

Report to the Council Forum

3rd October 2019

Progress of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The report sets out the progress of the People, Place and Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committees that met in September.

Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 9th September and looked at a number of issues that affected the portfolio areas covered by the Committee.

Dialysis Services in the Region

The Committee received a presentation on the review of the renal and haemodialysis service. The Committee agreed:

1. To support the review of dialysis services in Lancashire and South Cumbria to improve access to treatment closer to home for in-centre dialysis patients in East Lancashire
2. To support the expansion of dialysis capacity in East Lancashire whilst reducing the number of units to 2 from 3 and ensuring that travel times are no more than 30 minutes.
3. To support the desire to ensure that patients wanting home dialysis have suitable local support to develop their skills and confidence.
4. To support the aim of improving patient experience during dialysis treatments in East Lancashire and in particular through the enhanced service delivery proposals in Blackburn.
5. To welcome the opportunity to discuss further following the conclusion of the retender process.

The Committee welcome the positive outcomes proposed for patients in East Lancashire and this borough in particular with the replacement of temporary accommodation with purpose built facilities and improved services especially for those patients who required treatment in isolation.

The Committee were informed that this consultation was the first in a series of service reconfigurations that would be consulted on in the near future. As these covered services delivered on a regional footprint across Lancashire, South Cumbria, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen, a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with powers to consider and make recommendations on these is being considered with representation from the four upper tier Local Authorities.

Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Inspection.

The Committee received information on the SEND inspection that had taken place in June of this year. The inspection was a joint inspection undertaken by OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission and included the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Public Health, NHS England, Early Years settings, Schools and Further Education Providers.

The review highlighted Key areas of strength and areas for improvement and areas have been identified for further improvement. This will form the basis of the revised SEND

Strategy Action Plan for the local area. This plan will be co-produced with stakeholders and co-owned between the Council and the CCG. The Committee congratulated those responsible for the positive outcome of the review and the continued successful development of services to Children and Young People with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Feedback from the Youth Forum

The Committee received an update on the work of the youth forum and the projects that they were involved in. The forum had been looking at many issues including

- The Takeover Challenge which will focus on knife crime and prevention.
- The Regional Youthforia event
- The annual Youth MP conference in August at Leeds University.
- Solutions to Integration in BwD
- BwD Youth Integration Forum and “Eat, Rave, Repeat”

The Committee continue to value the input of the Youth Forum into the work of the Committee.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 16th September and continued its work on the key corporate priorities. The Committee looked at the issues facing the Waste disposal contract, Kerbside Recycling and Government consultation on Waste Strategy.

Members have agreed to focus on the Corporate Priorities as the work programme for the year with Members seeking to add value to the work of the Executive and work with them on the delivery of these. This report sets out progress on the Kerbside Recycling Project and the Waste Disposal Contract which as members will appreciate is one of the key areas of service delivery to residents of the borough and contributes to the corporate priorities.

The Committee looked at the issues the service was facing particularly around the lack of companies willing to take on the contract for recycling collection and disposal of recyclates. The steps to ameliorate the situation were outlined and the progress so far was noted. Members also discussed the Household recycling centres which were not fit for purpose and the need to review how we provide these services to improve recycling rates. The Committee agreed-

1 That they would wish to be kept informed of the progress of the recycling and kerbside collections with an updated position being reported to the next meeting of the in December.

2 That they be kept informed of the progress of the Government’s strategy for waste and the effects that this would have on the Council’s services.

3. That the Council’s monitoring of the amount sent to landfill be submitted to the Committee for information.

4. That the re-introduction of the education and advice role in to improve recycling rates be supported and that the rates of recycling be monitored at future meetings of the Committee.

5. That the discussions that have taken place with recycling operatives asking them to be more helpful and accepting of the difficulties residents face when recycling be supported.

Call-in Committee

The Call-in Committee took place on 28th August 2019 to review the decision relating to the proposed Asset Transfer of Blacksnape Playing Fields. The Committee received information on the proposed transfer from the Executive Member and the background to the decision. The Committee heard responses to the reasons for the call in together with examples of how similar transfer of assets had taken place and the outcomes that this had delivered.

The Committee accepted the decision of the Executive Member to approve the Asset Transfer of Blacksnape Playing Fields via a 25 year lease from the Council.

Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee met on 23rd September and looked at the work of the Executive Member for Finance and Governance. The Committee were reminded that Members have agreed to focus on the Corporate Priorities as the work programme for the year with Members seeking to add value to the work of the Executive and work with them on the delivery of these. The work of the Executive Member for Finance and Governance underpinned the work on all of the Councils Key priorities.

The Budget

The Executive Member outlined the key issues relating to the council's financial position and the budget going forward. The forecast overspend and the level of usable reserves were outlined and the discussions that are ongoing to consider remedial actions. The Committee was reminded that the Council could not present an imbalanced budget and the implications of the use of reserves for this year and on later years was outlined.

The Committee considered the work that was ongoing on the impact of the recent one year Spending Round which may have positive and negative impact on the Council's budget. These included-

- The potential impact of an Adult Social Care Precept of 2%
- Additional monies for Adult and Children Social Care £1bn (nationally)
- A small real terms increase in Public Health Grant
- Additional monies for SEND provision £700m (nationally)
- Uplift in Business Rates multiplier

BUT ALSO

- The ending of the Lancashire 75% business rate retention pool pilot
- Potential end to new 'New Homes Bonus' payments

Directors will continue to work with Executive Members to review all options to reduce costs and close the forecast budget gap.

The Committee discussed the implications of the pilot for retention of Business Rates and if taking this forward would be beneficial for the Council and in response it was informed that if the pilot was implemented in the way that it had run in Lancashire for the past year then it would be positive for Blackburn with Darwen.

The Committee agreed that they be kept informed of the progress on the delivery of the budget throughout the year and the ways that are being examined to seek a reduction in the forecast deficit.

Sickness Absence, Mental Health and Barriers to Employee Health and Wellbeing.

The Committee were updated on the work ongoing on sickness absence, mental health and barriers to employee health and wellbeing. The report addressed the recommendation of the Committee held in March and examined what the Council does to support attendance and address barriers to health and wellbeing. The Committee looked at how the positive benefits of wellbeing initiatives were being delivered in terms of improved attendance and comparisons with other authorities. Information was shared on the support given to staff in terms of training and development to carry out their duties and team working.

The Committee asked for further comparisons with other Unitary Authorities in the area and to receive further information on the introduction of new technology and smarter/agile working. The absence targets and work place initiatives would be kept under review by the Committee.

Removal of Call-in Provisions.

The Committee were informed that the Chair and Vice Chair had been requested and had agreed to the suspension of the call-in provisions in respect of a decision relating to the Kerbside Recycling Contract. The Committee were informed that the issue had been the subject of a review by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting.

Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

September 2019.