

Report to Council Forum

26th January 2023

Progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Purpose of the Report

To update the Council Forum on the progress of the Policy and Corporate Resources, Health and Social Care, Children and Young People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21st November 2022.

The Committee met on 21st November and continued to progress its work programme.

1. Terms of Reference for the Committee

Members received draft terms of reference for the Committee for consideration. The terms of reference had been drawn up to assist members in their work and give a greater understanding of the issues that were to be scrutinised and how this could be done. The Committee noted the terms of reference.

2. Quality Care Homes in the Borough

The Committee looked at the issue of Quality Care Homes in the Borough and the issues that they would raise with the Strategic Director as a task Group in January and agreed a focus for the meeting.

The Committee will focus on the following –

a typical person going in to care, a person with specific needs and a person discharged from hospital?

The current situation within the borough regarding care homes?

How do we ensure we have and then maintain quality in the boroughs care home provision?

Where do we stand legally on the provision of care homes in the borough the duty to provide care homes?

What happens if we have not got enough provision in the borough to meet need?

How would we deal with a provider withdrawing services at short notice?

Is the care market in the borough sustainable?

How does the Health and Wellbeing Boards Ageing Well Strategy tie in with care provision?

If a care home in the borough suddenly closed how would we as an authority deal with this?

The Committee agreed that a meeting of a task group be set up to meet in January to look at the issue of care homes and discuss the scope as outlined above with the strategic Director.

3. Progress of the Task Group looking at Leisure, Leisure Centre Usage and Re:refresh.

The Task Group met on 1st November at Blackburn Leisure Centre and discussed with officers from the Public Health and Operational Services Department a number of issues that the Committee had included in its scope of the topic.

- The scope of the refresh offer and who it was targeted to benefit
- The current offer and how this has developed historically
- The funding for the initiative both historically, now and in the near future.
- How users access the programme
- Booking arrangements for sessions
- Availability issues
- How leisure centres were dealing with the issues caused by the economic situation
- How leisure centres sought to attract people to centres and the methods used.

The Executive Member will now be requested to report to the Committee on how the changes in the future funding for Re refresh will be managed, how this will impact on service provision and the impact on Leisure Centres and to look at how accessibility to the re: refresh Programme is managed with particular regard to issues relating to digital bookings which may exclude some sections of the community. The Executive Member will also be requested to report back to the Committee on how reductions of funding will impact on the health of the borough and how the work on going in partnerships that could help mitigate this.

Jacqueline Slater,

Chair of the Health and Adult Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5th December 2022.

The Committee met on 5th December and continued to progress its work programme.

4. Update from the Youth MP and the Youth Forum.

The Committee received an update on the work of the Youth Forum and the Youth MP. The Committee were informed of progress on the Takeover challenge that had been held in November and focused on Child Poverty. The day had included work on issues such as resilience, food poverty and children's mental health. Over 80 schools had taken part from across the borough and great feedback had been received.

The Committee were informed that the youth forum/ youth MP would now share the findings with schools and youth organisations and ask for their feedback. They would collaborate with schools, colleges and stakeholders on the issues raised and look at presenting the findings at various strategic bodies.

The Committee were updated on the recent visit to the House of Parliament to take part in the national youth debate. The debates had focused on the issues affecting young people and reflected the main issues being considered by the youth forum.

The Committee were keen to continue with the work of the Youth Forum being reported to them and would support their campaigns and work where possible

5. Achieving Excellence Update and the Improvement Board.

The Committee received an update on the work following the OFSTED review and were informed that the Achieving Excellence Board had been replaced with the Improvement Board which would support a board made up of partners. The Board would look inward at what we do and how we do it and focus on deep routed reviews of the services that were provided for children of the borough. The Committee were informed that even though the process had now been streamlined it would still focus on the inspection report. The establishment of a monthly 'Improvement Board' to oversee the ILACS framework priority areas for development and wider departmental strategic actions, will comprise of Council Officers and be supported by LGA Advisor Linda Clegg.

The revised governance arrangements will also include the establishment of a 'Quarterly Partnership Improvement' meeting for the Local Authority, Health & Police to share intelligence to influence the direction of the improvement strategy and maximise shared learning opportunities.

The Committee noted the revised arrangements for the delivery of the improvement plan following the OFSTED inspection and that the Achieving Excellence Board would now be replaced with an Improvement Board. Regular reports on the progress on the post inspection plan and the areas of recommendations would be submitted to this Committee.

6. Self-Evaluation Framework.

The Committee received a presentation from the Interim Director Children and Education on the Self-Evaluation Framework. The frame work was a requirement that focused on what we did and how this made a difference to the lives of children in the borough. The Committee were reminded of the challenges we faced as a borough together with the contextual information. The Committee looked at the areas that the Authority needed to address as part of its self-evaluation and the difference that it made to the lives of children in education and early years and special educational needs. The Committee were informed that part of the issues that we still needed to address needed a national lead such as the appointment and retention of social workers. The Interim Director undertook to provide information to members on the workloads of social workers in the Borough and work that we undertook to retain them in the Borough. Members drew attention to the improved provision of data which helped assess progress of service delivery and need. It was pointed out that data was useful however this still needed to be interrogated to ensure that it was understood properly. The Committee noted the progress on the Self-Evaluation Framework and that detailed information be provided to the Committee at their next meeting on progress and issues that needed to be addressed following the self- evaluation process.

Councillor Sylvia Liddle,

Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee met on 12th December and looked at a key issue relating to their work programme.

7. The New Approach to Procurement and Leveraging of Social Value

The Committee received a presentation on the lessons learned since the introduction of the Council's Social Value Policy (SVP), approved by Council in March 2022.

The SVP had three main elements:

- Set minimum commitments expected from providers
- A local first approach where possible on low value spend
- For high value contracts setting 15% of the evaluation criteria on social value priorities

The Council's Social Value priorities were outlined, and bidders for contracts were now asked for commitments about delivery of social value priorities and the impact they would make. The delivery of social value commitments were closely monitored and outputs tracked, and examples were given of positive examples from the first six months. The lessons learned and next steps were outlined and specific examples of social value outputs relating to the Growth Deal 3 South East Blackburn were highlighted, including employment by contractors of apprentices and work placements and work with local communities. The social value outputs relating to the Fishmoor Housing Development were also outlined, particularly relating to job creation.

Members discussed the presentation and indicated that they felt that some contracts should be broken down into lots to enable smaller firms to get on the Council's frameworks, and the need for penalties where possible for those companies who had promised social value benefits but not delivered them. The Committee requested that the Executive Member report back to them on how the Council can address this issue.

8. Work Programme for the Committee

The next meeting of the committee will look at Section 106 (s106) funding, focussing on:

- How is s106 funding spent?
- Where is it spent?
- The decision making process
- Involvement of Ward Councillors/Consultation
- How could s106 funding be spread/shared by wards where there was unlikely to be any development that would lead to a s106 agreement?

The Committee also discussed infrastructure as part of the discussions on s106 funding, but decided that the scope was already large enough for the next meeting, so requested that a report be presented to the subsequent meeting on infrastructure considerations in the Borough, covering s106 aspects, but also the issues and ongoing actions relating to school places, highways, transport, NHS services etc.

Brian Taylor, Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Salim Sidat, Vice Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee met on 19th December and continued to look at issues that had been highlighted for consideration as part of their work programme.

9. Digital Strategy.

The Committee received an update and presentation on the progress of the Council's Digital Strategy. Progress made on the Strategy 2021-2024 the 4 outlined work streams was outlined. These streams were:

- Digital First for our Services
- Enable Transformation for our Staff
- Data Driven Organisation
- Secure and Resilient Technology

The Strategic Director highlighted how Blackburn with Darwen had invested in the people, skills and infrastructure to provide 21st century public services, that enabled the Council and its services to work in new ways. He also told the group that as the Council embarked on its latest vision for digital and technology it had done so with strong foundations, albeit after a prolonged crisis with the Covid-19 pandemic in which the pace of technological change rapidly increased. The next steps for the Digital Strategy within the Council were highlighted that they will continue to deliver planned work with existing investment across the four work streams and work in accordance with the six principles set out in the strategy. These were:

- Customer Centred Design
- Secure by Design
- Cost and Quality Effective
- Digital First and Inclusive
- Data driven
- Open, flexible and Cloud First

Going forward, the Strategic Director discussed the potential risk to delivery in the medium term if existing revenue and programme funding is limited or scaled back. The seriousness of the risk of Cyber Attacks was also highlighted if the Council does not continue to invest in work stream 4 of the Digital Strategy.

The Committee discussed issues with the director including the risk of leaving behind those who are technologically illiterate, the cost effectiveness and value for money of the Digital Strategy project, and the safety of the Council from cyber-attacks. The Committee noted the progress on the delivery and supported the way the digital strategy being implemented.

10. Update on the Accommodation Strategy

The Committee were updated on the Council's Accommodation Strategy. The Strategy followed a number of principles which were:

- To adopt a planned and structured approach to determining our future office accommodation needs
- To manage office buildings as a corporate resource to drive down cost, and maintain safety and security.
- To invest in the repair and maintenance our key office buildings to reduce maintenance backlog.

- To maximise use of fewer assets, through smarter working 'work is what we do, not a place we go'
- To achieve carbon reduction through environmental improvements and adaptations. (BEIS)
- To promote joint working and explore opportunities for shared use of assets with partner organisations to improve collaboration and reduce costs.

The Committee were informed of a number of options to raise finances from the Council's accommodation. This included the potential for shared use of office spaces, or the selling of Council land/ accommodation. The Committee noted the strategy and requested to be kept informed of the development and implementation of the strategy in the coming months.

11. Revenue Monitoring

The Committee were updated on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2022/23 on the basis of a budget monitoring exercise undertaken at the end of September 2022. The Executive Member for Finance and Growth highlighted the request to the Executive Board to:

- a. give approval to the Portfolio Cash Limit Adjustments as outlined;
- b. note the General Fund Budget Summary position as at 30th September 2022;
- c. in view of the forecast overspend to request Portfolio Holders to review their budgets for the remainder of 2022/23 with a view to addressing the issues identified and limiting the amount of monies that would be required to be taken from reserves at financial year end;
- d. note the Earmarked Reserves and General Fund Balance position.

The Executive Member summarised that with the predicted overspend, work must be done to improve the efficiency in all portfolios.

Members of the Committee questioned the Executive Member included how the Council was dealing with the Cost of Living crisis, and the possibility of using other streams of income to balance the overspend. The Committee agreed to closely monitor the budget situation and the work of portfolio to review expenditure.

Councillor Tony Humphrys.

Chair, Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.