

MINUTES OF: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 14th November 2022

Present: Councillor Johnson (Chair)
Councillors Coogan, Janet Eaton, Foxcroft, McInnes (sub), Marriott,
Morris, Rooke, Procter and Thompson

In attendance: Neil Shaw, Chief Executive
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Adam Allen, Director of Communities
Andrew Buckle, Head of Customer Services and ICT
Anne Storah, Principal Planner- Forward Planning
Nathaele Davies, Planning Officer - Forward Planning
Mandy Lewis, Director of Economic Development
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager

Also Present: Councillors Ashworth, A. Barnes, Hughes and Lythgoe
1 member of the public

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor McMahon (Councillor McInnes subbing).

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting on 21st September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

5. Question Time

There were no public questions.

6. Chair's Update

In relation to queries and suggestions raised at the previous meeting, information was circulated to members in advance of the meeting which included the following:

6.1 The Health and Well-being Plan year 1 review briefing note was circulated to the committee to keep members informed of the progress that had been made since the plan was agreed by Council last December.

6.2 A Health Update from the Lead Member for Communities Health and Well-being was circulated to keep members updated on the work of Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee. This was accompanied by their work programme and a useful briefing report which contained links to the latest information from the new Integrated Care Board and also links to national, regional and local updates.

- 6.3 At the last committee meeting it was agreed to request more relevant detail from Operations and other service areas, particularly in relation to mitigating action being taken in the update sections of the quarterly performance reports. Officers had now been asked to provide more detail in these sections, and where there were red KPI's, a relevant officer would be asked to attend the meeting where appropriate to provide more detail.
- 6.4 It was also agreed to see if comparison figures could be added to the quarterly report to show the figure from the previous quarter as well as the figure from the same quarter the previous year. Changes would commence where KPI's were showing in red, but to update to the full report would take longer, and this work was being progressed.
- 6.5 The recommendation to review the missed bin collection target and to consider moving to reporting on the percentage of bins collected was currently being picked up by the Head of Operations.
- 6.6 People and Policy were also asked to consider including something as part of the job application process to say the Council welcomed applications from all candidates who fit the Rossendale profile, and that it was open and accessible to everyone and to actively seek to boost the workforce profile in relation to disability. They have confirmed that this would be included going forward.
- 6.7 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny had held various consultation sessions to develop Call-in Guidance to assist authorities with the Call-in process, particularly those authorities with no current procedures in place. Draft guidance had since been produced, but there would be little impact for Rossendale as the Council already has procedures in place which were in keeping with the draft guidance. This would be revisited once the new guidance was issued.
- 6.8 In response to the updates it was noted that there was an outstanding action from the previous meeting in relation to following up questions raised regarding Rawtenstall bus station. The Director of Economic Development agreed to follow up the questions and noted that there was information regarding the bus station included in the quarterly report item at D3 on the agenda.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

7. Digital Strategy – year 2 projects

- 7.1 The Head of Customer Services and ICT provided a presentation on the Digital Strategy – year 2 projects and included an update on year 1.
- 7.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:
- The presentation was being provided at the committee's request from the previous year as it had been recommended to provide an update on the progress of year 1 projects and inform the committee of the work to take place in year 2.
 - Members were being consulted on the rationale of the future work plan and noting the progress to date.
 - The Council systems were certified to ISO27001:2013 and as secure as is reasonable. Where financially possible industry best practice was adopted and whilst more can always be spent on security, we consider ourselves to have the right balance. The programme of works was outlined in the security theme of the Customer and Digital Strategy.
 - Cyber Security training had been provided for councillors and officer training was taking place this Wednesday.

- Testing scenarios had also been undertaken and the Council's Emergency Plan covered as much mitigation possible.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation and thanked officers for updating the committee.

8. Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)

8.1 The Principal Planner- Forward Planning introduced the AMR report and a presentation given by the Senior Planning Officer.

In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- Residential planning applications were currently being prioritised.
- The work which had been delivered should not be underestimated. In addition to this work the team was working on Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and they had managed to deliver the work so far to the planned timescales.
- Nearly 75% of the required housing completions had been delivered, whilst this was still below target, it was increasing compared to previous years, as the adopted Local Plan gives developers a degree of certainty they would have successful outcomes.
- The adopted Local Plan was now bearing fruit.
- The Hot Food Takeaway SPD was in the work plan, but other work such as Climate Change SPD was the current priority. In terms of overnight accommodation applications received, planning should ensure that it accords with the visitor economy and the Economic Development Strategy.
- The Council was already as robust as it could be in relation to takeaways. R5 is already an adopted policy in the Local Plan and has more weight than the interim Hot Food Takeaway SPD, which is a guidance document. As policy was already in place, the SPD would be worked on in accordance with the work plan. Officers would look at the reasons for the approval of two hot food takeaways.
- Heritage buildings were being identified and audited by Growth Lancashire as part of a county-wide initiative. A decision would be brought back to members in due course about a Local List for Rossendale identifying specific buildings. Officers would request an update from Historic England about Rawtenstall's reference on the Heritage at Risk register.
- All the housing documents were separate documents which did different things, for example, the housing action plan was government directed to ensure there was a procedure to identify what the Council was doing to increase the delivery of housing.
- The 5 year Land Supply Housing report was a key planning policy document.
- There were a number of government policies coming out as housing was such a key issue.
- The team tries to signpost to the right policies as much as possible.

The Forward Planning Team was complimented on the hard work that they had done and in delivering to timescale.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Noted the contents of the Rossendale Authority Monitoring Report for 2021-22.
2. Recommended the Authority Monitoring Report be published on the Council's website.

3. Recommended the AMR be brought to Overview and Scrutiny on an annual basis, reporting on delivery of the Adopted Rossendale Local Plan.

9. Quarter 2 Performance Management Report (July, August & September) 2022/23

9.1 The Head of People and Policy introduced the Quarter 2 performance report.

9.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- The Council struggled to get comparative information from other providers of commercial waste collections as it was commercially sensitive information.
- There had been an issue this quarter with commercial waste collections due to access being blocked etc., this was unlikely to occur again for Q3.
- There had been less subscribers for garden waste this year, however the costs for a bin have increased which has helped income to stay steady.
- Work was being undertaken to make the sign up and continuation of the garden waste service easier.
- There were still some challenges in relation to Dark Lane and whilst there was movement on this the work, it had not been fully concluded. The Director of Economic Development agreed to provide a further update to Councillor Foxcroft.
- The Council was in the process of recruiting to 11 vacancies and there had been some credible applications received.
- A Health and Safety trainee had been appointed, for which there had been 17 applicants.
- The closing date was Monday 21st November for applications to the Chief Executive and Director of Economic Development posts.
- The finance and planning posts were still proving challenging but the Council was looking at options for the planning vacancies.
- As a small district it was difficult to compete with the salaries offered at other authorities.
- The Flexible Working Policy had been reviewed again and over 50% thought it was working well.
- Staff were mainly leaving for reasons such as career progression or retirement.
- There were other district Councils in Lancashire with higher staff turnover.
- Exit interviews were conducted by the manager. The Head of Service or Director also had an informal conversation with anyone leaving the authority.

Thanks was given for the amendments made to the quarterly report, which made the information much clearer.

It was also noted that the information provided in the job application packs, including being inclusive and declaring salary details, was also positively welcomed.

Resolved:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the performance of the council as detailed in the report.
2. Cabinet were asked to consider any comments and suggestions made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and escalate anything appropriate for further action.

10. The Forward Plan

10.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for January. The committee was asked to submit questions in advance of the update from the Police to enable them to sufficiently prepare their presentation.

10.2 It was requested that an update be provided to the committee at a later date regarding the reports going to the November Council meeting regarding the allocation of funds for Ease the Squeeze and Household Support Fund – Third Round (if they were approved at the Council meeting). The Director of Communities confirmed that the recipient groups usually reported back to the Council in March.

Resolved:

The Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme items were noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.40pm)

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date