

=PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23/03/2023 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor Ahmad (Chair)
Councillors Byrne, Islam and Kenyon

Also in Attendance:

Andy Cooper	Senior Finance Manager
Julie Daniels	Director of Childrens Services
Jonathan Downs	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy
Matt Bulmer	Assistant Director, Childrens Services Integration
Paul Rogers	Constitutional Services
Anne Ryans	Director of Finance
Tony Shepherd	Assistant Director Education and Early Years
Jake Womack	Sacre Consultatnt, Penine Learning
Alistair Ross	Sacre Consultant, Penine Learning

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bashforth, Hussain, Rea and Shuttleworth.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Byrne declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 9 – Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education as she had been appointed as the Council’s representative on the Board.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions for the Committee to consider.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

6 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER THREE 2022/23**

The Committee scrutinised a report which presented a review of the Council performance for the third quarter of 2022/23 (April 2022 to March 2023). The Committee was invited to examine areas on under performance and where appropriate recommend remedial action. The Committee was asked to note areas of good performance.

The Council’s Corporate Performance report (CPR) monitored the delivery of business plan actions, risks and measures against Corporate Priorities. The CPR provided a breakdown by each corporate priority area and included further details on any

exceptions. The Council continued to monitor and to plan for, the impact of both internal influences (e.g staff capacity) and external factors including increased demand due to cost of living, reduction in resources, changes in legislation and policies on all its services



The Committee was informed of the following regarding actions during the third quarter:

Members were informed that

12 actions were certain to achieve target
24 actions were likely to achieve
11 were unlikely to achieve
27 no prediction

- 89% (164/184) of actions are on track or completed
- 71% (103/145) of risks are low, very low or closed; less than 2% (2/145) are high
- 77% (40/52) of targeted measures are on or within target
- 77% (36/47) of measures with end of year targets are predicted to achieve them.
- These figures are as expected for the third quarter of the reporting year

Members were informed that each business plan measure is aligned to one of the five corporate priorities or is designated as a service specific measure.

The infographic on Page 3 of Appendix A (attached to the report) gives an overview of progress against each priority and shows the Council is on track in most areas.

A summary of the Council's business plan achievements against corporate priorities in 2022/23 will be provided with the Q4 report.

Pages 4-14 of Appendix A give an overview of progress against business plan measures within each service area and shows green areas – Actions and Risks on track, and red areas where risks are raised.

It was emphasized to Members that the Council is still operating in the context of the cost of living crisis and the impact of Covid cannot be underestimated.

A Member referred to Performance measure M498 (C) which indicated 100 per cent compliance and it is evident that some street lights in the Borough are unlit.

Members were informed that a formal response would be sought and reported back to this Committee regarding the street lighting EON contract.

A Member drew attention to M333a (C) - Percentage of Council Spend in Oldham where there was no description of any Action.

Members were informed that a formal response on the action being taken would be reported to the next meeting on this Committee.

Resolved: That

1. the Committee notes the progress in implementing current business plans;
2. the Committee notes the comments on progress, in particular the narrative that relates to any red measures;
3. the Committee notes the interconnection of the actions with ongoing activities in other portfolio areas and key projects such as Cost of Living Response and Don't Trash Oldham.
4. Celebrates the areas of good or improving performance.
5. reports on the performance response relating to the Street lighting contract with EON and, where there was no description of any Action Percentage of Council Spend in Oldham be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee.

7

REVENUE MONITOR AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2022/23 QUARTER 3

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Finance which provided the Committee with an update on the Council's 2022/23 forecast revenue budget position at Annex 1 of the report and the financial position of the capital programme as at 31 December 2022 (Quarter 3) together with the revised capital programme 2022/23 to 2027/28, as outlined in section two of the report at Annex 2 of the report. The report was presented to and approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 20 March 2023.

Revenue Position

The forecast outturn position for 2022/23 was a projected deficit variance of £1.280m after allowing for approved and pending transfers to and from reserves. An operational deficit of £2.055m reduced by £0.775m with the anticipated effect of management actions and strengthened restrictions in relation to expenditure and recruitment. Whilst improving, it was recognised that this remained a challenging position and every effort would be made to further reduce the overall variance before the year end.

The position included additional costs and pressures that had been identified by the Authority in this financial year because of the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were currently two areas which continued to experience significant pressures attributed to the on-going impact of the pandemic; Community Health and Adult Social Care was reporting an

adverse variance of £5.717m and Children's Social Care was recording £3.555m. These pressures were being offset against a corporate provision of £12.000m COVID-19 Legacy funding which was set aside during the 2022/23 budget setting process specifically to mitigate the on-going costs of the pandemic. The residual balance of £2.728m was being used to reduce the operational pressure. This would be monitored for the remainder of the financial year with action taken to address variances and take mitigating action as detailed in the report.

An update on the major issues driving the projections was detailed within Annex 1 of the report.

The forecast pressure of £1.280m at Quarter 3 was a £0.953m decrease to the adverse position of £2.233m reported at month 8 and forecasted the impact of, as previously reported, the management actions that had been strengthened across all service areas to review and challenge planned expenditure, control recruitment and to maximise income.

Information on the Quarter 3 position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Collection Fund was also outlined in the report.

Against a generally improving position, the DSG was forecasting an unchanged in-year surplus of £3.287m, which reverses the deficit brought forward leaving a forecast year-end surplus of £0.514m. Action would continue to be taken with the aim of mitigating cost pressures and delivering and maintaining a surplus position. To assist, Oldham had been invited by the Government to take part in the Delivering Better Value in SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Programme which would provide dedicated support for the SEND Review reforms to 55 Local Authorities with historical DSG deficit issues with the aim of putting the DSG of participating Authorities on a more financially sustainable footing. Working with partners, detailed work had commenced on compiling the grant application for submission in late June/ early July.

There were currently no significant issues of concern in relation to the HRA.

The Collection Fund was forecasting an in-year surplus of £0.060m which in turn contributed to an estimated surplus of £4.179m being carried forward into 2023/24. The Collection Fund had been particularly volatile largely because of COVID-19. Whilst currently in surplus, the position would continue to be closely monitored as any surplus or deficit at the end of the financial year would have a direct budgetary impact in future financial years.

Capital Position

The report outlined the most up to date capital spending position for 2022/23 to 2027/28 for approved schemes. The most recent estimated revised capital programme budget for 2022/23 was £50.361m, a net decrease of £49.887m from the original budget

of £100.248m. The most recently recorded expenditure level was £44.073m (87.51% of the forecast outturn). It was likely that the forecast position would continue to change as the year draws to a close with additional re-profiling into future years.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the financial position of the Council as presented in the report.

8

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND FINANCE UPDATE MARCH 2023

The Committee received an update to a previous report to the committee on 10 February 2022 titled 'Children's Services - update on Financial Performance and Improvement Plan' on progress in relation to Children's Social Care improvement plans and financial performance.

The current financial position of Children's Social Care is a forecast pressure of £13,171k after the planned use of £851k of reserves. The variance comprises a pressure in relation to COVID expenditure of £3,555k and a business as usual overspend of £9,616.

The Getting to Good programme continues to drive improvements in compliance performance in Children's Social Care. The programme has expanded its focus to include specific actions and support to drive improvements in the quality of social work and early help practice.

A relaunched Children's Transformation Programme, supported by the recent £14.7m investment, targets transformational change in six strategic areas. The programme has made quick progress and has direct oversight from the Chief Executive's Strategy Group.

The Children's Social Care service continues to experience significant sustained volumes and complexity of demand demonstrating the impact of contextual factors facing families in Oldham. Service leaders have responded by recruiting additional capacity across the workforce in order to reduce caseloads to be able to provide timely and sufficiently intensive support and intervention work with children, young people and families.

Regarding the recruitment of Social Workers, Members were informed that the Council is experiencing challenging times with this issue. Staff being recruited at a junior level, being trained and the service is then losing those people to Agencies. The Council is having to employ Agency staff at an additional cost as a consequence. The Council is then addressing staff retention and has put in place a package which provides competitive rates of pay and conditions whereby caseloads are not excessive together with positive support from management.

Resolved: That the Committee notes the report and progress to date.

9

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

This annual report is prepared by Oldham SACRE. SACRE as a body is required to advise the Local Authority on matters relating to Religious Education and Collective Worship. The report provides a picture of the support given for Religious Education and Collective Worship during 2021-22. The report is a public document which is also sent to the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and the Department for Education.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10

REPEAT REFERRALS IN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The Committee scrutinised a report which gave an update to a previous report to the committee on 10th February 22 titled 'Children's Social Care re-referrals' on the repeat referral performance, key challenges impacting on the performance indicator and the service response for improvement.

This report considers the current challenges across the Children's Social Work Service, focusing in particular on the variable trajectory of repeat referrals within the last six months. A re-referral relates to a family who has received two or more referrals through to Children's Social Care services within a twelve-month period.

Members were informed that since April 2022 re-referrals has shown a consistent upward trajectory throughout 2022.

A new model of practice was launched recently in the multi-agency safeguarding hub. The council have commissioned Professor David Thorpe to support a relational model of practice, encouraging partners to contact the hub by telephone, and not email. This will provide greater opportunities to discuss a professional's concern for a child and/or family to encourage a conversation about who is best placed to provide support and intervention. The model has been implemented across other Northwest Authorities and is reported to have reduced demand through to Children Services by up to 30%. We are hopeful that by implementing this approach, this will reduce unnecessary statutory intervention for those families who often go on to receive no further action following assessment.

Even today there is a positive feedback.

Members suggested that update reports be submitted to future meetings of this Committee showing the impact of the new model.



Resolved: That

1. the Committee notes the report and progress to date; and
2. update reports be submitted to future meetings of this Committee setting out the impact the new model has made on referrals.

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**PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK
PROGRAMME 2022/23**

The Committee received a report detailing the Committee's Work Programme for 2022/23.

Resolved:

That the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2022/23 be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.35 pm