

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY

SELECT COMMITTEE

01/10/2020 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor Ahmad (Chair)
Councillors Phythian (Vice-Chair), Stretton, Salamat, Byrne,
Haque, Harkness and Shuttleworth

Also in Attendance:

Anne Ryans	Director of Finance
Mark Stenson	Head of Corporate Governance
Andy Cooper	Senior Finance Manager
Lori Hughes	Constitutional Services
Julia Veall	Director of Workforce and Organisational Design
Sian Walter-Browne	Principal Constitutional Services Officer
Naaira Zaman	Performance Improvement Lead

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

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 PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Performance and Value for Money Select Committee meeting held on 27th August 2020 be approved as a correct record.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes from the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10th July 2020 be noted.

7 **MINUTES OF THE GMCA HOUSING, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the GMCA Housing, Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 29th July 2020 be noted.

8 **COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT JUNE 2020**

The Select Committee gave consideration to a report which presented a review of the Council performance as at June 2020.

The presentation of performance commenced with the provision of an 'Oldham Profile in Numbers' comprising basic data in respect of population, housing, education, crime, income and benefits, household information, health, and community in the Borough. Performance against each of the three corporate objectives of an Inclusive Economy, Thriving Communities and Co-operative Services was then reported. It was noted that 21 measures had achieved their target, 5 were within tolerance and 6 were currently outside tolerance. A review of achieve-ability against corporate performance measures was undertaken in May to identify the impact of Covid-19 on reporting. This resulted in 23 Corporate Performance measures being temporarily suspended, 5 measures no longer reported corporately and replaced with 8 new measures. The measures which had been suspended owing to the impact of Covid-19 were highlighted at Appendix VI.

The performance measures and the associated risks were considered in more detail at Appendices I, II, III and IV of the report as submitted.

Members were advised that this was the performance for the first quarter, 1 April to 30 June – and some data had changed in the interim period. Those measures which had been suspended as outlined at Appendix VI had been agreed with the relevant portfolio holders. Members were provided updated information related to unemployment figures. Members were also informed of measures and business plans being reviewed as a result of Covid-19. Members noted the time lost to sickness was lower than the same time last year. Targets which had not been met by 5% were highlighted which included M501 waste collections; M640 – Percent of 16 – 17 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET); M619b Care Leavers in Not in Education, Employment or Training; M941 – child entering care and moving in with adoptive family; M980 – Highways Classified Network Condition and S370 – Time taken to process Council Tax Reduction which had been impacted by Covid-19. Members noted the improvement in performance M715 Annual EHCP (SEND) Statutory Reviews as a result of improved communications and adaptation to new ways of working.

Members expressed concern related to the list at Appendix VI which had been suspended and highlighted the Council Tax and Business collection rates and expressed disappointment that these were not being monitored. Members were assured that the position was being monitored by the Cabinet member and relevant officers who received weekly updates. Payment holidays had been offered earlier in the year whilst in lockdown. Payments would begin from July and August. Payments had also been rescheduled and reprofiled and this would impact on the performance of collection.

Members raised the issue on reasons for employees leaving. This would be discussed at a later agenda item.

Members asked about the attainment in Key Stage 2 attainment in reading and writing and breakfast clubs. Members were informed that Key Stage 2 was being monitored but data was not obtainable as the information for the academic year had not been published. Internal monitoring had continued. Information related to breakfast clubs would have to be reported following the meeting when information was available.

Members asked about the processing of council tax and enforcement. Members were informed that there had been an increase in the number of people claiming reduction which had created a backlog and additional staff brought in. With regard to enforcement, revised arrangements had been in place during the pandemic which should have minimised the impact on any one whose claim had been delayed. Letters and other notifications were now being sent and the Magistrates Courts process in line with national instructions.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Corporate Performance Report June 2020 be noted.
2. The information and updates provided at the meeting be noted.

9

FINANCE UPDATE - REVENUE MONITOR AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2020/21 (MONTH 4 - JULY 2020)

The Select Committee gave consideration to a report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the Council's 2020/21 forecast revenue budget position and the financial position of the capital programme as at 31 July 2020 (Month 4) together with the revised capital programme 2020/2025. The report was included as part of the Cabinet agenda for the meeting to be held on 28th September 2020.

The report was presented which enabled the Select Committee to continue its review of the financial position of the Council. The report also presented the current forecast revenue outturn position for 2020/21 together with that of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Collection Fund.

The Select Committee were reminded that in addition to the Month 3 monitoring information presented at the meeting on 27 August 2020, the report had provided an update on the most recent:

- COVID related unringfenced revenue grants received
- COVID related ringfenced revenue grants received
- Other ringfenced revenue grants
- Other unringfenced revenue grants
- Capital grants including those received since April

The figures in the Month 4 report were an update on this position within the COVID related funding gap reducing to £15.556m.

Members were advised of the changes from Month 3 as presented to the Select Committee in August to Month 4. The report highlighted the impact on individual portfolios. The information in the report was that prior to receipt of compensation from the Government and the authority was in the process of submitted a return. Figures would be included in future monitoring reports. Members were advised of the continued pressure in Adults and Children's Services. Corporate actions had been put in place to alleviate as much pressure as possible. Members were also advised that there had been little movement in the capital programme.

Members sought clarification at Section 2.3 and the overspend forecast at Month 4. Members were advised of the difficulty in planning for future years until the funding statement was made. Members were informed that budget options were being investigated and the challenge in predicting what was happening around the pandemic nationally and locally. Two significant events would be the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Local Government Financial Settlement. Every local authority was in the same position with regard to not knowing the detail. The reliance on reserves was noted and that resilience was important. The authority did have a reasonable level of reserves, but these could only be used once.

Members asked about the ability to recover overspends. Members were advised that services were demand led and presented challenges especially at times of uncertainty. Activities were being undertaken to reduce financial pressures. Work was also ongoing with services.

Members were advised of reprofiling on the capital programme.

RESOLVED that the financial position of the Council as presented in the report be noted.

10

EMPLOYEE ATTENDANCE, WORKFORCE COVID RESPONSE AND FIT FOR OLDHAM PROGRAMME

Members were provided an update on employee attendance, Workforce COVID Response and the Fit for Oldham Programme.

Members were provided information related to sickness absence performance in 2019/20 and for the currently financial year. The current sickness absence at the end of August 2020 stood at 3.2 working days per full time and if current absence trends continued, the year-end outturn would be 7.8 days. Covid-19 (diagnosed or self-diagnosed) was accountable for 5.3% of sickness absence.

The turnover rate in 2019/20 was 12.7% compared to in year turnover at the end of August at 12.2%.

Members were informed of workforce welfare which had been developed in response to Covid-19 in recognition of increasing

pressures on both mental and physical health. Members were also provided information on working arrangements whereby Covid-19 absence was recorded separately, the introduction of paid self-isolation leave and the introduction of paid time off if the employee was a main carer for someone with Covid-19. Members were provided information related to Covid-19 risk assessments and future plans which included use of buildings and embracing new ways of working.

Members were advised of the Team Oldham Workforce Strategy 2020-2023 Objectives and Employee Attendance management programme objectives. Members were also informed of the growing Fit for Oldham Offer.

Members were advised that the trend in the reduction of sickness was the same across Greater Manchester and other local authorities.

Members referred to the reduction in sickness and the consideration of productivity, addressing mental health and any permanent moves to work from home. Members were informed of work to achieve the right balance and also social interaction. Staff were constantly asked about mental health and there were those who struggled with isolation. Some staff had come back into the working environment with colleagues. Some team meetings had been held whilst adhering to government guidelines. The right balance was constantly reviewed. Some staff were struggling working from home and it the younger staff this affected this most. The authority would need to be careful in addressing what was right for staff as well as reducing costs.

In terms of staff turnover which was 12.7%, this was lower than most authorities. Staff were relatively happy. Turnover in some areas was high which could be due to restructures. A better understanding of staff leaving was needed and was to be put in place.

Members sought information on working arrangements around Covid and asked about support for staff. Members were informed the support offered which included mental health first aiders, occupational health and the employee assistance programme. There was also advice and support on the intranet. Covid absences were recorded separately. The authority was sympathetic to staff with childcare and other caring responsibilities. All managers were completing risk assessments, particularly for high risk roles. The authority was also ensuring staff had the correct Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). Staff had been asked to undertake home risk assessments. Staff had been allowed to take equipment home if needed. A handbook had been introduced which included best practice guidance. Staff in buildings were following social distancing rules and sanitiser stations had been put in place.

The Workforce Strategy had been approved and would support staff over the next three years. Members were advised that 46% of staff were over the age of 50 and investment in junior

staff needed. Communications were provided to staff which included emphasis on wellness, not just sickness.

Members made an observation on the opportunities for employees to move upward and better career paths. Staff would want to know what the opportunities were if they stayed with the Council. Members were informed for future challenges and the need for the retention of young talent. Members were informed that improvement to the apprentice offer was being looked at as well as entry level jobs.

Employee attendance had improved and some staff had found a benefit working from home. Managers had been good at making changes. There were improvements to be made to referrals to the assistance programme and referrals to physiotherapy had proved beneficial. The Fit for Oldham offer had been important over the last few months but had changed as face-to-face could not be offered. Activities focused on mental health or social isolation. There was work to be done to increase the offer, there were not as many men taking up the opportunities and activity needed to be geared around the diverse needs of the work force.

Members queried communications with staff and were informed there were a number of general communications that included an email to all staff sent out regularly, special communications in-between, newsletters sent to managers on Fridays with key messages and arrangements with managers that for those staff without access to email to be given the messages. In addition, the Chief Executive and other had vlogs and blogs. Internal communications were being reviewed to ensure it was as engaging as possible.

Members queried the information related to percentages on days absent, highlighting Friday and Monday and asked if this was related to holidays. This information was not readily available and would be sent after the meeting. Members would also be provided information related to exit interviews and reasons for leaving.

RESOLVED that the update on Employee Attendance, Workforce Covid Response and the Fit for Oldham Programme be noted.

11

KEY DECISION DOCUMENT

The PVFM Select Committee gave consideration to the latest published Key Decision Document.

RESOLVED that the Key Decision Document be noted.

12

PVFM SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The PVFM Select Committee gave consideration to the Committee's work programme and informed of amendments for receipt of reports.



Oldham
Council

RESOLVED that the PVFM Select Committee Work Programme be noted.

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DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the date and time of the next Performance and Value For Money Select Committee to be held on Thursday, 12th November 2020 at 6.00 p.m. be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.14 pm