

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY
SELECT COMMITTEE
03/10/2019 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor Ahmad (Chair)
Councillors Phythian, Stretton, Williamson, Haque and Hulme

Also in Attendance:

Mark Stenson	Head of Corporate Governance
Andy Cooper	Senior Finance Manager
Glenn Dale	Head of Environmental Services
Merlin Joseph	Interim Director of Childrens Services
Lori Hughes	Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Byrne.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee held on 22nd August 2019 be approved as a correct record.

6 **MINUTES OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED
AUTHORITY (GMCA) ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH
AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Scrutiny meeting held on 12th July 2019 be noted.

7 **MINUTES OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED
AUTHORITY (GMCA) CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the GMCA Corporate Issues and Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16th July 2019 be noted.

8 **MINUTES OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED
AUTHORITY (GMCA) HOUSING, PLANNING AND
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the GMCA Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11th July 2019 be noted.

9 **CHILDREN'S SERVICES - OFSTED: REVIEW OF
PERFORMANCE RELATED INFORMATION**

The Select Committee gave consideration to a report which provided an overview of the operational and financial performance of Children's Social Care following Ofsted's Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) early in 2019. The findings judged that the authority 'Required Improvement to be Good' across the board in each of the four main assessment criteria. The report focused on the financial investment in Children's Social Care, the current financial position, targeted management actions which supported the implementation of the Children's Social Care Improvement Plan and performance update.

The report recognised that Oldham had an accurate evaluation of social work practice and had well developed plans to transform services secured through a structural investment plan and the pending implementation of a new operating model.

The ILACS mandated the Local Authority created an improvement plan which addressed the key areas highlighted as requiring improvement which culminated in August with Ofsted approval of the Children's Social Care Improvement Plan 2019-2021. The plan, identified individual task and finish activities across the following themes which were tracked within clearly defined governance arrangements:

- Workforce
- Quality of Practice
- Partnerships
- Delivery
- Commissioning
- Assurance

The plan had been backed with significant financial investment in Children's Social Care to address demand and the rising cost of the provision of the full range of services together with additional investment to create an infrastructure that would support the recommendations within the plan.

There had been a dramatic increase in the cost base of Children's Social Care over the last three financial years. The majority of the use of reserves in 2018/19 had supported two short term investments initiatives to facilitate the implementation of the Children's Services Operating Model and Structural Resources Plan in 2019/20. The report detailed the allocation and use of resources to support spending pressures. Areas of overspend and underspend were detailed in the report as well as targeted management actions. Progress towards the implementation of the Improvement Plan, together with financial updates and progress against key indicators, were managed by the Children's Change Board.

A Financial Recovery Group had been established with an associated action plan developed to track any overspending activity across Children's Services. The report highlighted:

- Proactive management activity
- Effort to reduce Out of Borough placements

- Review of spending in the Children with Disabilities and Placement Teams
- Review of Semi-Independence Units
- Review of Costs of the Regional Adoption Agency
- Use of in-house legal provision; and
- Review of operational working arrangements.

Performance related information was highlighted in the report. The report noted that there had been a decrease in demand experienced across a range of key performance areas. Members were informed that where children had been in long-term foster care the carers were being encourage to undertake special guardianship. The number of caseloads per social worker had reduced .

Members referred to the continued overspend in previous years and were informed of measuring being take to address the issue.

The report outlined the current financial position, pressures, underspend and investment along with management actions in place. Members were informed about the work of the Financial Recovery Group, new operating model, recruitment being undertaken. The majority of team managers were now permanent staff and by the end of March 2020 it was anticipated that the workforce would be in a good place. Morale was high. The use of agency staff has reduced, there had been investment in learning and development as well as new accommodation at Met Place. The number of out-of-borough placements was being reduced. Member were informed about the challenge around the Regional Adoption Agency.

Members sought clarification on the Regional Adoption Agency overspend as it had been put into place to save money. It was clarified that there was not an overspend but as the local authority did not manage the budget the income of 'selling' adopters that previously came to the local authority went to the RAA. For the first two years it has been agreed that the Agency would retain any income generated to develop support for the authorities. The RAA had been unable place some children and the local authority had been asked to fund the placement. Going forward surplus would be split across the local authorities.

Members sought clarification if the number of referrals going down was sustainable. Members were informed that this was being taken with caution. The Early Help offer was being developed and likely to reduce demand. The police were implementing a new system which could cause an upsurge in referrals but this was being monitored.

Members asked about the spike in referrals at the beginning of the calendar year and were informed that this could be related to Ofsted and also schools returning after the school holidays with new issues and contacts being made to the local authority.

Members referred to out-of-borough placements and were informed that officers reviewed requests for placements whether they be in-house or out of borough and bear in mind so as not to cause disruption. Work was ongoing on the development of an in-house fostering service and the residential estate being redesigned to have wrap-around services. A number of out-of-borough placements were therapeutic placements. Members were also informed of work with the Virtual School and education provision within a home setting.

Members asked what the service required to become good and then outstanding. Members were informed that to become 'Good' was not just linked to finance but also investment in developing a fit-for-purpose structure.

The following was highlighted to members:

- A new operating model was in place;
- A learning suite developed with a focus on quality;
- A unit undertaking audit activity which included casework and management of caseloads;
- Ensuring procedures were up to date;
- Emerging issues and risks in terms of performance data addressed;
- Work with Stockport Council, who were assessed as Good, and were partners in practice. Best practice was reviewed at other councils.
- The authority did well in educational attainment in Children Looked After.

Capacity and support to social workers was important; team managers were in place, the pan of control had been reduced, a stable skilled workforce would achieve a good outcome. The improvement plan had been signed off within any amendment to be made and would be tested in further inspections. There would be a full inspection in three years but there would be focussed visits in-between.

Members asked that the financial position be kept under review and that a further report be brought back in six months.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report on the operation and financial information related to the Children's Ofsted inspection be noted.
2. The financial position be kept under review and a further report be brought back to the Select Committee in six months.

NOTE: Councillor Phythian left the meeting during this item.

The Select Committee gave consideration to a report which detailed progress on the additional investment to the Street Cleansing Services Clean Street Initiative had made.



Oldham's long-term strategy to tackle fly-tipping and littering recognised that people's behaviour was strongly influenced by a range of factors in their immediate environment and unconscious thought. The approach was designed around clear messaging and information followed by intervention and enforcement. To support this approach, whilst tackling known flytipping hotspots, a proposal had been developed and resources identified to:

- Increase the number of dandy cart operators by 19 to taken on the responsibility in high-density areas and give a high level of visibility to the local community;
- The proposed dandy cart resource would be supported by an additional mobile team to ensure that any collected would be removed in a timely and efficient manner; and
- Enhance the enforcement resource by increasing the number of enforcement officers by three.

Recruitment had taken place and the majority of staff employed were taken from within Oldham Borough through a close working relationship with Get Oldham Working. The roles of the staff included the emptying of public litter bins, fly-tipping removal, routed street cleansing and dedicated area-based teams. The additional staff had complemented the existing workforce and enabled the service to have a more flexible and proactive approach covering 7 days a week. The staff were allocated to areas so they were known in their areas. This had received positive feedback which included submissions to the Council's TOP Awards by members of the public. Members were informed of changes to working whereby enforcement officers, where able, when collecting evidence removed the flytipping. Members were also informed of work with community groups and funding allocated through the Green Dividend.

An independent audit undertaken by Tidy Britain on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs had credited Oldham with a 'Passing Grade'. The result showed that the investment made had taken the Borough to a standard that was national recognised. The Government had requested details on the approach as they examined examples of good practice.

There had been an increase of 211 formal legal enforcement actions since the introduction of additional enforcement staff when compared with the same period in the previous year. Increased enforcement activity brought in additional income and also sent a strong message that the Council was serious about litter, issue fixed penalty notices and ultimately prosecutions.

Cabinet agreed in September 2019 to the introduction of a Fixed Penalty Notice for the specific offence of fly tipping and one for a 'duty of care' offence. These penalty notices were fixed at £400, which was the maximum allowed by legislation.

Members asked about encouraging residents to recycle, information and bins for rented properties. Members were informed that this area did not fall under the Street Cleansing but that work did take place with newcomers including regular literature. There was a transient population in some areas of the borough so the messages would need to be repeated as well as engagement with residents and education with children.

Members asked about unadopted alleyways and were informed that these were effectively the responsibility of residents. There were large areas in town with back to back terraces.

Members commended the service for the work with Get Oldham Working and asked about an apprenticeship approach. Members were informed that this approach had been in place since 1995. There was also a training programme in place to gain the various levels and proceed to full-time positions.

Members asked how people could be educated not to litter. Members were informed of work about recycling in schools through assemblies and smaller groups.

RESOLVED that the report and the improvements made with the additional street clean investment be noted.

11

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 1: REVENUE MONITOR AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2019/20

The Select Committee were provided with an update on the Council's 2019/20 forecast revenue position and the financial position of the capital programme as at 30 June 2019 (Quarter 1) together with the revised capital programme 2019/24 as outlined in the report.

The current forecast revenue position for 2019/20 was a projected deficit variance of £3.805m after allowing for approved and pending transfers to and from reserves. The most significant areas of concern were People and Place, Children's Services and Community Services & Adult Social Care. Action was being taken and would continue for the remainder of the financial year to address variances and take mitigating action as detailed in the report. The overall position was to a limited extent being managed by offsetting favourable variances. Projects were detailed at Annex 1 to the report.

As the financial monitoring report reflected the financial position at Quarter 1, it could be regarded as an early warning of the potential year end position if no corrective action was taken. However, management action had been initiated across all service areas to review and challenge planned expenditure and maximise income. It was anticipated that by the year end, the outturn would be closed to a balanced position and this should be demonstrated in Quarter 2 which would be presented to Cabinet in December and to the Select Committee early in 2020.

Information on the Quarter 1 position for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Collection Fund was outlined in the report. There were currently no significant issues of concern in relation to the HRA, however, the Collection Fund was forecasting an in-year deficit of £480k. The DSG continued to be an area which was faced a financial challenge with a projected deficit increase in 2019/20. Action was being taken with the aim of reducing the cumulative deficit and the DSG brought towards a balanced position.

The report also outlined the most up-to-date capital spending positions for 2019/24 for approved schemes. It was noted that the revised capital programme budget was £77.143m at the close of Quarter 1, a net decrease of £10.346m from the original budget of £84.332m. Actual expenditure to 30 June 2019 was £6.297m (8.16% of the forecast outturn). It was probable that the forecast position would continue to change before the year end with additional re-profiling into future years.

An overview of variances in four key services areas was outlined in the report which included wage related pressures, corporate landlord pressures, traded services and community care. There were additional pressures highlighted related to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Due to the severity of the deficit, a recovery plan had been submitted to the Department for Education. It was unclear what the amounts in the settlement mean at a local level at this point. Management actions and monitoring were in place.

Members commented on the deficit this early in the year. Areas of concern could be reviewed by the Select Committee to address concerns with the relevant members and officers. Education and Adult Services were highlighted.

Members commented that it needed to be recognised that half of the Council's budget had been removed over recent years. The local authority had to set the budget not based on what ought to be spent but based on the amount available to spend. In many cases members and officers were being put into a difficult position to set a budget on the funding available and not what was needed.

Members asked about the pressure from Brexit on adult social care providers. Members were informed that Oldham had a lot of small local providers and contingencies were in place. The settlement did contain funding for adult social care which included the Better Care Fund. Monday had been ringfenced for 2020/21 and there was flexibility in the budget. The authority had the added benefit with MioCare. The continued and additional funding for the Joint Social Care Grant was available to both adults and children.

Members were also advised on the position of the capital grant.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2019/20 Quarter 1 – June 2019 and associated appendices be noted.
2. The Capital Investment Programme Report 2019/20 Quarter 1 – June 2019 and associated appendices be noted.

12 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT - JUNE 2019**

The Select Committee gave consideration to the Corporate Performance Report for Quarter 1 2019/20.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Performance Report be noted.

13 **PERFORMANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Select Committee gave consideration to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee Work Programme for 2019/20.

It was suggested that upon receipt of the SEND Inspection outcomes that a report be brought to the Select Committee on improvements. Members also suggested a report reviewing the Regional Adoption Agency be brought to a future meeting. Members noted that a report on the Value For Money on Health Transformation was due to a future meeting and there would be no Administration Budget Proposals presented to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee Work Programme for 2019/20 be noted.
2. A report be scheduled on the SEND Inspection be provided to a future meeting.
3. A report on the Regional Adoption Agency be provided to a future meeting.

14 **KEY DECISION DOCUMENT**

The Select Committee gave consideration to the Key Decision Document which had been published on 20th September 2019.

RESOLVED that the Council's Key Decision Document be noted.

15 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that the date and time of the next meeting of the Select Committee to be held on Thursday, 7th November 2019 at 6.00 p.m. be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.28 pm