

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

MEETING DATE Monday, 9 September 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors David Howarth (Chair), Colin Coulton, Colin Sharples and Karen Walton

CABINET MEMBERS: Councillors Paul Foster (Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group) and Matthew Tomlinson (Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets))

OFFICERS: Gary Hall (Interim Chief Executive), Howard Anthony (South Ribble Partnership Manager), James McNulty (Senior Management Accountant), Darren Cranshaw (Assistant Director of Scrutiny & Democratic Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillor Matthew Trafford (Member Champion (Youth))

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1 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Will Adams.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3 Corporate Plan Performance Report: Quarter 1

The Panel considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive which outlined the Council's performance during Quarter 1.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster, advised that the report set out the performance against the delivery of the Corporate Plan projects and objectives that was approved in February 2019.

Overall, performance of projects was good, with 28 out of 34 (over 80%) on-track. This meant that the current timescales of these projects have been met or are within the agreed targets.

Key Performance Indicators and measures of the Corporate Plan were also performing well, with 14 succeeding and 22 marked as being on-track.

Members of the panel were informed that the Council's performance data is monitored through a reporting system called 'InPhase'. This enables scoping, delivery and evaluation of performance and has a functionality to produce a dashboard for reporting to the public. Members were keen to find out more about this

and agreed that a site visit to Fylde Council, who are currently using this function, would be beneficial.

The three projects highlighted as 'positives to note' were Moss Side income generation, occupancy rates of the Council's investment estate, and the Green Links scheme. These projects were identified as exceeding their anticipated targets.

Members expressed concerns regarding the percentage of calls to the Council abandoned before being answered, particularly as there had been an increase from the previous quarter. As of July 2019, this figure had decreased to 9% of calls and members were assured that extra resources were being provided to the service area to alleviate these issues.

Discussions around the number of complaints made to the Council focussed around the garden waste subscription scheme. Work was being undertaken to reduce financial burden on residents and the bin collection policy would be looked at as part of this.

Members acknowledged the difficulty in measuring progress in some areas, particularly homelessness. 65 out of 83 households were prevented from becoming homeless in Quarter 1 with this figure lower than the previous quarter. It was recognised that more in-depth information on homelessness prevention was needed as it involved the borough's most vulnerable residents.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the Panel welcomes the new format and readability of the report.
2. the Panel commends the progress made and steps being taken to bring the small number of actions and indicators back on track.
3. the Panel looks forward to working on the Citizen Performance Portal in six months' time and making a site visit to other councils using the system.
4. the Panel asks that a report on bin replacement be provided to the next Scrutiny Panel meeting.
5. future quarterly performance reports provide examples and case studies of learning from complaints.
6. more in-depth information on homelessness, numbers in temporary accommodation and numbers in bed and breakfasts be provided to the next Panel meeting.

4 Budget Monitoring Report - Quarter 1

The Panel considered a report of the Interim Section 151 Officer which provided an update on the Council's overall financial position at the end of Quarter 4 of the 2019-20 financial year.

Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets, informed the Panel that an underspend of £681,000 was forecasted for the end of the financial year.

The majority of this underspend had been caused by low expenditure on staffing and difficulties in recruiting were acknowledged due to uncompetitive salaries. A review into staff resources was underway and proactive steps were being taken to fill vacancies. Members welcomed this work and requested that progress be reported to the next meeting of the Panel.

Pooling arrangements for business rates were queried and members were informed that the current temporary arrangement of pooling 75% of business rate income would end and that a return to the previous arrangement was anticipated but not confirmed.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the Panel welcomes the report and level of detail included.
2. the Panel looks forward to monitoring the budget going forward.
3. the Panel welcomes the assurance that employee vacancies are being resolved and looks forward to being kept up-to-date on progress.

Chair

Date