

Minutes of	Scrutiny Committee
Meeting date	Monday, 20 February 2023
Members present:	Councillors Angela Turner (Chair), Michael Green (Vice-Chair), Lou Jackson, Colin Sharples, Kath Unsworth and Karen Walton
Officers:	Darren Cranshaw (Head of Democratic Services) and Ben Storey (Democratic and Member Services Officer)
Guests:	Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform) and Leader of the Labour Group), Councillor Michael Titherington (Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing) and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Matthew Tomlinson (Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets)) Chief Inspector Chris Abbott, Asim Khan (Director of Customer and Digital), Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer), Jennifer Mullin (Director of Communities)
Other members:	Councillors Aniela Bylinksi Gelder, Paul Wharton-Hardman, Mary Green and attending virtually Councillors Carol Chisholm, Phil Smith, Margaret Smith and Peter Mullineaux.
Public:	4

96 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

- Councillor Will Adams
- Councillor Julie Buttery
- Councillor Matt Campbell
- Councillor Colin Coulton
- Councillor Mal Donoghue
- Councillor Stephen Thurlbourn

97 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Michael Green declared a personal interest in item 5 – Community Safety Partnership Update as a member of the drugs and alcohol partnership at Lancashire County Council.

Councillor Michael Green also declared a personal interest in item 10a – Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update as the Health and Wellbeing portfolio holder at Lancashire County Council.

98 Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 17 January 2023 of Scrutiny Committee

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, held on Tuesday, 17 January 2023, be approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

99 Matters Arising from previous Scrutiny Committee meetings

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

The Committee requested more detailed responses for the next meeting given the number of outstanding recommendations yet to be implemented and the quality of the progress updates within the report.

100 Community Safety Partnership Update

The Chair welcomed Chief Inspector Chris Abbott from Lancashire Police, Councillor Mick Titherington, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Jennifer Mullin, Director of Communities to the meeting and invited the Cabinet Member to introduce the report.

Responding to a question on how effective the Partnership it was felt that the key indicator was whether residents felt South Ribble was a safe place in which to live, work and spend time in. It was also acknowledged that the perception of crime often differed from the actual number of crimes reported, referencing the data within the report's appendix. Members also heard that much work was undertaken to prevent criminal activity, not only through the Partnership but in collaboration with many other partners.

When asked on engagement from members of the Partnership, the Committee were advised that, aside from the Clinical Commissioning Group, all partners were fully engaged. With changes within the NHS, Clinical Commissioning Groups had been reformed into Integrated Care Boards in 2022. The new Integrated Care Partnership was part of the Community Safety Partnership at a county level but further logistical work following the changes was needed at the district level. The Committee was reassured that they were committed to supporting the Community Safety Partnership.

Members were advised that a Community Safety Action Plan was currently being developed after not having one for around 18 months. Due to the pandemic, a strategic needs assessment and subsequent consultation, including member consultation exercises, needed to be undertaken.

It was acknowledged that it had taken some time to clarify the governance arrangements for the Partnership and agreed to provide an update to the Committee after the meeting.

Members asked for more detail on the role of the Partnership in reducing re-offending and how successful the Chorley and South Ribble Integrated Offender Management (IOM) panel had been with the 18 individuals it had been working with. The role of the Integrated Offender Management panel was outlined. On a monthly basis the panel meets any individuals that officers feel will engage, with a focus on crime prevention. Successes had been hampered by the pandemic but there was

confidence results would improve. Individuals were also supported by other partners around contributing factors to criminal activity, such as homelessness.

On how successful police recruitment had been, the Committee was advised that had been around 100 new officers being trained at Hutton with further recruitment ongoing. Moving away from the degree-level entry programme, recent recruits did not require a degree to apply. Whilst a total figure was difficult to know currently, with the station at Leyland now a full time response base there would be a greater town centre presence. Through the Student Development Unit (SDU) new recruits are allocated a tutor who supports the recruits through the programme. The challenges in replacing the experience that had left the force in previous years was highlighted and referenced finding a balance between providing new recruits access to experienced officers whilst maintaining experience within the various response teams.

Following a request for further information on the work with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, it was reported that the Trust had undertaken research within South Ribble and were delivering sessions for staff. Work was underway on organising further sessions for staff and community partners around personal safety and anti-harassment bystander training which is designed to upskill individuals to help defuse situations, discourage harassers and support victims.

Members were told that Domestic Homicide Reviews were public documents and are accessible on the website. Any learning from previous reviews is shared with the relevant partners and more widely across Lancashire. It was noted that it can take some time to become public documents as they need approval by the Home Office.

The Committee welcomed the offer to split the MARAC data into just South Ribble information.

Responding to queries on how crime data is used, the Committee was advised that a weekly tasking meeting was held to consider the data in order to form a plan as to where and how resources were allocated. Monthly meetings then took place to review how the police and the wider Community Safety Partnership were responding to and tackling issues through an action plan and subsequent monitoring. Some of the data received, such as that through the Safer Streets campaign, also helped to identify other factors that could deter criminal activity. One such example was in Seven Stars and Moss Side where poor lighting was identified as a problem -officers were able to source funding for additional lighting to alleviate some concerns raised.

On the figure of whether 89 drug related offences in 2021-22 was a true reflection of drug crime in the borough. Covid had impacted on the number of reports the police had received in that period and recent trends suggested an increase in these figures. Whilst this may look worrying it demonstrated a return to pre-pandemic figures with officers proactively targeting areas where there are known problems.

Members heard that the 2022 Strategic Assessment was due to be released in the new financial year and looked forward to receiving it once available.

On road safety, the data was provided by the Lancashire Road Safety Partnership with more current and detailed information accessible on their website.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED:(Unanimously)

that the Committee:

1. thanks the Chief Inspector, Cabinet Member and Director for attending and answering questions;
2. looks forward to the new draft Community Safety Partnership action plan being presented to the Scrutiny Committee in the future;
3. asks that the current situation with the governance of the Lancashire Community Safety Partnership and the delay in implementing review be clarified;
4. requests that a detailed breakdown of the funding allocated to South Ribble as part of the domestic abuse and sexual violence support service be provided together with the ongoing evaluation of take-up and impact; and
5. is grateful for the offer of a breakdown of the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) data to a South Ribble level.

101 Waste Services Insourcing Update

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster and Director of Customer and Digital, Asim Khan to the meeting to present an update on the waste service.

The Committee heard that since the service was insourced last year, performance levels had not been negatively impacted despite significant challenges around inflation and recruitment which compared favourably against other nearby authorities. The Committee were told that the cost of insourcing the waste contract was less than it would have been to renew the contract with FCC. In addition, staff in the waste services team now benefited from better pay, pensions and conditions since moving.

Questions were asked whether the Council should wait for the Resources and Waste Strategy before extending the range of recycling that is collected. In response, changes were already been reviewed and options considered, particularly where practical improvements could be made such as with the small green paper bins. Other areas being looked at are how the Council can work with partners to reduce the amount of waste in the system to begin with.

Regarding staff mobilisation and morale, members asked for details on the staff feedback since the service was insourced. There was a transitional period but staff had been engaged along the process which provided reassurance and ensured the change went smoothly. Overall feedback had been positive, with staff members now feeling valued as Council employees and enjoying greater job security and better terms and conditions. It was confirmed that agency staff had been offered full time

positions with two loaders and one HGV driver being recruited since the service was insourced.

With waste collection being a key front line service, the Committee heard that it was important to maintain relationships with agency staff to protect the service and provide a contingency should the council face any resource challenges that could impact on service delivery. As the service expanded, more full time positions would be recruited where possible. Training opportunities had been offered to staff in the neighbourhoods team so capacity issues could be met in-house, increasing resilience and reducing the reliance on agency staff.

With regards to the cost variance it was acknowledged that when Council agreed to insource the waste service, the figure was £310,000. The additional costs of £195,000 were due to the 7% public sector pay award which was much higher than what had originally been budgeted for when the decision to insource the waste service had been made.

The Committee heard that the insourced waste service had been a success and credited the hard work of the staff. The service now had flexibility to expand waste collections and consider more commercial contracts which could support and subsidise the wider service.

The Committee welcomed the offer to share the waste service internal audit action plan which was believed to be being discussed at the next meeting of the Governance Committee.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

that the Committee:

1. Thanks the Leader and Director for attending and answering questions;
2. Welcomes the update on some of the recycling initiatives being explored for the future; and
3. requests that the internal audit of the waste service is circulated to the Committee once available.

102 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report Q3

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets, Councillor Matthew Tomlinson and Director of Finance, Louise Mattinson to the meeting to present the quarterly revenue monitoring report.

The Committee were directed to the change in the forecasted overspend since the last meeting, which had now reduced from over £250,000 to £98,000. In addition the general reserve remained above the Council's agreed limit of £4 million. This was

against a backdrop of additional costs associated with the public sector pay award and increases in utility bills.

With increased costs due to recruitment issues highlighted throughout the report, members sought further details on what was being done to tackle these issues. In response, it was acknowledged this was a widespread issue facing both public and private organisations across the country. Shared services did offer the opportunity for better pay and development opportunities for employees and in addition improved resilience within teams.

Members heard that whilst the installation of solar panels at the Civic Centre and ongoing decarbonisation work would relieve some of the challenges rising energy costs presented the council, in the short-term the additional costs would need to be managed effectively. The Council was committed to achieving its zero carbon targets and, where possible, would pursue options to support these ambitions.

The Committee asked why the council's pre-planning service remained suspended and whether there were plans to re-start the service. It was agreed that a response and further information would be provided to the Committee after the meeting.

The Committee raised queries over the reduction in earmarked reserves and whether the current rate would continue in future years. Members were advised that it was difficult to forecast and plan effectively when the government only announced a rolling one year settlement at a time. The report outlined a number of specific, planned allocations of funds for this year and it was not expected that this would impact and reduce earmarked reserves moving forward.

The overspend within the Customer and Digital directorate was discussed, with the Director of Finance clarifying the breakdown of costs.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

that the Committee:

1. Thanks the Cabinet Member and Director for attending and answering questions;
2. welcomes the report and current financial position; and
3. asks that further information be provided on when the suspended pre-planning advice would resume.

103 Capital and Balance Sheet Monitoring Report Q3

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets, Councillor Matthew Tomlinson and Director of Finance, Louise Mattinson to present the quarterly capital programme monitoring report.

Members heard that some of the significant changes related to the planned work on Jubilee Gardens and funds allocated to the Leyland Town Deal scheme. In addition, it was highlighted there was currently no short-term or long term borrowing.

A question was asked about the variance from the original programme and why this was so high. Estimating when spending significant levels of money was always challenging and was linked with some delays in the larger projects the council was committed to.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

that the Committee:

1. Thanks the Cabinet Member and Director for attending and answering questions; and
2. welcomes the report.

104 Draft 2023/24 Budget

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets, Councillor Matthew Tomlinson and Director of Finance, Louise Mattinson to present the Draft Budget 23/24.

The proposed freeze in council tax for the third consecutive year without the need to cut or reduce any council services was highlighted. The proposal provided a balanced budget that maintained council reserves. The draft budget would be considered by Full Council on Wednesday 1 March 2023.

The Committee were told that the budget was set out to achieve the Corporate Strategy which was a reflection of the priorities within the administration's manifesto. Members heard that the proposed freeze of council tax wasn't sustainable given the current economic climate but had been a promise made by the administration.

On the question of potential for cuts in services in future years, the Council had a track record of meeting challenges and being adaptable, suggestions included the growth of shared services and finding efficiencies through the ICT Strategy as ways that the Council can look to mitigate for any budget shortfalls.

Questions were raised over the budget consultation only being open for around a two week period and whether this could be reviewed in future years. Potential changes on when Cabinet met could allow for the consultation to begin earlier but there was a balance to find as the draft budget may not be in its final version.

The Committee were reassured that an equality impact assessment had been undertaken on the budget proposals and that this would form one of the appendices when the full budget report is released.

On investment priorities for 2023-2024, it was highlighted that although there wasn't as many points as in previous years, the investment areas were significantly larger

schemes, mentioning the improvements to the leisure centres, funding towards the Leyland Town Deal and the Jubilee Gardens extra care facility.

Reassurance was provided that the Committee would be fully engaged in the update of the Transformation Strategy and was supportive of the Scrutiny Committee's input.

The allocated reserve of £500,000 for maintenance of Penwortham Mill Reservoir was felt to be a sufficient amount and would be monitored closely.

The Capital Programme would form part of the overall budget setting process that would be decided at Cabinet and subsequently Full Council and was aligned to achieve the priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED:(Unanimously)

that the Committee:

1. Thanks the Cabinet Member and Director for attending and answering questions;
2. Is grateful for the re-assurance that there will be no cuts in services next financial year;
3. welcomes the proposed review of the way in which the budget is consulted upon in future years; and
4. asks that the Committee be engaged in the development of the proposed Transformation Strategy.

105 Scrutiny Matters

105 Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee Update

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The Council's representative on Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Lou Jackson, provided an update on the work of the committee and discussions from recent meetings. These included presentations on mental health services, the Lancashire Alcohol and Drug Action Plan and the Initial Response Service.

106 Meetings and training attended by Scrutiny Committee members

No training had been attended since the last meeting.

107 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

108 Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

Members were reminded that the final report of the Task Group looking into the impact of housing developments would be brought to the next meeting in March.

Chair

Date