishment and progress of a scrutiny task group around homelessness in the borough was provided by its Chair, Councillor Haydn Williams

A further progress update on the establishment of a scrutiny task group to consider the development of a Cultural Strategy was provided by its Chair, Councillor David Howarth.

## **52 Meetings & Training Attended by Committee Members**

No meetings or training had been attended by committee members since the last meeting.

## **53 Cabinet Forward Plan**

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

Chair

Date