

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date of Meeting:** 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015

**Present:** Councillor A Robertson (Chair)  
Councillors Bleakley, Haworth, McMahon, Morris (substituting for Collinge), Oakes (substituting for Lythgoe), Procter (substituting for Kenyon), Sandiford, Smallridge (substituting for Hughes) and Steen

**In Attendance:** Katie Gee, Corporate Officer  
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager  
Councillor Marriott, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance  
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

3 members of the public

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### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eaton, Hughes, Kenyon and Lythgoe.

### 2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meetings held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

### 5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow the members of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

### 6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair informed the Committee of the following items:

a) Blue Badges – new information had been received from LCC which indicated that there are two ways to apply for or renew a blue badge. This can be done by

online or via phone and requesting a call back for someone to assist in completing the form with the applicant.

Concern was expressed at the lack of communication from LCC on changes to the way services are provided or withdrawn and asked that County Councillors raise this with County. It was also suggested that there was a need for somewhere identifiable to allow people to go to access support for completing forms.

A member of the public indicated that he had used the service recently and praised the courteous way they assisted him with the renewal.

b) The Chair informed Members that the Scrutiny Officer had circulated information on the footfall in the one stop shop, Coventry Call Centre and STAN, which had been requested at the last meeting.

c) Members were informed that membership for the Dog Fouling Task Group had now been agreed and that a meeting would be arranged for early October.

d) The Chair confirmed that a Member Briefing with GVH on their Business Plan would take place on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016. With regard to quarterly meetings with the Chair of Scrutiny and the Chair of the Rossendale Action Partnership, these had yet to be set up.

## **7. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 1**

The Corporate Officer presented the Council's performance report for Quarter 1 (April to June 2015), which showed that there had been a decrease in the number of green Performance Indicators, at 68% compared with 76% for the same period last year, although there were less red indicators in this quarter than the same period last year.

A number of performance indicators have exceeded target and some of these were as follows:

- Customers in the One Stop Shop were waiting 3 minutes less than targeted
- Percentage of recoverable overpayments of Housing Benefit finished Q1 1.33% above target.
- The number of people accessing STAN was nearly double the target figure of 200 with 393 people actually seen.
- Percentage of council tax collected at the end of Q1 finished above target at 29.22%.
- Planning application determined on time continues its strong performance with all 3 types of applications significantly above their targets.
- The % of household waste recycled finished above target in Q1, continuing its strong performance in the last two quarters of the 2014/15 business plan.

In relation to Corporate Business Plan, 96.5% of Actions were green in status in Q1, compared to 94.4% in the same quarter last year.

With regard to reviewing the Council's Risks, this will now be undertaken by the Audit and Accounts Committee to help them understand how risks are gathered/collated. These will still be included in the Integrated Performance Reports to Overview and Scrutiny.

There were 2 performance indicators that were behind target and action plan for each of these had been completed by the appropriate officer, with actions being taken to improve performance.

Overall the majority of the Council's risks set out in the risk register were identified as low risk, with 3 medium risks and one high risks.

A number of questions were raised by Members which the Corporate Officer answered where possible and she agreed to report back to the next meeting on queries raised which would need clarification from Officers within the Council, which included.

- Whether the Promoting Rossendale brochure would be updated to include contact details and it was confirmed that this will be picked up in future revised copies.
- The Corporate Officer confirmed that there will be a full update on LI64 – number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished.
- A member of the public asked for clarification on NI 154 – net additional homes provided, which the report indicated was 224 were provided in 2014/15.
- That Clarification be sought about what finance is available to support business start-up and growth, in particular information about Rosebud Finance.
- Information on whether the Council still uses the poop scoop machine.

**Resolved:**

1. That Overview and Scrutiny notes the levels of performance and risks as detailed in the report.
2. That Overview and Scrutiny continues to monitor performance of those actions and performance indicators that are under-achieving target levels of performance.

**8. ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2014-15**

Members considered the Annual Equality Report 2014/15 which was presented by the Corporate Officer. The report provides another positive review of equality.

The Equality Act 2010 states that everyone has the right to be treated fairly and equally. The two main purposes of the Act bring together and simplify all of the existing discrimination law and strengthen the law to further support progress on equality.

The Council is required to publish equality information on at least an annual basis. It was noted that the Council continues to take an appropriate and proportionate approach to equality and diversity.

From a qualitative perspective, the report highlights that despite some difficult financial challenges and changes, the Council has been able to continue to support a range of projects and support services within the community, with some positive results.

Although the Council will continue to ensure it is compliant with its required duties, Members were asked to note that as financial challenges and changes continue within the Council, this could impact on the extent of the Council's involvement in this agenda in future years.

The report and the appendices provide an overview of the Council's key progress and achievements during 2014/15, in relation to equality and diversity. It also presents the Council's key equality data.

From a quantitative perspective, the equality data shows:-

- The majority of the workforce is male (62%) and female (38%)
- 1.7% of employees have disclosed they have a disability
- 0.5% of employees identified as Black or Minority Ethnic
- A third of the workforce are aged 50-59 years
- 6% of the workforce are 19-24 years
- Average basic pay for females is £23,537 pa and £23,075 pa for males
- 3 requests for flexible working (outside of standard flexible working conditions) were received during 2014/15
- The Council successfully implemented a health and wellbeing project called Up and Active, which aims to provide and signpost health and wellbeing activities to minority groups in two wards of the Borough
- There had been no employee complaints in relation to discrimination during 2014/15

The Council also helped organise and run a very successful financial literacy session for young people to give them information on finance, loan sharks and credit. An event was undertaken at Fearn's, similar to a speed dating session and this proved to be a success.

A number of questions were raised by Members which the Corporate Officer answered where possible, these included:

- a) Information on the ethnic makeup of all of Rossendale to enable comparison to Council employees
- b) Information on the Affordable Warmth Grant.

Responses to the above questions would be sent via the Scrutiny Support Officer.

## **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the Council's Annual Equality Report and appendices for 2014.15.
2. That Overview and Scrutiny continues to monitor the Council's progress on equality and sufficient publication of equality information in line with current legislative and best practice requirements to ensure that the Council is operating fairly and equitably.

## **9. FORMAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REVIEW**

The Committee and Member Services Manager presented a report on the annual complaints and compliments received by the Council and the Local Ombudsman complaints recorded for the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015.

Members had already had sight of these complaints and compliments as they were included within the quarterly reports that come before the committee, but this report showed the yearly figures and enabled members to make a year on year comparison.

In relation to Formal Complaints, there had been 115 complaints, the majority of which were in relation to customer service, application processing, or an action, response or communication.

In 2014/2015 the average complaint response time was 9 working days which was within the 10 working day target, and was an improvement when compared with 2013/2014.

Ninety five of the 115 complaints were resolved at stage 1 and there were 20 stage 2 reviews. Of these 20 stage 2 reviews, 5 were subsequently referred to the Ombudsman. The outcome from the Ombudsman was that there was no further action for 2 of the complaints, and 1 was not upheld after the investigation.

Two complaints were still open at the end of March, but had since been closed, one being closed after initial enquiries with no further actions and the other was not upheld with no evidence of fault.

The Ombudsman Annual Letter indicated that they had received 25 enquiries or complaints about the Council and they conducted detailed investigations into just 2 of these. The Ombudsman had categorised them both as "not upheld".

Although the Council was still not notified about the majority of the complaints received by the Ombudsman and of the decisions made, the Ombudsman now included breakdown information not previously provided. This was extremely useful in enabling the Council to identify and match up complaints which had been through the Council's Formal Complaints Process.

In relation to compliments, there had been 170 compliments (which was a slight increase when compared with the previous year). The majority of compliments

were in relation to a member of staff or team, the quality of service or an action, communication or a response.

In relation to monitoring complaints and compliments, as well as Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving the information, they were also sent to every Management Team meeting where Managers and Heads of Service were asked to follow up any outstanding complaints in their service area and also note any compliments that had been received. A weekly update was also sent to relevant officers and managers so they could check any complaints or compliments in their service area.

Where Ombudsman complaints were concerned, as well as the quarterly reports and Management Team reports, there were also additional meetings with the Liaison Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee and Member Services Manager responded to questions raised by Members.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the number of formal complaints and compliments received by the Council, together with the Local Government Ombudsman complaints recorded for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.25pm

Signed .....  
(Chair)

Dated .....