

Report of the Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee

1. Any recommendations on the reports that require a decision by full Council appear as separate items on the agenda.
2. Please note that the report may not necessarily reflect the wording used in the minutes.

Meeting of 11 September 2023

Scrutiny Recommendations Update

3. Darren Cranshaw, Head of Democratic Services presented the Committee's Recommendations Tracker updated as of 31 August 2023.
4. It was resolved (unanimously):
 - i) That the Scrutiny Recommendations Update be noted; and
 - ii) That the Recommendations marked "complete" be removed from the Tracker list.

South Ribble Quarter One Performance Monitoring Report 2023-24

5. The Chair welcomed the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Property, Assets, Commercial Services & Major Developments), Councillor Aniela Bylinski Gelder, and the Chief Executive, Chris Sinnott to the meeting to present the Quarter One Performance Monitoring Report 2023-24.
6. Councillor Bylinski Gelder highlighted that 75% of the performance indicators were either on or above target. With regard to Music in the Park, held on 28 May 2023, 2,300 people attended and furthermore, using an event calculation tool, the event contributed an estimated £196,200 boost to the economy. She also referred to the Cost of Living Action Plan, South Ribble Credit Union, and Play Areas Refurbishment. She highlighted performance indicators which were currently on amber, notably the Leyland Town Deal project, which she stressed was related to the inherent risk in finalising elements in the design stage (RIBA stage 3). This would be resolved once the stage was complete.
7. The Committee asked a number of detailed and probing questions in relation to the report. The key issues and responses were as follows:
 - There was a dispute about the figure of 75% performance indicators being on or above target quoted by Councillor Bylinski Gelder. This was due to the 5% "tolerance" of certain performance indicators not meeting target. It was explained that the tolerance was applied in order to allow focussed attention on the highest priorities. The Committee were concerned that this was not sufficiently clear within the report and that more clarity was needed.
 - The estimated figure of £196,200 boost to the economy by the Music in the Park event was generated by a government-backed calculator which measured the impact on the local economy. Councillor Bylinski Gelder

acknowledged that it was therefore possible the event was not in profit. She stressed that the event was viewed as an investment for the first few years, as time was needed to build up a strong reputation and brand. It was confirmed that detailed figures were to be reported to full Council including the gross spend. A budget for further events would need to be approved by Council. The Committee requested further information on the income and expenditure from the event.

- The Committee were informed that the Social Prescribing service arose from the Chorley and South Ribble Partnership which identified that the Chorley service had been shown to have a positive impact e.g. reduction in feelings of loneliness. Access was via several channels e.g. Citizen's Advice Bureau, Council's homelessness service. The Committee referred to the lack of provision identified by Community Hubs in some areas e.g. Farington, Lostock Hall. It was suggested that the service be linked with Community Hubs.
- With regard to customer services, the Committee stressed the importance of retaining face to face contact for those who prefer to do so or who are unable to contact the Council online. Councillor Bylinski Gelder strongly agreed and expressed a commitment to this.
- With regard to the Civic Centre workspace, Chris Sinnott, Chief Executive gave number of reasons for the delay, including the implementation of the shared services programme, establishing the use of office space following the pandemic, and the rolling out of new ICT equipment to staff.
- Chris Sinnott addressed a question regarding data and intelligence sharing arising from the Chorley and South Ribble Partnership. He indicated that the pandemic led to a lifting of data protection restrictions, which had helped better target residents in need. The initiative seeks to ensure that the public sector is using information in the best way to benefit residents.
- A query was made regarding the planned Leyland Town Deal engagement event in August 2023. An update would be provided to the Committee.
- As regards the Economy Strategy, which was only launched 3-4 months ago, an update would be provided by Councillor Flannery to the Cabinet in a few months.
- As regards Wellbeing Sessions and team capacity, Chris Sinnott informed the Committee that there had been short term vacancies at a crucial time which caused the target to be missed. However, there was now added capacity and the intention is to hold an additional session in the week.
- As regards the number of households in temporary accommodation, Chris Sinnott informed the Committee that the Council works closely with partners e.g. Registered Social Landlords and Lancashire County Council. However, there has been an overall increase in the number of people presenting as homeless.
- Chris Sinnott informed the Committee that recruitment of planning officers was a national problem and the LGA had now launched a graduate scheme to address this. This Council has recently appointed to the Planning Team and

that the recruitment process for the Director of Planning and Development post was currently underway.

- As regards the risk of non-determination of planning applications, improvements are expected in terms of determining applications more rapidly, which should be reflected in Quarter 2.

8. It was resolved (unanimously):

The Committee:

1. thanks the Deputy Leader and Chief Executive for attending and answering questions,
2. asks that future performance reports provide greater clarity in the way tolerance information is presented;
3. welcomes the assurance that the evaluation of Music in the Park is being presented to Full Council and requests further information on the income and expenditure from this year's event be provided to committee members;
4. suggests that the social prescribing service links in with the Council's Community Hubs;
5. wishes the social prescribing service well and looks forward to regular updates;
6. is grateful for the confirmation that we will continue to offer face to face customer service in addition to channel shifting to online;
7. asks that the quarter 2 performance report provide further information on customer contact performance data;
8. welcomes the offer of more information being provided on the Business Energy Efficiency Scheme and the Leyland Town Deal engagement event; and
9. understands the staffing shortage and national situation facing planning and welcomes the re-assurance will improve in future quarters.

Revenue Budget Monitoring Report Q1

9. The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member (Finance and Public Protection), Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, and the Principal Financial Accountant, Jean Waddington, to the meeting to present the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 1.

10. Councillor Tomlinson gave an overview of the report, highlighting key factors impacting on the budget such as the expected £200k overspend on staffing costs.

11. The Committee asked a number of questions and the key issues / responses are summarised below:

- The Council is in a good financial position with a reserve of £4.2m. It is a relatively large reserve compared to other local authorities.
- A review of the Council's waste services is to be carried out including the spend on agency staff. Factors outside of the Council's control, such as additional bank holidays, and staff holidays, impact on the budget. It is hoped that a result of bringing the service in house the costs will be seen to be reducing.
- The Committee were keen that the Council maximises its advertising of South Ribble Council jobs across social media platforms.
- The Committee requested an update on the 6 month review of car parking changes.
- The Committee raised the issue of delays concerning Worden Hall. It was acknowledged that there were unforeseen issues such as the drainage collapse which needed to be addressed.
- The Committee raised the issue of vacant posts in the Customer and Digital Directorate. Chris Sinnott indicated that an Executive Member Decision should now have been taken with regard to IT staffing. An update would be provided to the Committee.

12. It was resolved (unanimously):

The Committee:

1. thanks the Cabinet, Chief Executive and Principal Management Accountant for attending and answering questions;
2. asks that job vacancies be advertised more effectively via social media and sites such as LinkedIn in the future;
3. welcomes the re-assurance that the overspends in the waste service are being closely monitored and reviewed;
4. requests an update on the six-month evaluation of the car parking changes;
5. welcomes the progress made in making Worden Hall operational; and
6. Asks for an update on the recruiting to vacant posts in the Customer and Digital Directorate.

Capital and Balance Sheet Monitoring Report Q1

13. The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member (Finance and Public Protection), Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, and the Principal Financial Accountant, Jean Waddington, to the meeting to present the Capital and Balance Sheet Monitoring Report – Quarter 1.
14. The Committee asked a number of questions and the key issues / responses are summarised below:
- The Committee enquired as to the capacity to deliver on major projects. Councillor Tomlinson indicated that he was very confident in the Council's ability to deliver on major projects such as the Leyland Town Deal.
 - As regards pursuing debtors, Councillor Tomlinson stated that the authority actively seeks payment of council tax and business rates as it is a statutory obligation for these to be paid. This Council has a good track record both of debt recovery and of supporting people struggling with debt.
 - Queries relating to Leisure Local were made by the Committee. It was noted that further information could be provided by the Cabinet Member (Communities, Leisure and Wellbeing).
15. It was resolved (unanimously):
- The Committee:
1. thanks the Cabinet Member, Chief Executive and Principal Management Accountant for attending and answering questions; and
 2. asks that further information on the return on investment on Leisure Local be provided to the Committee.

Scrutiny Matters

Establishment of Task Group

16. Darren Cranshaw, Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee of a proposal to establish a Scrutiny Task Group to consider the creation of a Cultural Strategy for South Ribble.
17. It was resolved (unanimously)
- That expressions of interest for membership of the Task Group be submitted to the Chair or Head of Democratic Services.

Meetings and training attended by committee members

18. The Chair referred to the recent training with Dr Steph Snape.

19. Feedback from the Committee was very positive.

20. It was resolved (Unanimously):

That the positive feedback and thanks of the Committee be passed on to Dr Snape.

Cabinet Forward Plan

21. The Forward Plan was noted.

Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

22. Members considered the Committee's Forward Plan for the 2023-24 municipal year, which outlined topics and areas due to be scrutinised.

23. The Committee's Forward Plan was noted.

RECOMMENDATION:

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That the report of the Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee be noted.

COUNCILLOR W ADAMS

CHAIR, CORPORATE, PERFORMANCE AND
BUDGET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE