

## **Report of Scrutiny Committee**

1. This report summarises the business considered at the meetings of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel held on 22 June and 2 July 2020 and the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 9 July 2020.

### **SCRUTINY BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL – 22 JUNE**

#### **Year End and Quarter 4 (Jan - Mar 2020) Performance Monitoring Report 2019/20**

2. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster, and the Interim Chief Executive, Gary Hall, presented a report on the performance of the Corporate Plan at the end of Quarter 4.
3. The report set out the performance between January and March 2020 against the delivery of the Corporate Plan projects and objectives.
4. We were pleased that the current timescales of 36 out of 43 projects have been met or are within the agreed targets.
5. Given recent issues surrounding the council's Annual Governance Statement, we welcomed assurances that the data provided in the report was robust.
6. We mainly considered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Council's performance and were pleased that, although a significant financial impact was anticipated in the next year, the pandemic had a minimal impact on performance in Quarter 4.
7. We noted that a member working group on business recovery post-COVID-19 had been established to look at how the Council could provide local businesses with support and access to funding.
8. We were satisfied that some of the targets within the Corporate Plan would be reviewed as a result of COVID-19 and as part of a refresh of the Corporate Plan in September 2020 and that we would receive further information on this.
9. In response to our queries around the surplus site review, which was off-track, we were pleased that an additional staff member had commenced work on the project and that this was identified as a priority by the Leader and the Interim Chief Executive.
10. We also requested further information on the cost breakdown for the implementation of Tempo time credits and look forward to receiving a copy of the ICT Benefit Realisation Plan once finalised.
11. We noted the report, commended the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery plans and thanked the Leader and Interim Chief Executive for their attendance.

### **SCRUTINY BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL – 2 JULY 2020**

#### **Coach House Lottery Project**

12. The Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Wellbeing, Councillor Mick Titherington, presented a report on the costs of the restoration of the Coach House building in

Hurst Grange Park, Penwortham. We were also joined by the Leader of the Council, Interim Chief Executive, the Director and Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods and Development, the Assistant Director of Projects and Development and the council's Landscape Officer

13. We considered the report as a result of members' concerns regarding an increase in expenditure on the project.
14. We queried the level of involvement of the Cabinet Member in the project and were informed in response that the Cabinet Member was aware of the project prior to his appointment as portfolio holder and that he had been taken part in a Full Council vote to approve the application for National Lottery funding.
15. Whilst we acknowledged that the council had not yet accepted the funding offer by the National Lottery as this would be a decision for Full Council, it was suggested that the council could accept a portion of the offered funding, but this was unlikely due to the significance of the achievements in being offered the funding. We urged the Cabinet Member to re-visit the project and scale it down to make it more affordable whilst restoring the existing Coach House structure.
16. We queried why the project had not been included in the council's Corporate Plan and the impact that this would have on monitoring the project. Consequently, we asked that future reports agreeing the capital programme provide greater details of each project to ensure Members are making informed decisions.
17. Discussion focused on the lack of transparency around the increase in costs of the project. Although the increased costs had been reported to Full Council in February 2019 and February 2020 and to Cabinet in June and October 2019, this was not readily identifiable and we asked that any items committing the Council to significant costs or expenditure be approved by Cabinet or Council as appropriate.
18. We also requested that the Council reviews its scheme of delegation to Members and Officers to clarify roles and responsibilities for decision-making, including documenting decisions and ensuring they are open and transparent, and that the Project Management Framework is reviewed with a view to strengthening project approvals, monitoring and dealing with any deviations.
19. Similarly, we queried the level of stakeholder engagement in the project including ward members, Penwortham Neighbourhood Forums and Penwortham Town Council. We recommended that greater links are established between the new My Neighbourhood Forums model and key projects as part of the Council's commitment to putting communities at the heart of everything we do and that members are briefed and engaged in key the projects and activities taking place in their ward and local area.
20. It was suggested that further consultation could be undertaken prior to a decision being taken by Full Council and we were receptive to this.
21. In response to queries around the evidence base for the project considering the number of similar venues in South Ribble, we were assured that officers were confident that there is a need for and interest in the building. The impact on Hurst Grange Park and the wider community had also been considered.

22. Concern was expressed that the implication contained in the report that a rejection of the grant by Full Council '*could generate negative publicity for the council*' was unwarranted given the lack of engagement with members. It was agreed that this comment would be revised.
23. As a result of concern that the tender process for works to the Coach House did not mention commercial category pricing for bidding contractors, which would protect the council's financial liability, we requested a review of the process for bidding for and accepting external funding takes place to ensure that approvals are in place and risks are effectively managed.
24. We queried the lessons learnt as a result of the meeting and a lack of transparency and stakeholder engagement was acknowledged. Commitment to improvements in these areas was provided.
25. We noted the report and I thanked those in attendance and commended the Friends of Hurst Grange Park, Councillor Mick Titherington and Greg Clark for their work.

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 JULY 2020**

### **South Ribble Partnership Update**

26. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster, the Interim Chief Executive, Gary Hall, and the South Ribble Partnership Manager, Howard Anthony, presented an update on the work of the Partnership.
27. We queried the collaborative approach of the Partnership and were informed that prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, partnerships with other agencies and organisations were still in development but the common goals of partners had been strengthened by work during the pandemic and greater cooperation was now possible.
28. We requested a progress update on implementation of the Refernet service and were informed that 30 organisations had signed up to participate to date, including KEY and Preston Community Transport, and that this would help with the 'one front door' approach to accessing support services.
29. We welcomed greater links between the Partnership and Chorley Public Service Reform Board as this is a similar model to the Partnership and works with similar partners in Chorley.
30. We queried the resources provided by partners and it was emphasised that the Partnership is reliant on collaboration and cross-sector working, as opposed to financial contribution.
31. The method for measuring success of the Partnership's action plan was also questioned and we were advised that metrics for this are still in development and could change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information would be provided once known.
32. A further update on the work of the Partnership will be provided to the Scrutiny Committee in January 2021 and we look forward to receiving this.

33. We noted the report and I thanked those in attendance and commended the work of the Partnership in supporting our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Worden Hall Progress Update**

34. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets, Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, and the Director of Planning and Property (Jonathan Noad) presented a report on the progress of the Worden Hall project.
35. We queried the budget and forecast expenditure for the employment of Purcell and requested that these figures be provided.
36. We expressed interest in how the project would meet the Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030 and supported the commitment to reducing the carbon footprint of the Hall.
37. We queried what progress could be expected by the next meeting and requested a further update on the procurement process.
38. We welcomed the offer of regular updates from the Council's consultants on the project.
39. We noted the report and I thanked the Cabinet Member and Director for their attendance.

### **Scrutiny Portfolio Update: Planning, Regeneration and City Deal**

40. The Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and City Deal, Councillor Bill Evans, and the Director of Planning and Property, Jonathan Noad, presented an update on the work of the portfolio since May 2019.
41. We were interested to note the key priorities for the portfolio, and we wish the Cabinet Member well with these over the next 12-18 months.
42. We were informed that the portfolio had been involved in the relief efforts against COVID-19, with the council's Investment and Skills team providing general support to businesses within South Ribble, including authorising grants. Potential impact on the housing market was also acknowledged.
43. We requested an update on the Penwortham and Bamber Bridge Masterplans and were informed that work on the Penwortham Masterplan would begin within the current financial year. We look forward to progress being made on all masterplans.
44. We queried the membership of the Town Deal Board and were provided with a comprehensive list of members. Although we questioned why an elected member for the County Council was not on the Board, we were advised that an officer was nominated to represent the County Council.
45. In light of recent approval of a hot food takeaway by the Planning Committee and recent advice by the Director of Public Health, we requested that consideration be given to a planning policy on hot food takeaways.
46. We asked that an update on the homelessness strategy be provided to members.

47. Progress on the extra care facility project was queried and we were informed that the Cabinet Member had visited a similar facility in Chorley and that two potential sites in South Ribble had been identified for the facility. A report would be provided to Cabinet in September 2020 and we welcomed the offer of visiting the facility in Chorley.
48. An update on progress in unlocking the Pickering's Farm site for development was requested and we were advised, in response, that the masterplan was due to be presented to the Planning Committee and applications would soon be submitted for the cross-borough link road and the development.
49. We noted the report and I thanked the Cabinet Member and Director of Planning and Property for their attendance.

### **Registered Providers (Housing Associations) Report**

50. We received a report identifying the registered housing providers in operation across South Ribble, which the committee had previously requested.
51. We felt it would be beneficial to invite Progress Housing and Accent Housing to a meeting to gain further insight into their work and stock.
52. However, it was felt that this meeting should be deferred until such a time where normal meetings can resume following the outbreak of COVID-19, to enable and encourage greater public participation.

### **Recommendations**

That Council note the report.

COUNCILLOR DAVID HOWARTH  
CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
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