

- MINUTES OF SCRUTINY BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**
- MEETING DATE** Monday, 11 November 2019
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillors David Howarth (Chair), Will Adams, Colin Coulton, Colin Sharples and Karen Walton
- OFFICERS:** Gary Hall (Interim Chief Executive), Jane Blundell (Interim Section 151 Officer), Peter McHugh (Assistant Director of Property and Housing), Howard Anthony (South Ribble Partnership Manager), Darren Cranshaw (Assistant Director of Scrutiny & Democratic Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)
- OTHER MEMBERS:** Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group), Councillor Michael Titherington (Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Health, Wellbeing and Leisure) and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Matthew Tomlinson (Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets))
- PUBLIC:** 0
- 5 Apologies for Absence**
- There were none.
- 6 Declarations of Interest**
- There were none.
- 7 Minutes of the Last Meeting**
- The minutes of the last meeting, held on Monday, 9 September, were signed as a correct record by the Chair.
- 8 Matters Arising from Previous Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel Meetings**
- The Panel thanked the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet for accepting and implementing the Panel's previous recommendations.
- The report was noted.
- 9 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report**
- The Panel considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive which outlined the Council's performance during Quarter 2.

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. The performance of the Corporate Plan projects and objectives approved in September 2019 would be reported from Quarter 3 onwards.

Overall, performance of the projects was good, with 31 out of 32 (over 95%) on-track. Key Performance Indicators and measures of the Corporate Plan were also performing well, with 10 succeeding and 30 marked as being on-track. Only four Key Performance Indicators were off-track and these were highlighted in the report.

Members of the panel queried the percentage of calls to the Council's Gateway service abandoned before being answered. Performance in this area was succeeding its target but it was acknowledged that there is a lengthy pre-recorded message that residents must listen to when they call the council, which can cause frustration. Members requested that figures for the number and duration of abandoned calls be provided following the meeting and welcomed the offer to review the pre-recorded message.

An update on the development of InPhase, the Council's performance monitoring system, was requested. Members were informed that implementation was ongoing and that the relevant officers were receiving training on the system. It was anticipated that the system would be in use for reporting on Quarter 3 performance.

Members expressed concerns that only 29% of licensed taxis were inspected in the last quarter and that there was no set target for this. A need for robust and timely inspection was acknowledged and the measures for inspection would be reviewed.

The average number of days between a Disabled Facilities Grant referral from Lancashire County Council to application was highlighted as being off-track. It was acknowledged that this was largely as a result of customers failing to provide the necessary paperwork and due to lack of resources in the referrals team at Lancashire County Council. A review of the application process would be carried out with the intention of streamlining the process where possible.

Members also received further information on homelessness in South Ribble, as requested at the previous meeting.

In response to a query regarding how homelessness in South Ribble compares with neighbouring authorities, members were informed that South Ribble was similar to Chorley and West Lancashire.

The Council has 56 days to prevent a resident becoming homeless once notified. Housing Officers would identify the reason why the person may become homeless and would investigate. Short-term support can be provided for those with dependency issues and the Housing Options team can also negotiate with landlords and provide bonds in order to prevent a person becoming homeless.

Members were informed that temporary accommodation is provided if a household meets relevant criteria and that there are currently 23 households in temporary accommodation, 15 of which have children. Members requested further information on the average length of stay in temporary accommodation.

The panel commended the officers for providing support to vulnerable households and requested that an annual update on homelessness be provided to the panel.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the Panel asks for further information on the average length of call waiting times and the offer to review the pre-recorded message.
2. the Panel expresses its gratitude for the offer to review the measure for licensed taxis inspected.
3. a review of the process for Disabled Facilities Grants applications be carried out to streamline the process where possible.
4. the Panel asks that the average length of stay in temporary accommodation be provided to the Panel.
5. an annual update on homelessness be provided to the Panel.

10 Budget Monitoring 2019/20 - Month 6 (Sept)

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 2 of the 2019-20 financial year.

Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets, informed the Panel that an underspend of £515,000 was forecasted for the end of the financial year but that new budgets had been approved for a music festival in Leyland and for consultancy fees on the borough's leisure facilities.

It was acknowledged that much of this underspend had been caused by low expenditure on staffing and a list of vacant posts was provided to the Panel. Information on the length of time that the posts had been vacant would be included in future budget monitoring reports.

The report highlighted the capital programme for the financial year which provided a breakdown in projects and schemes. Members requested that a progress column be added to the Capital Programme 2019-20 Quarter 2 Monitoring document to demonstrate the progress of these projects against their allocated budgets and spend forecasts.

Budgets for each My Neighbourhood Forum would be allocated in early 2020 and would be aligned to the Council's formal budget process.

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 previous arrangements had now been confirmed.

Members requested a breakdown of the budget by service area to gain a better understanding as to each department budgetary spend. A subjective analysis of budgets would be provided as part of the budget planning process in February 2020.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. information on the length of time that posts have been vacant be included in future budget monitoring reports.
2. the Panel requests a progress column be added to Capital Programme 2019-20 Quarter 2 Monitoring (Appendix A) in future reports.
3. the Panel welcomes the alignment of My Neighbourhoods Plans and the Council's budget.
4. the Panel looks forward to receiving a subjective analysis of budgets as part of the budget planning process.

Chair

Date