

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD
16/06/2020 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor McLaren (Chair)
Councillors Taylor, Toor, Jacques, Curley, Hamblett (Substitute),
Price and Surjan

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Shah	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Covid-19 Response
Councillor Chadderton	Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Reform
Councillor Ball	Deputy to the Portfolio Holder for Covid-19 Response
Rebekah Sutcliffe	Strategic Director Communities and Reform
Vicky Sugars	Head of Reform
Neil Consterdine	Reform Directorate
Lori Hughes	Constitutional Services
Mark Hardman	Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor
Williamson.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

3 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny
Board held on 3rd March 2020 be approved as a correct record.

6 **MINUTES OF THE GMCA CORPORATE ISSUES AND
REFORM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the GMCA Corporate Issues
and Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th
February 2020 be noted.

7

MINUTES OF THE GMCA ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that the minutes of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8th November 2019 be noted.



8

PLACE BASED INTEGRATION

The Board was reminded that place-based integration was about teams of public services, working in an integrated way, out in communities to better meet the needs of people and those communities. The Board was presented, in the form of a presentation, an update on place-based integration, with a focus on the response to Covid-19.

The Head of Reform advised that in March 2020 the Council had been given a statutory duty to coordinate food, self-care, medical supplies and other forms of necessary assistance to vulnerable groups in response to Covid-19. A Community Bronze Group, established with joint leads from the Council and Action Together, mobilised five Hubs to coordinate food, medicines, mutual aid, volunteering and community intelligence and establish an Emergency Helpline to act as a front door and triage. Behind this was a comprehensive food distribution network led by Oldham Food Bank and Action Together with support wrapped around from the Council and Oldham Community Leisure. The centres were also heavily supported by a volunteer offer.

The Bronze group had quickly recognised a need to go beyond the statutory duties and by week 3 had started to co-ordinate referrals for vulnerable groups from the Helpline and the Hubs to ensure wider needs were being met. The Board was advised of structures established by week 3-4, with a wide range of voluntary, community and faith based groups and public services all connected, including identified referral pathways to relevant supporting bodies and agencies across sectors. Updating for the period from week 3 to the end of May 2020, there had been increases in poverty related referrals and in repeat demand; the identification of the need for support of families with children; identifying instances of social isolation; identification of more complex cases needing ongoing support; a reduction in referrals for mutual aid and support; and more access to information to inform decision making. Calls to the Helpline had dropped, but the complexity of need and repeat calls were increasing; impacts appeared economic, rather than health, related; and demand for early help and mental health services were increasing.

The ongoing experiences arising from the Covid-19 event had provided key learning in several areas related to the place-based integration approach. The importance of this learning in areas such as the need to support the sustainability of the voluntary, community and faith sector, the need to develop a

better public/private sector partnership, and the need to ensure the retention of mutual aid infrastructure was considered within the presentation.



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The Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Reform acknowledged that work undertaken by Officers and partners over the past three months had been impressive, the five geographical areas having performed better than might have been expected and representing a true Team Oldham approach. Going forward there was a wish to return to 'normal' working and Councillors to pick up casework. In this regard there was a need for a conversation around District Teams and, with unemployment likely to rise, the actions that might be taken locally. In response to a query as to whether this meant that staff would return to their original teams, the Strategic Director advised there was a need to use current learning to inform future arrangements. A Member noted that staff in the District Teams had changed their hours to respond to the Covid event, and the date for any return to offices was queried. The Strategic Director advised that Public Health England advice was being followed; this currently suggested January 2021 but the guidance did change over time.

A Member commented that some people had considered that some information had been sent out too late, the Strategic Director advising that on occasion the Hubs had been overtaken by events. The increased demand arising for mental health services was noted, comment being made that young people's services had been stretched before Covid. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that the service needed to respond to the issues now arising. A query was made as to whether calls to the Helpline had indicated whether particular communities needed support. The Board was advised that a database had been developed to identify where calls had come from and the types of support being sought.

With regard to the voluntary, community and faith sector, a Member noted that Covid-related funding streams were open but queried when other funding streams might be re-opened. The Strategic Director advised that the Council had sought contact with bodies with whom there was a contractual arrangement, looking to ensure minimal impact; that where grants were Covid-related there could be flexibilities to explore; and acknowledged that national funding streams were difficult to predict. Members were invited to forward any particular individual issues in this regard.

The Chair referred to a Board Task and Finish Group that had been considering place-based integration to the point of design, but which had not progressed since January 2020 due to Covid: it was acknowledged that the model might look different now. The Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Reform suggested that some time should be taken to gather information and consider future direction, and that Member input should follow this consideration. The Chair however suggested a number of issues to resolve, including how place-based integration was to

work, proposed staffing structures and the role of Co-ordinators that might be considered by Members.



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RESOLVED that -

1. the update provided on Place Based Integration be noted;
2. the Board Task and Finish Group considering Place Based Integration be taken forward.

9

POVERTY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Board were provided with an update on the Poverty Task and Finish Group established to update the Council's Poverty Strategy, the current Strategy having been established in 2010. The new Poverty Strategy was intended to take account of four main points suggested by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation "Talking About UK Poverty 2019/20" report (a copy of which was appended to a submitted report), information from the Local Government Association, work the Council itself was doing and considering how the Council could work with partners.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Covid-19 Response noted that levels of deprivation recorded in Oldham had changed little over the years and, while work to address this had been progressing, much of this work had been impacted upon by Covid-19 which had amplified existing poverty related issues and highlighted issues around resilience. Taking this area of work forward, there was a need to ensure that addressing poverty was at the forefront of all the Council's thinking. To this end, a workshop for senior Councillors, senior Officers and partners was to be held in the following week to ensure that all relevant work was embedded in the place based integration approach, including the need to ensure the voluntary and business sectors were aligned to a whole system approach. The Strategic Director further noted that work was being progressed on the Corporate Plan which would underpin all the work being undertaken. Much joined up work had been developed and achieved during the Covid event which now needed to be joined up in all our processes.

The Chair acknowledged that the situation now was very different to that which existed when the Task and Finish Group terms of reference had been agreed and it was evident that work would need to be undertaken at the local level, suggesting the Group's terms of reference might be reviewed. The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder thanked the Chair for this acknowledgement, noting that the Council faced a massive task and there was a need for all to work towards the same targets to ensure that people's lives changed.

A Member noted that people who were currently furloughed might be made redundant and queried how they could be supported. It was confirmed that this was being considered, acknowledging that some jobs may no longer exist meaning that reskilling would be required. It was important for Council Departments and sectors to be inter-connected to develop information and insights and to be able to put measures in

place. Decisions were difficult before but would be increasingly so going forward meaning that whatever was prioritised needed to be targeted.



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The convening of the Poverty Truth Commission was queried. It was noted that this had been delayed due to Covid, but the importance of listening to those who had lived experience of poverty was recognised and stressed by the Deputy to the Portfolio Holder for Covid-19 Response. The Strategic Director noted that even if the Commission could not progress as originally anticipated, experience could be sought digitally or through some other safe means. A wider equalities Bronze Group had been established to include those with lived experience and common approaches might be adopted.

The Chair noted that the Task and Finish Group would need a membership appointing, and he and Councillors Jacques, Price, Surjan, Taylor and Toor indicated willingness to serve as Group members.

RESOLVED that -

1. the Overview and Scrutiny Board Poverty Task and Finish Group assist in the update of the Council's Poverty Strategy;
2. the terms of reference for the Poverty Task and Finish Group be reviewed in light of the forthcoming Workshop for senior Councillors, senior Officers and partners as reported to the Board by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Covid-19 Response.

10

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019/2020

The Board gave consideration to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20.

The Annual Report outlined the purpose of overview and scrutiny, the roles and responsibilities of the three scrutiny Committees, and a summary of the work undertaken by the overview and scrutiny function in 2019/20. This included the overview and scrutiny of key plans and strategies, internal and external consultations, monitoring of services, motions referred to scrutiny by Full Council and the work of task and finish groups.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20 be commended to Full Council.

11

GENERAL EXCEPTION AND SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

The Board gave consideration to details of those decisions that had been taken under General Exception and Special Urgency provisions since the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

The Board noted that a number of those decisions had been taken in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to authorise support as directed both nationally and locally.

RESOLVED that the decisions as outlined in the report be noted.

12

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Board gave consideration to the proposed Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme for 2020/21, outlining those issues which would be considered by the Board during the municipal year. The Chair asked members to note that the Work programme might require re-working through the year as business related to Covid-19 might be expected to be brought forward.

The Board gave further consideration to an appended report presenting details of the consideration of the Extending the Co-operative Approach to the Use of Council Asset Policy. The Chair noted that of the membership of the Task and Finish Group, only he remained as a Board member. He therefore proposed that the deliberations of the Task and Finish Group, as now presented, be referred to the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet for their consideration.

RESOLVED that -

1. the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2020/21, as presented, be noted;
2. the deliberations of the Extending the Co-operative Approach to the Use of Council Asset Policy Task and Finish Group be referred to the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet for their consideration.

13

KEY DECISION DOCUMENT

RESOLVED that the Key Decision Document published on 1st June 2020 be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.50 pm