

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 5th September 2023

Present: Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (Chair)
Councillor Bill Armer
Councillor Andrew Cooper

24 Membership of Committee

All Members of the Panel were in attendance.

The Chair explained that Councillors Hussain and Ramsay had ceased to be members of the Committee as a result of accepting places in the Cabinet. Thanks were expressed to both Councillors for their contribution to the work of the Committee.

25 Minutes of Previous Meeting Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1st August 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

26 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

27 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

28 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

29 Public Question Time

No questions were submitted.

30 Corporate Financial Management - Quarter 1 Report

The Committee received a report in respect of the Corporate Financial Monitoring Report for Quarter 1, 2023/24 and a verbal update in respect of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Councillor Graham Turner, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Regeneration, Rachel Spencer-Henshall, the Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health and Isabel Brittain, the Interim Service Director, Finance were in attendance and a presentation was given which highlighted the following:

- The headlines from the Quarter 1 Monitoring Position Report.
- An overview by directorate and a breakdown of the key service variances.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 5 September 2023

- The mitigations and actions that had been put in place.
- The Medium-Term Financial Strategy established a financial planning framework, with the aim of ensuring delivery against savings and supporting budget planning, aligned to the objectives within the Council Plan. This would be considered at Cabinet the following day and would be the subject of a key discussion debate at Council on 13th September.
- Activity was ongoing to resolve the immediate issue of the forecast budget gap and to ensure a balanced budget by February 2024, alongside the development of robust proposals for future years.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- One of the Council's priorities was transforming services to be more effective and the potential of investing to save, such as in respect of transport costs, would be a consideration, although it was noted that the cost-benefit analysis of such proposals could be complex. It was confirmed that there was a budget associated with the transformation work.
- More detail could be provided to Members about partnership working on tree planting.
- The Authority would be cognisant of the potential financial impact of challenges in respect of changes to care packages and placements. The approach would be to work within a framework to ensure that an individual solution was reached in each case.
- An undertaking was given to provide more detailed information, after the meeting, in respect of re-profiling and variances between the current figures and the figures submitted to Council in February.
- In terms of the achievability of the forecast savings, and when the authority would be in a position to have more certainty on this, the Service Director explained that she was undertaking a robust review of the saving plans and their effect to provide assurance that they could be achieved.
- It was important that the issue of capacity was considered within decisions relating to recruitment, to ensure that the Council would still be able to take advantage of opportunities. Assurance was given that the panel responsible for managing vacancies would take into account the importance of avoiding a negative impact on income and would also consider capacity to ensure that resources were utilised in the best possible way.
- It was believed that there should be systematic approach to identifying opportunities for funding; including by/through partners and through working with the community and voluntary sector who would have access to funding that was not available to the Council. It would be beneficial for there to be wider visibility and understanding of the Council's approach in this regard.
- The Council had an External Funding Officer who scanned for such opportunities.
- It was noted that accessing external funding could be challenging under the current system of bidding for pots of national funding. There had to be an appropriate level of balance in terms of risk and return and due consideration of the cost associated with submitting a bid and the chances of success. There were also issues associated with challenging timescales both for the submission of bids or deadlines for funding to be used.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 5 September 2023

- Partnership working with the community and voluntary sector in Kirklees was very effective.
- The Committee had identified at the issue of procurement and external funding as an issue for consideration within its work programme for 2023/24.
- In terms of the effectiveness of processes associated with reducing spend, it was believed that there was a strong financial team with a robust approach. Detailed examination was being undertaken as the authority moved towards the end of Quarter 2 and further information would be provided to the Committee at future meetings.
- Forecasting of the impact of changes in the demographic profile of the district and demand for social care needs was undertaken as proficiently as possible but was challenging due to the many factors that influenced the results. It was acknowledged that the number of people with special educational needs and disabilities had increased, and investment was being made into specialist schools to increase capacity.
- Regeneration proposals, including the Huddersfield Blueprint and the Cultural Heart, had been incorporated into the Capital Plan, and would be considered in the review of capital spending.
- There was a need to invest to save and to increase the Council's future income.
- The Department for Education supported the Council's approach in respect of the 'safety valve agreement' for Children and Families and was assured that the actions plans were deliverable. Although it was not possible to predict levels of demand, there was a robust SEND transformation programme in place which took account of all the relevant factors.
- It was queried whether land that would not be used for a period of time could be used to increase the amount of parking in Huddersfield town centre, this would also generate additional income.
- The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provided the principles and framework for setting the budget and delivering savings. Engagement with Councillors and residents on the detail was an integral part of the approach. The underlying detail on actions and delivery would follow.
- There was a clear approach, in achieving efficiencies, to ensure that the needs of each service was assessed to ensure that valuable corporate memory was not lost. There was also a focus upon the development of graduate opportunities and University placements so that the next generation of staff could be developed in those areas where recruitment could be a challenge.

Resolved –

(1) That further information on the position at Quarter 2, the achievability of savings and detail of the re-profiling of the Capital Plan be provided to Members of the Committee at the earliest possible opportunity.

(2) That it be noted that the following issues were included within the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/24:

- (i) Procurement and external funding.
- (ii) The approach to asset management.
- (iii) IT Strategy.

31 Corporate Performance and Impact Report - End of Year 2022/23

The end of year, Corporate Performance and Impact Report 2022/23 was submitted.

Councillor Paul Davies, the Corporate Portfolio Holder, Andy Simcox, Service Director for Strategy and Innovation and Mike Henry, Head of Data and Insight attended the meeting. A brief presentation highlighted the following:

- The background to the current approach to performance monitoring, which focussed upon impact and achievement of shared outcomes.
- The report included outcomes, key measures and delivery of the priorities contained within the Council Plan.
- Detailed operational performance management information was collated within each service and was presented to the Council's Executive Team.
- The approach to performance was being reviewed.
- Demand and capacity indicators were provided to the Members of this Committee on a regular basis.
- The new Council Plan was expected to be approved in January 2024, and consideration would be given to the revision of performance indicators and the schedule for corporate performance reporting.
- Members were invited to identify any issues that they considered would benefit from scrutiny.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- It was anticipated that the future format of performance reports would include more tangible indicators and measurement of outcomes against targets. Financial data and activity data would also be integrated.
- Further detail on the issues and the context affecting the outcomes would be useful in assessing performance.
- The importance of the provision of 'real-time' data to assist Cabinet in decision-making was recognised. The demand and capacity indicators were shared with Cabinet on a monthly basis.
- The importance of the transparency of information was acknowledged and this point would be taken on board in revising the approach.
- It was suggested that consideration should be given to the potential for using land in the Council's ownership for energy generation using wind which would generate revenue, and this was taken on board as a potential item for the relevant Scrutiny Panel.
- The importance of the place standard funding, associated action plans and ward/community-based budgets and the benefits in terms of early intervention and prevention was recognised but there was significant financial pressure, particularly looking forward to 2024/25. The position was being reviewed, with a view to doing everything possible to maintain the investment, and this would be progressed as quickly as possible to inform the budget in February 2024.
- The aim was to support the move towards resilience and self-reliance within communities and using funding to foster and build independence and sustainability.
- The area of care provision was being extensively reviewed, the aim being to create efficiencies whilst retaining the necessary support; it was not possible to

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee - 5 September 2023

say whether the Council's role would change at this stage. It was noted that this may be an issue that the relevant Scrutiny Panel might wish to look at in more detail.

- The government had given assurances in respect of the funding to deal with any problems with concrete structures. Limited numbers had been identified, to date, in the district. The Asset Management Team already had a rigorous review and maintenance process in place.

Resolved -

(1) That the issue of transparency of performance management information be taken into account in the consideration of the future approach.

(2) That it be noted that a further information will be provided to Members of the Committee in respect of the Council's participation in the 'Vision Zero' road safety management initiative.

32 Establishment of Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Approval was sought to the process to be followed in relation to the appointment of Kirklees representatives to a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC), with Calderdale and Wakefield Councils, in respect of the Older People's Inpatient Mental Health Services Transformation Programme.

It was noted that the draft Terms of Reference contained within the report would be submitted to the JHOSC for approval.

Resolved -

That it be agreed that the nominations for Kirklees representation on the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with Calderdale and Wakefield Councils, should be sought from the main political groups (Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Green) on the basis of 1:1:1:1.

33 Lead Members' Updates

The Lead Members for the Children's Scrutiny Panel and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel updated the Committee on the work being undertaken by their Panels.

34 Work Programme 2023/24

The latest version of the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/24 was submitted for consideration.