

## **Review of the Work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees 2022/23**

This report pulls together the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the municipal year 2022/23 for member's information and to highlight the progress that has been made and issues that have been addressed.

### **The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**6<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

The Committee also looked at the work of the two portfolio members and the pressures, priorities and issues relating to their portfolio. The Committee continues to value the work of the Youth MP and the youth forum and the role they play in contributing to the work of the Committee.

#### **Youth Forum Update.**

The Committee looked at the work being undertaken by the Youth Forum and the Youth MP. The forum were continuing their progress on the training as Young inspectors and this entailed-

Development of a Framework

- Inspection Framework & Plan, Services to inspect, and much more.
- Residential Trips & Collaboration
- Planning & Preparation

Planning for Inspections

- Identifying Inspection timeline
- Training and Planning
- Pilot Inspections & Development

The Youth MP and Deputies were also busy working on a number of issues including-

- Consultations
- MYP Annual Conference
- Make Your Mark Voting
- Projects
- Events

The Committee also welcomed representatives of the Leaving Care Forum who updated the Committee on the work the forum was undertaking. The forum had been launched in April 2022 from members who were part of the senior voice group and were eligible to move up into this age category. They drew attention to work being undertaken by Manchester Metropolitan University where Young people who had previously been looked after in children's homes took part in a consultation with a student from Manchester Metropolitan University to share their experiences. The Committee were informed that after concerns regarding the Bee Active card, a new system was put in place and the age extended to 25. Two representatives from the Leaving Care Forum attend the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group and the Corporate Parenting Executive Board to put forward the young people's voice. The leaving Care Forum are currently in the process of devising a new name for leaving care as they feel there are negative connotations attached to the name and being a 'care leaver'.

## **Adult Safeguarding**

The Committee received the annual report of the Adult Safeguarding Board. The Board was required to produce an annual report and although requirement this had been put on hold during the pandemic it had been felt important to have one and acknowledge the work that had been undertaken. The report covered the period up to March 2021 and provided a summary of the work undertaken by the safeguarding board in Blackburn with Darwen. The report stated that there was an efficient system of maintaining contact with the elderly and shielded residents and an efficient system to ensure food deliveries were made to those who needed them. Agencies that were responsible for safe guarding and protecting the most vulnerable adults had been able to maintain their services.

The Committee discussed the long term effects of the pandemic on the mental health of the borough and how this would manifest itself in the future service needs.

## **Portfolio Responsibilities**

In line with the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees members were informed of the revised portfolio responsibilities and how they fit into the remit for the Committee.

## **OFSTED Review of Children's services.**

The Committee received an overview from the Executive Member on the findings of the Ofsted review of Children's Services. The review had taken place earlier in the year and the finding of the inspection would be reported to the Executive Board on 9<sup>th</sup> June. The review had found many good things in the services delivered and that children in the borough were safe.

The report outlined ten key areas for improvement and an Achieving Excellence Board had been established to look at how the effectiveness of services could be enhanced. The chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been invited to sit on the board. The Committee would receive regular progress reports on the improvement of services and the work of the Board and how improvements would be implemented and outcomes monitored.

## **Work Programme for the Committee.**

The Committee received a presentation on the issues, pressures and priorities of the portfolio areas and the work that was ongoing. The Committee discussed areas where they could add value and support the work of the Executive and agreed that during the year they would-

- Receive regular updates including progress of the Achieving Excellence Board on the actions relating to the Ofsted inspection.
- Receive regular reports from the Youth Forum on the progress of their work programme
- Receive an update on the reconfiguration of Pathology Services for Lancashire and South Cumbria (September)
- Receive information on the establishment of the ICS for south Cumbria and Lancashire including the new roles for partners
- establish a task group to examine Leisure services and leisure centres with a particular focus on how we are seeking to improve use of facilities, how we are meeting the challenges of the competition and how the refresh scheme is working.( before September)
- Look at homelessness in the borough and the work of agencies that assist people.
- receive an overview of the work of the adult social care and health portfolio areas
- Look at the work of Blackburn Health Watch and look at possible areas of collaboration.

- Review the work being undertaken in schools to support pupils who are falling behind due to the continued effects of the pandemic.
- Look at how the borough continues to deal with covid and potential outbreaks.
- Any consultations that we are required to look at due to its potential significant impact on residents of the borough.
- We will also look at the work of the Joint Committee when established.

### **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

The first meeting of the Committee took place in **September** and looked at a number of key issues affecting the portfolio and services to children and education.

#### **Youth Forum.**

The Committee received an update from the youth MP, Deputy Youth MP and members of the Youth Forum. The Committee were informed about the work on the Young Inspectors project which aimed to involve young people in reviews of service provision that affected services to their peers. Training had taken place and a development framework was being drawn up. Work was ongoing with young people relating to poverty and the effects of this on Mental Health and Wellbeing and this was being discussed with Voice Forums. The forum were working on this year's takeover challenge with three key areas of focus-

- Adverse Childhood experiences
- Child Food Poverty
- Mental Health and Wellbeing.

The aim of the takeover challenge was to raise awareness and generate ideas which could be fed back directly to youth MPs. The Committee welcomed the progress and report of the youth MP and Forum.

#### **Achieving Excellence Update.**

The Committee received an update on the achieving excellence board and the progress to date. Members received and noted the terms of reference of the board and the time line for reporting and delivering on the key areas. The Post Inspection Action Plan setting out 10 areas of recommendations was also considered and the executive member addressed member's questions on the processes and how this would deliver improvement.

The Committee noted the terms of reference of the Achieving Excellence Board and the progress to date and agreed to receive regular reports on the progress on the post inspection plan and the 10 areas of recommendations.

#### **Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership Annual Report.**

The Committee received a presentation from Stephen Ashley, Independent Scrutineer, of the Safeguarding Assurance Partnership on their annual report for the year ending 2021. The partnership was a Pan Lancashire covering Lancashire, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen and the 12 districts that constitute the Lancashire footprint. The Partnership was made up of the key safeguarding partners together with relevant agencies who were required to keep children safe. The Committee were informed of the way the partnership worked and how reviews of practices were carried out on the death of a child. These reviews were shared and disseminated to seek to prevent harm. The Committee looked at how the partnership developed the workforce to assist in keeping children safe with briefings and training. The Independent scrutineer was satisfied that partners had structures and processes in place as required by law and that they were working together effectively, work was undertaken by

frontline staff and there was openness and transparency of the CSPA executive board which has enabled progress to be made. The Committee welcomed the Safeguarding Annual report and the findings.

### **Early Years Speech and Language.**

The Committee were informed of the work that was ongoing on improving speech, Language and communication as part of the early year's strategy. The strategy highlighted the fact that the white paper on early years highlighted that high quality early years education, particularly early language skills can greatly improve a child's attainment throughout primary school. One of the authorities key focuses were on school readiness to give them the best start to their education. The borough wide initiative was to improve outcomes for all children in all settings with targeted support. The strategy would also focus on children who have English as an additional language. The Committee welcomed the development of the strategy for early year's speech and language and would wish to see how the strategy makes a positive influence on the outcomes for early year's development over time.

### **5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.**

#### **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

#### **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.

### **Self-Evaluation Framework.**

The Committee received a presentation from the Interim Director Children and Education on the Self-Evaluation Framework. The framework 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.

The Committee continued with its work programme and looked at a number of the key issues affecting the delivery of services in the borough.

### **Youth MP and the work of the Youth Forum.**

The Committee received an update from the youth MP on the work that was ongoing. The Committee also looked at the work of the youth forum who were involved in a number of campaigns and projects including the young inspectors programme and the Youthfonia event held in Blackburn which had focused on the issues of Violence, LGBT and the cost of living. Members welcomed the work of the forum and their involvement in the work of the Committee.

### **Children's Attainment**

The Committee received an update on the attainment of children in the borough and how this compared to regional and national averages. The data provided a snapshot of attainment at Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 and beyond and how the work that had been done to improve attainment was working. The Committee looked at how attainment had improved over time and the work that had led to this including working with schools, introducing programmes borough wide to improve the learning foundations and how this was monitored. The Committee will continue to monitor the attainment of children in the next municipal year.

### **Update on Improving Speech, Language and Communication- Early Years Strategy.**

Earlier in the Committee's work programme for the year we had looked at the early year's strategy for improving speech, language and communication. The provision of high quality

early education, particularly in early language skills could greatly improve a child's attainment throughout primary school and that almost half the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers at key stage 4 has emerged by the age of five. Nationally, Speech, Language and Communication are the biggest barriers to children making progress.

The Committee were informed of the significant progress that had been made across the Authority and the level of commitment from all education providers in the borough since the introduction in October and how this would be progressed.

### **Self -Assessment Framework**

The Committee were updated on the work that was ongoing on the Self-Assessment Framework for Children's Social Care. The framework was using a systemic approach to what we do and the difference that has been made. The Committee were made aware of the work that was still be done and the challenges that need to be faced. The Committee will keep the progress on the self-assessment frame work under review and hold the Executive Member to account for delivered outcomes at future meetings.

### **Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

**13<sup>th</sup> June 2022.**

The Committee looked at the work of the two portfolio members and the pressures, priorities and issues relating to their portfolio

#### **Portfolio Responsibilities**

In line with the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees members were informed of the revised portfolio responsibilities and how they fit into the remit for the Committee.

#### **Work Programme for the Committee.**

The Committee received a presentation on the issues, pressures and priorities of the portfolio areas and the work that was ongoing. The Committee discussed areas where they could add value and support the work of the Executive and agreed that during the year they would look at-

- the proposed Household recycling centre including the layout and design, consultations, how we will educate and engage with residents and prevent fly tipping (this will meet as a task group before September)
- burials – progress on the new cemetery site
- transport to employment on the periphery of the borough
- the growth programme
- progress on the local plan.
- flooding and critical gullies.
- The top 25 fly tipping sites in the borough

The Committee commenced their work programme by looking at the issue of Flooding and how the Council works to mitigate the risks to residents and businesses through their work.

The Committee were informed that the Council, as the Highways Authority, were responsible for the maintenance of 30,000 gullies and had a statutory duty to maintain these. The highways

drainage was designed to drain a 1 in 5 year rainfall event however this was becoming more frequent. The Committee were informed that the Council was also responsible for 52 debris screens and how these were checked when an alert trigger was issued. The Committee were informed that over 21,000 residents and 2,159 homes were within the areas of flood risk with 12.58km of highways and 47.32 ha of agricultural land at risk.

The Committee were informed of the trigger mechanisms that the Council received that led to actions being taken to seek to minimise risk of flooding. This included checking on debris screens, looking at potential areas of flooding and drains in that area to ensure that they were functioning efficiently. The Council would also seek to give assistance to owners and partners where flooding occurred and assist with access properties where necessary.

The Committee looked at how the borough had been affected by flooding in recent years and how this had shaped delivery of services. Critical drains in flooding areas were identified and were maintained twice a year and inspected during weather warnings and heavy rain forecast. Following flood events the Council would investigate all reported flooding and carry out repair work to adopted drainage assets where required. Members looked at the way that work had been funded and how the Council accessed grants for this. The issue of the size of drains was discussed and how increasing the size of drains would be extremely expensive. Members were informed that whilst flooding occurred in a number of places this flooding receded in a very short period of time.

Members drew attention to areas where they felt that work needed to be carried out and how individual drains that were blocked and had not been cleared. The Director drew attention to the work carried out on critical drains and how critical drains were the ones that mattered in terms of flooding. The issues relating to access to drains such as parked cars was raised and how by working with local members this may be improved. Members also drew attention to the level of service that was accessible and questioned whether this was enough to meet demand.

The Committee were informed that discussions were to take place with community tidy groups about the picking up of leaves that could affect drainage and water dispersal. It was hoped that this would assist in the issues in the borough.

### **Update on Household Recycling Centre and New Sites for Burials in the Borough.**

The Committee were updated on the issues that they had identified as part of their work programme. The Executive Board at its meeting in September had agreed that the proposals for the new Household Recycling Centre had put on hold as the cost identified had escalated to exceed the budgetary provision due to the economic climate. Members were informed that the work on the new burial sites was progressing and tests were still being carried out on the water table and would be complete in the near future. Water table measurements had to take place for a full year to ensure that land identified was suitable and reports would be submitted to the Executive board when these were completed. The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee would also be kept informed when possible.

### **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.

## **March 2023**

### **Section 106 Contributions**

The Committee focused on the issue of section 106 payments looking at-

- When they are sought
- The decision process
- Development Viability and contributions
- The contributions received by the council
- Affordable housing provision and S106
- Education Provision and S106
- Transport and Highways Provision and S106
- Green Infrastructure/Open Space and S106

The Committee were informed that a summary of the section 106 contributions were outlined and published on the Council's website and that the council was one of the first councils to publish in this way. Members were reminded of the publication of the Local Plan later in the year which clarified the Council's role in seeking funding contributions from developments.

Members looked at how Ward Councillors could have an input into how money could be spent in their wards and also how Community Associations could seek to influence how money was spent in an area.



## **Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

### **September 2022.**

The first meeting of the Committee was held on 1<sup>st</sup> September. The meeting looked at two of the major issues facing the service are and how these would affect the services provided to residents by the National Health Service, Partners and the Council.

### **Integrated Care Board.**

The Committee received an in depth briefing on the revised arrangements for Health services delivered in the Lancashire and South Cumbria area. The Integrated Care Board had been established and come in to effect on 1<sup>st</sup> July and were responsible for the commissioning and delivery of health services in the whole area. The Clinical Commissioning Groups had been abolished and revised structures implemented that work on local neighbourhood areas. The Committee were informed of the issues relating to the deprivation of the borough and how the new systems were intended to ensure that services were best provided where need was greatest. The Committee would be looking to see the positive outcomes of the creation of the Integrated Care Board and the changes that the new structures would seek to reduce health deprivation in the borough.

### **Adult Social Care.**

The Committee looked at the work of the Adult and Social Care portfolio area the activity and performance and the changes in demand. The Committee looked at how the department managed demand and the structure of the department and pathways to care.

The Committee looked at how changes in legislation would affect the delivery of services and the strategic context for the reforms. The health and care act set out a 10 year vision for the reforms to provide individuals with choice and control, access to outstanding quality and personalised care and support. The Committee were informed of the charging reform and how this would affect service users and reform the way that the care market would be sustainable for the future. The impact of the reforms was outlined and how the service would need to adapt to meet the challenges. The Committee would continue to monitor the changes in Social Care and the implications for services users and providers to ensure that the challenges faced would be met.

The Committee were informed of the Care Quality Commission inspection provision that was contained in the Health and Care Act to be carried out in the near future and the assurance framework that would be used to assess performance of Key Stakeholders. Details were still to be finalised and would go live for the process to be fully activated in April 2023. Work had commenced on his area and the Committee were made aware of progress.

### **Work programme for the Committee.**

Members discussed the work programme for the new Committee and how they could make a difference and add value to the work of the executive. The Committee were informed that the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had looked at the work of the executive member at their last meeting and had agreed to establish a task group to examine Leisure services and leisure centres with a particular focus on how we are seeking to improve use of facilities, how we are meeting the challenges of the competition and how the refresh scheme is working before the next meeting of the committee in December.

### **November 2022**

## **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.

## **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 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?

## **Progress of the Task Group looking at Leisure, Leisure Centre Usage and Re:fresh.**

The Task Group met on 1<sup>st</sup> 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 fresh 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: fresh 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.

### **March 2023.**

The Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be meeting on the Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March and will look at the outcome of the Care Quality Assurance peer challenge day and receive an update on Care Home Assurance.

### **Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee,**

#### **20<sup>th</sup> June**

#### **Update on RIPA Activity, Procedural Guide and RIPA Inspection.**

The Committee received a report on the introduction of the RIPA procedural Guide, the adoption of the recommendations made by the investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, the RIPA training delivered to Officers and RIPA activity and applications. The Committee endorsed the recommendations in the report which would be submitted to the Executive Board for approval of the adoption of the new RIPA procedure and guidance.

#### **Portfolio Responsibilities.**

The Committee received the revised portfolio responsibilities which identified the areas that related to their work on scrutiny.

#### **Progress against the Corporate Plan 2021/22**

The Committee considered a report outlining the progress against the Corporate Plan 2021/2022 for the six months to year end (October 2021-March 2022). The report had been considered by the Executive Board on 9<sup>th</sup> June and they had noted the remedial action to improve delivery against the 2019-2023 Corporate priorities which were giving cause for concern. The Leader and the Chief Executive attended the meeting and outlined the actions and progress on the priorities which would be the focus of the scrutiny work for the year. Members were informed of the new arrangements that would be introduced with the introduction of the Integrated Care Strategy which would significantly affect the delivery of Health and Social Care within the borough. Members noted the progress of delivery against corporate targets and will continue to look at performance at future meetings of the Committee.

#### **Development of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2023/24.**

Members received a report on the development of the general fund revenue budget 2023/24. The report had been considered by the Executive Board and set out an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/26 as the start of the process for developing the Council's Budget for 2023/24.

The report highlighted the key risks to the delivery of the budget in 2023/24 and the uncertainty of the funding outlook for the council. The Committee discussed issues that impacted on the budget and made particular reference to sickness absence and how the Council sought to mitigate the effects on the budget by keeping absence to a minimum through numerous programmes. The Committee had looked at sickness absence previously along with wellbeing

measures that sought to maximise attendance and agreed to look at this issue as a topic this year.

## **September 2022**

### **Progress of the Council Capital and Revenue Budget.**

The meeting had been re-arranged at short notice which had meant that the Executive Member had been unable to attend. The Director of Finance outlined the content of the reports that were presented to the Executive Board which detailed that

- a) The total cost of the Council's capital investment programme for 2022/23 has now increased from £35.691 million, as approved by Finance Council on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022, to £52.400 million at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The net variation of £16.709 million (detailed in Appendix 2) reflects;
  - An increase of £13.526 million in respect of variations to the programme following the finalisation of the outturn position for 2021/22,
  - budget increases of £0.827 million (of which £0.462 million is funded by transfers from existing capital scheme budgets) made to reflect the approval of schemes during the first quarter of the year,
  - further variations during the first quarter of the year, for which approval is requested (£2.818 million),
- b) As at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022, the capital expenditure across the portfolios was £1.102 million (representing 2.10% of the current, revised projected capital spend).
- c) The estimated capital receipts expected in 2022/23 is £3.445 million; £0.985 million has been received in the first three months of the year.
  - In accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, all Portfolios are required to examine their revenue budget position on a monthly basis. Quarterly reports are submitted to the Executive Board for review and action as necessary along with a final report, detailing the financial outturn for the year.

The development of the budget is a key element of the Council's financial governance processes. The requirement for the Council to monitor its budget during the year is set out in s28 of the Local Government Act 2003 with s28(3) requiring the Council to take action, as it considers necessary, if there has been a deterioration in its financial position.

With regard to the revenue Budget position the Committee were informed that the Council agreed the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2022/23 which was subject to changes for a range of reasons as the financial year progresses. The Committee were provided with a detailed analysis of those budget adjustments that have occurred during the period to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The impact of these adjustments on the Council's Budget for 2022/23 was summarised. Members discussed the position that the Council was in and the potential position at the conclusion of the financial year. Detailed questions relating to individual items in the budget would be responded to by the Director and the Committee would continue to monitor the progress throughout the year as a part of their work programme.

## **December 2022**

### **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.

### **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.

### **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

**Councillor Sylvia Liddle**, Chair, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Councillor Brian Taylor**, Chair, Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Councillor Jacqueline Slater**, Chair of the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.