



Date of Meeting	13 th October 2021
Report Author	Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
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Report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Executive Summary

1. This report provides an update on recent activities regarding the corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Key Points for Consideration

So far in 2021/2022 the Committee has had two formal meetings on 22nd June and 14th September 2021 and one informal meeting on 12th July 2021.

22nd June 2021

This meeting was the first 'face to face' meeting of the Committee for about 18 months and it was good to see fellow Councillors in person again, rather than on screen and to welcome some new members to the Committee.

The Committee received two presentations at the meeting. The first related to the Contact Centre. The presentation highlighted current usage of the Contact Centre and how this had been utilised during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and also outlined future development plans, now that the facility has been brought back 'in-house'. Members of the Committee have once more been invited to visit the Contact Centre to observe how it operated in practice.

The second presentation outlined how libraries had adapted and changed to support residents during the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee noted the importance and significance of libraries to local residents and welcomed the offer of further updates as the libraries offer and strategy further developed. We were advised that the Borough Libraries Strategy was due to be refreshed in March 2022 and that the Committee would be part of the consultation process.

Other reports considered by the Committee at this meeting include the financial outturn report for 2020/2021 and the final quarter performance reports of 2020/2021 for the Resources Directorate and the Neighbourhoods Directorate.

14th September 2021

The Committee had a busy and varied agenda for this meeting. Firstly the Committee considered its first call-in for about four years, after two members of the Council had called-in two grant funding decisions, in respect of two local brass bands, that the Pennines Township Committee had made at their most recent meeting. It was good to see the Committee have a detailed debate regarding this and to see both the call-in and the original decision defended by the respective members of Pennines Township. Firstly the Committee agreed that Pennines Township Committee had followed the correct procedures in reaching their decision but due to the specific nature of the two applications, which are due to the preponderance of brass bands in that locality, Members resolved to refer the funding decisions back to the Township Committee for that body to determine. The Committee did though note that Pennines Township, mainly due to its geographical location, receives a relatively large number of funding applications from brass bands, so we recommended that the Cabinet investigate the feasibility of a separate fund being established from which brass bands can make applications to.

The Committee, at this meeting received a presentation regarding proposals to revamp and refresh the Council's Communications Strategy, noting that all employees of the authority would shortly be asked for their views as part of the consultation process on the proposals.

We also received first quarter, 2021/2022, update reports on performance in the Resources and Neighbourhood Directorates, a report that detailed proposals for Council Tax discounts for Care Leavers, details of the latest Financial Update report – which had previously been considered by the Cabinet, a report detailing 'Corporate Complaints' in the second half of 2020/2021 and a report which set out a budgetary timeframe for consideration of the proposed 2022/2023 Council Budget.

Informal Meeting

On 12th July 2021 an informal meeting of the Committee's membership was held to consider a confidential report which detailed the risks associated with property investments made and proposed to be made by and on behalf of the Council. The report was subsequently approved by the Cabinet and it was reassuring that the Cabinet gave due regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration, prior to making their decision. The meeting was informed that the Council held a number of property and non-treasury investments including those derived from its property investment strategy, as set out in the Capital Investment and Disposal Strategy, which had previously been approved at the Budget Council meeting in March 2021.

We look forward to receiving reports/presentations at future meetings regarding the refreshed Digital Strategy, Artificial Intelligence and the evolving 2022/2023 Corporate budget, amongst other things.

Councillor Mike Holly

Chair – Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee