

MINUTES OF: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 12th June 2023

Present: Councillor S Barnes (Chair)
Councillors D. Ashworth, Coogan, Foxcroft, McMahon, Norton, and Rooke.

In attendance: David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager

Also Present: 1 member of the public

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted from Co-opted Member James Heaton.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting on 13th March 2023 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

6.1 Since the last meeting, Cabinet had approved the refreshed Housing Benefit Overpayment Policy and the Housing Benefit Write-Off Policy as recommended by the committee.

6.2 The Chair reminded committee members of the workshop with senior officers on the 20th June and also the training being delivered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny on 21st June in the Council Chamber and encouraged all members of the committee to attend.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

7. Quarter 4 Performance Management Report (January, February & March) 2022/23

7.1 The Head of people and Policy, Clare Law, introduced the Quarter 4 performance report.

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

- A lot of work was being done in relation to temporary accommodation for homeless. Two properties had been purchased with another two identified as potential properties.
- People were currently being accommodated in Rochdale Bed and Breakfast accommodation until the Council could develop its own solution.
- The Red/Amber/Green (RAG) status for minor planning applications was green and not amber as there was a 5% tolerance applied on RAG ratings.

- All targets were currently undergoing review and revision to ensure they were realistic and relevant.
- Corporate Management Team reviewed targets annually in addition to challenging the contents of each quarterly report before coming to the Overview and Scrutiny meeting.
- In relation to refuse, new software was being introduced to help with monitoring and help identify locations and reduce duplication of work.
- The new Head of Operations had been liaising with other authorities regarding their key performance indicators to look at what others were doing.
- The commercial target needed to be an income generation target.
- Operation Trident had a set procedure. If there was no identification evidence the rubbish would be collected there and then, otherwise it would be called in for enforcement to investigate. There had been a significant number of prosecutions and Free Press notices were released to highlight the good work. The re-opening of the Haslingden recycling centre may have a future positive impact on fly tipping.
- The criteria for applying RAG ratings was included in the report and the risk matrix was included in the Risk Management Strategy. The Chief Finance Officer was currently reviewing and revising the definition of risk.
- Meetings were held with relevant departments and partner organisations to debrief on lessons learned, particularly following significant events to make improvements for future incidents. Business Continuity Plans were in place for each service area, and higher level emergencies went through Emergency Planning and/or the Lancashire Resilience Forum for a Lancashire wide response and also included Blue Light Services and the Environment Agency.
- There was also an internal Programme Board that monitored projects where project sponsors and managers would provide a quarterly update on key milestones for all the corporate projects.
- The new report would focus on outcomes rather than actions and would aim to provide the best way of reporting without overloading with too much information.
- Some milestones had been reviewed and amended mid-year e.g. Rawtenstall car parks and Waterfoot Action Plan.
- The enforcement contractors had pulled out and the Head of the Public Protection Unit (PPU) was working with other local authorities to get another contractor in place.
- An audit had been done on how we communicate and web sites and social media sites were being reviewed, however the Climate Change Network Facebook group had not been included, so this would be followed up. An exercise was also being done to put boundaries and processes in place for managers. Work also needed to be done on identifying target audiences.
- The external communications contract was reviewed annually and covered press enquiries, reputational damage, high level risk and key communications. In addition to this, there was an apprentice focussing on social media and internal communications. The communications apprentice was pulling together a strategy for the year as well as the internal communications plan.

It was agreed to follow up on following:

- In relation to households in temporary accommodation it was agreed to find out how long people were in temporary homeless accommodation and also the turnover, such as how many were presented and how many had gone into accommodation compared with how many were waiting to move on.
- Information on the number of homeless people as a result of domestic abuse, health and mental health problems would be provided confidentially to the committee.

- To share the numbers for fly tipping.
- To share the risk strategy with the committee.
- To provide information to show evidence of the recycling pilot working when compared with the rest of the borough.
- To look at the monitoring and ownership of the Climate Change Network Facebook group.
- To find out why the payment of invoices had suddenly turned to red RAG status.
- To provide an update on the enforcement contract.
- To provide a list of Council social media pages/groups.

Resolved:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the update and requested a follow up on the actions identified.
2. To bring the Communications Plan to the committee with the channels of communication identified, the process for communications, and how it fits in with the external organisation and how it marries together with the Communications Plan.
3. To let Overview and Scrutiny have sight of the new quarterly report before the September meeting to enable the committee to ensure there are clear markers for milestones on corporate projects and to better assist the Council in setting realistic targets.

8. Housing Benefit War Pension and Armed Forces Disregard Policy

8.1 Committee members considered the policy.

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

- This was a new policy that the Council needed to have and it was consistent with other authorities.
- It was a good policy and would benefit those in receipt of housing benefits along with a war pension or war widow's pension.

Resolved:

The committee recommended Cabinet to agree the policy as detailed in the report.

9. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Work Programme

9.1 Committee members considered the Annual Report and Work Programme.

Resolved:

The Annual Report and Work Programme was noted and recommended to Full Council for approval.

10. The Forward Plan

10.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for July. Members were encouraged to submit their questions in advance of the meeting in relation to items on the next agenda.

Resolved:

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

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.05pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date