

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

Monday, 31 July 2023

PRESENT: Councillor O'Neill (Chair); Councillors Anstee, E. Blundell, Kelly, Mir, Aasim Rashid, T. Smith and West

OFFICERS: Julie Murphy (Director of Corporate Services/Chief Finance Officer), Donna Bowler (Interim Director of Neighbourhoods), Michelle Ashworth (Head of Commercial Finance), Carly Cooke (Customer Feedback Manager), Fabiola Fuschi (Senior Governance and Committee Officer)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jackson and Rana.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business received.

4 ITEMS FOR EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Members noted that there was an item for exclusion of press and public. This was item 13 – Property Growth Fund Performance and Risk Q4 2022/23.

5 MINUTES

Resolved that, subject to the amendments of Item 1 - Apologies, to the effect of adding Councillor Kelly's apologies, the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2023 be approved as a correct record.

6 GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY (GMCA) OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Resolved that the minutes of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee minutes held on 22nd March 2023 be noted.

7 ANNUAL CORPORATE COMPLAINTS REPORT 2022/23

The Committee considered a report of the Customer Feedback Manager which sought to inform of the corporate complaints and comments received during the reporting period for April 2022 until 31st March 2023.

The report author was in attendance to present the information and to respond to the Committee's questions and comments.

The Officer informed that, since the previous year, there had been an increase of 98% in the number of complaints received. 66% of the overall complaints in this reporting period had been upheld with 32% of the overall number of complaints received not upheld and the remainder had been found to be out of scope or withdrawn.

The Officer continued informing that 73% of complaints received in the period in question concerned Environmental Management; Highways was the second highest service for complaints. The majority of complaints had been resolved at stage 1 (i.e.: ten working days) and, on average, it took nine working days to resolve a complaint. For completeness, the Officer informed that 240 compliments had been received in 2022/23.

Members sought and received clarification / commented on the following points:

- How were the complaints/comments received directly by councillors accounted for in this process? The Officer explained that they were separate from formal complaints and were referred to as “service requests”;
- Members noted that it would be very useful to know the number of complaints ward by ward;
- Rochdale Borough Housing and Members having to go through a complaint process in order to submit a service request; a longer term review would be advisable to get a better measure of the issues reported;
- East Middleton – Was there a theme regarding missed bins?
- Complaint by ward – 157 complaints were not related to a ward? Members would like to know the reason for this figure not being linked to a specific area within the Borough.

The Officer would collate all the questions and circulate an email to all members of the Committee with the answers to those questions.

Resolved:

1. That the content of the report be noted;
2. That the Customer Feedback Manager collate the answers to the questions Members raised today and provide the responses via email.

8 2022/23 FINAL OUTTURN REPORT FINANCE UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to a report of the Deputy Chief Finance Officer which sought to inform of the outturn 2022/23 financial position at the end of March 2023.

The Director of Corporate Services / Chief Finance Officer was in attendance to present the information and to answer the questions and comments of the Committee.

The Senior Officer informed that this report had been presented to Cabinet at the end of May 2023 and that its content outlined the Revenue Outturn position and the increase in the budget to Quarter 4, the pressure of Covid-19 pandemic on the Council’s reserves, the Capital expenditure, the Property Growth Fund position and the Treasury Management position.

The Committee’s attention was drawn on table 4.1.1 of the report which showed that the largest overspends had occurred in Adult Social Care and

Children's Services, whereas a large underspend could be seen in the Finance Control element. Underspends could also be seen in Economy, Neighbourhoods, Public Health and Corporate Services, mainly due to staffing vacancies. Covid-19 reserves left in 2022/23 and 2023/24 had been utilised for Children's Social Care staffing.

The Senior Officer informed that the overspend in Children's Services of £3.336 m had been determined by the increased out of the area placements, child protection activity and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transport costs, compared to the projections in the Children's Strategy.

Members queried how many children were being placed out of the Borough? Members were informed that increased in out of area children's placements was a matter that all local authorities in Greater Manchester were facing and the aspiration was to open children's residential placements through the Capital programme through a GM approach / process to support children with complex health issues and more vulnerable children.

Members agreed to ask the Director of Children's Services to attend the next meeting to look at solutions and mitigating actions to address the matter of children's placements.

Resolved:

1. That the content of the report be noted;
2. That the Director of Children's Services be invited to attend the meeting of the Committee in September 2023 to discuss the mitigating actions in relations to children's out of area placements.

9 CORPORATE SERVICES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS DIRECTORATE PLANS 2023-24: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Committee received a progress report of the Director of Corporate Services and of the Interim Director of Neighbourhoods which sought to inform of the position at the end of Quarter 1 (1st April – 30th June 2023) against the targets outlined in the Corporate Services Directorate Plan 2023-24 and in the Neighbourhoods (Corporate Support) Directorate Plan 2023/24.

The Director of Corporate Services /Chief Finance Officer and the Interim Director of Neighbourhoods were in attendance to present the information and to address the questions and comments of the Committee.

The Director of Corporate Services informed that there were four areas whose targets had not been reached yet. These were:

- The Risk Register review which was 90% complete and was going to be submitted to the Corporate Leadership Team for their consideration.
- Relaunch and implementation of the Priority Payment Scheme – officers were confident that the income stream was on target but they wanted to increase it and they would take action through the second quarter;
- Information Governance, Complaints and Communication Strategy – some gaps had been identified and there was some additional work to do;

- Further development of core systems - identified areas in HR payroll which needed to be developed for automation, officers were confident that this action would be completed by the end of the year and system would be up and running by end of March 2024.

The Interim Director of Neighbourhoods informed that there were four areas whose targets had not been reached yet:

- Review and Impact of Sustainability Assessment Tool – there was an issue with Mod.gov and the trial had been extended for two months;
- Establishment of governance framework for community wealth – the consultant had produced a report with 22 recommendations received and advice on how to address community wealth. An action plan was being drafted based on the recommendations;
- Implementation and rolled out of a CRM solution to improve the customer journey when interacting with the Council – a workshop had been held with Members and one with stakeholders was being organised;
- Facilitating the refresh of the Rochdale’s Safety Community Partnership Community Safety Plan - a progress report would be presented at the meeting of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee tomorrow and an action plan was in place.

Members commented that it would be very useful if the CRM system was able to capture both complaints and Members’ casework.

Resolved that the content of the report be noted.

10 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed the work programme for 2023/24.

Members agreed that site visits, such as those carried out during municipal year 2022/23, were very useful.

Members agreed to request site visits at the Upperbanks development site and to the Old Town Hall to see how the works were progressing.

Resolved:

1. That Committee Services approach the relevant directors with the request for site visits for the Committee at the Upperbanks development site and the Old Town Hall.

11 COUNCIL MOTIONS TRACKING

The Committee gave consideration to a report of the Head of Governance which sought to inform of the progress on the actions which had resulted from the motions approved at Full Council during the current municipal year and related outcomes.

Members noted that they would like for the tracker to include additional information such as the ability to access the letters that have been sent as a result of a motion and if there was no progress on a motion, this be stated in the document.

Resolved that the document be noted.

12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the remaining part of the meeting pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that discussions may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

13 PROPERTY GROWTH FUND PERFORMANCE & RISK - Q4 2022/23

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Commercial Finance which sought to inform of the Council's property investments and to highlight the associated risks.

Resolved that the content of the report be noted.