

Minutes of	Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel
Meeting date	Monday, 13 March 2023
Members present:	Councillors Michael Green (Chair), Will Adams, Colin Sharples and Karen Walton
Officers:	Darren Cranshaw (Head of Democratic Services) and Ben Storey (Democratic & Member Services Officer)
Guests:	Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council) and Victoria Willett (Director of Change and Delivery)
Other members and officers:	Councillors Paul Wharton-Hardman, Mary Green, Michael Titherington, Michael Johnson (Performance & Policy Officer) and attending virtually Councillors Harry Hancock, Carol Chisholm, Caleb Tomlinson and Howard Anthony (Interim Head of Policy and Performance)
Public:	0

15 Nomination of Chair

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Angela Turner and with the Scrutiny Budget & Performance Panel not having a Vice-Chair, the Head of Democratic Services requested a nomination of a Chair for the meeting. The Panel unanimously agreed that Councillor Michael Green would chair the meeting.

16 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received for:

- Councillor Colin Coulton – substituted by Councillor Michael Green
- Councillor Angela Turner – substituted by Councillor Harry Hancock

17 Declarations of interest

None declared.

18 Minutes of the meeting Monday, 14 November 2022 of Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel, held on Monday, 14 November 2022, be approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

19 Matters Arising from previous Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel meetings

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That

- The Matters Arising from previous meetings of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel be noted;
- Minute 6.3 – Reserves for planning appeals and minute 7.2 – Delivery of capital programme remain on the Matters Arising document for further monitoring and;
- Any completed actions be removed from the report.

20 Quarter Three Performance Monitoring Report 2022-23

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster and Director of Change and Delivery, Victoria Willett to present the report which monitored the Council's performance against the Corporate Strategy between 1 October- 31 December 2022.

Of the fifteen projects in the strategy the report highlighted that fourteen were either on target or completed. Of the performance indicators, 62.5% of the Corporate Strategy measures and 64% of key service delivery measures were performing on or above target. It was noted that the McKenzie Arms affordable homes project and the Jubilee Gardens extra care facility, both significant projects for the Council, had progressed well since the quarter 3 reporting period.

The Panel were advised that a 5% permitted tolerance when assessing projects against performance targets provided an additional indicator to understand and quantify how close the project was to being on target as opposed to just marking as on or off target. This provided a better measure to assess where areas need to be focused on.

Questions were raised over how the activities delivered through the Community Hubs were making a difference to residents and communities. In response, the Panel were reassured that whilst it was challenging to quantify definitively, there had been positive feedback from members, key stakeholders and residents. In addition, uptake and attendance at events and schemes such as the HAF program demonstrated the benefits to the communities.

On improving the visitor offer in South Ribble, the Panel heard of the Council's commitment to include all areas of the borough. Following on, the Panel heard that the Chief Executive had been working with colleagues across Lancashire to ensure that South Ribble was rightly highlighted through the Marketing Lancashire initiative.

Members heard that whilst there was a desire for the Youth Council to have autonomy, there were plans to develop and strengthen the links with the Youth Council and the Council as a whole. This could be through participation of Youth Council members at meetings of the Council or by ways of being involved in policy development and the wider decision making processes. The Panel were told that now the Youth Council was established and numbers were increasing it was hoped that it would be embedded in schools across the borough and support greater engagement with local democracy.

A lack of progress with regards to increasing savers with Unify Credit Union was highlighted by the Panel. In response, it was acknowledged that progress had been

slow through the pandemic and more work was required to improve access and promote the Credit Union more widely. The Panel was reassured that the current number of savers, whilst below target, was a viable figure. In terms of outreach, it was suggested that the Community Hubs could play an important role in supporting residents to access the Credit Union – a commitment to arranging discussions between the Hubs and the Credit Union management team was provided.

Self-service channels were highlighted as an area where improvements could be made. The Panel were advised that the review of online service request forms was ongoing with the aim of making the forms more accessible for residents – this involved a lot of user testing to ensure a positive customer experience. Future engagement with residents was focused on digital access and the Council's website which would feed into the review of the self-service channels.

The amber rating for the McKenzie Arms affordable homes project was queried by the Panel. It was acknowledged that there had been delays in the program but as the project remained in budget it fell into the amber threshold. With regards this project, the Panel heard that the scheduled completion date would be 14 April 2023. With regards to another key project, the Jubilee Gardens extra care facility, the Panel were advised that this too had been delayed and would be reviewed.

The Panel were pleased to note the completion of work at Worden Hall and sought further information on bookings of the venue and its performance against its business plan. The Panel were directed to the full Budget papers for the detailed breakdown of the finances associated with Worden Hall, however, were advised that the cafe was fully open, other tenants would soon be in and bookings for the Hall would be open imminently.

On how the Council could support efforts to deliver more affordable homes in the borough, the development of more extra care facilities, utilising council land more effectively, transferring of private housing into social housing and enforcing the 30% proportion of affordable homes on new developments were all noted as ways in which the Council could help meet the growing demand. A follow up question was raised over supporting affordable home ownership schemes to which the Panel heard that the focus of the authority was supporting the social rented area where there was a greater need.

The challenges faced around the prevention of homelessness was raised. With increasing demand in this area and the need for further support from central government, the Panel could be not reassured that the performance indicators would be back on track in the near future. Following on from this, the Panel welcomed the commitment to present the homelessness action plan to a future meeting.

The Panel expressed concerns with the performance targets around abandoned calls and calls answered within 90 seconds. Members heard that improvements had been made following ICT upgrades and an increase in staff in the customer services team and that lessons had been learnt on how capacity is managed. Subsequently, a general upward trend in performance was reported but would remain closely monitored.

Questions were asked about the recruitment and training of apprentices and whether following their training a post would be available for them. Members were informed that as part of the apprentice network policy there was a requirement for a post to be

available at the end of their apprenticeship period. In response to how the work of the Apprenticeship Network could be expanded to involve other stakeholders in the borough. The Panel were subsequently invited to future roundtable events that the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Business Support hosted around the borough. These events brought a wide range of partners and stakeholders together to discuss wider economic development.

The Panel were reassured that health and safety of employees remained a priority of the council. A reduction in reporting of near miss incidents was being investigated and was debated at the last Governance Committee meeting. It was suspected that near misses were still being reported but that the data had not been captured correctly after moving to a new system. It was agreed to provide an update to the Committee once the review was complete.

It was subsequently;

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That the Budget Scrutiny and Performance Panel:

1. thanks the Leader and Director for attending and answering questions;
2. future reports include the impact of Community Hub projects on our local communities;
3. welcomes the commitment to the Discover South Ribble brand and events celebrating all communities and areas in the Borough;
4. looks forward to the link between this council and the Youth Council being strengthened and embedded further in the future;
5. is grateful for the offer to facilitate a meeting and future partnership working between the credit union and Community Hubs;
6. appreciates the commitment to present the homelessness action plan to a future Scrutiny meeting and commends officers on their work with this important area;
7. expresses concern at the call answering time performance indicator and welcomes the assurance that this is being addressed;
8. an update on the review of health and safety and near misses be provided to Scrutiny Members once complete; and

9. the progress being made on the take up of self-service channels be closely monitored.

Chair

Date