



Present: Councillor McLaren (Chair)
Councillors Aslam, Harkness, Hughes, Iqbal, Kenyon
(Substitute) and Rustidge

Also in Attendance:

Abdul Jabbar MBE	Cabinet Member for Value for Money & Sustainability
Sarah Johnston	Oldham MBC
Shelley Kipling	Assistant Chief Executive
Steve Hughes	Assistant Director Strategy and Performance.
Fran Lautman	Customer Development Manager
Lee Walsh	Finance Manager - Capital and Treasury
Kirsty Adderley	Complaints Manager
James Mulvaney	Policy Manager
Andrew Mather	Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ibrahim, Lancaster, Moores and Williamson (Councillor Kenyon substituting)

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.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS GOVERNANCE, STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY BOARD MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2024 be approved as a correct record.

6 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1, 2024/25**

The Assistant Director Strategy & Performance submitted the Corporate Performance Report (CPR) which provided an overview of corporate performance against agreed service business plan measures for the 2024/25 Q1 period (April – June). Historically, a full CPR has gone to the Governance, Strategy and Resources (GSR) Scrutiny Board; however, now there were four Scrutiny Boards, it was more appropriate that the constituent parts go to the appropriate meeting to enable more in depth analysis and discussion of the CPR alongside other associated reports. The CPR report for this Scrutiny Board contained information for the following service areas: Communications & Research; Customer Services; Finance;

In respect of Customer Services it was reported that two areas were currently not meeting performance targets, ‘% of calls answered’ which was just under target and improving and ‘Complaints responded to within timescales’ which was significantly below target performance and had worsened since the previous quarter. Officers outlined the reasons for the decline and steps which were being taken to improve performance. It was also reported that Customer Services were performing above target in several areas including ‘Average call wait times’.

Finance was reported to be performing well against its key metrics, with the processing of Housing Benefits, council, tax reductions and claims significantly above target. Improvement in the ‘Percentage of in-year Council Tax collected’ target was highlighted as an area for development.

In respect of Procurement two areas for development were highlighted ‘Percentage Council spend in Oldham’ and ‘Total amount spent in LOCAL supply chain through the contract (OT18)’. Members commented on the importance of spending within the District wherever possible.

Members noted that in respect of Human Resources & Organisational Development whilst there were no specific targets but that staff turnover had increased and sickness absence reduced.

IT(Operations) were reported to be operating at above target on the majority of their key metrics including a 99.6 Customer satisfaction score against a target of 80%. However, two metrics were underperforming, ‘breached tickets’ and ‘LAN availability- Civic Centre’. Officers explained that this was mainly due to office move and staff vacancies.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the progress in implementing the business plan objectives.
2. The areas of consistent good performance and improvements be welcomed.
3. Comments on progress be noted.
4. Areas for further development and action to improve below target metrics be noted.

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REVENUE MONITOR AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2024/25 MONTH 4

The Director of Finance submitted a report providing the Scrutiny Committee with an update as at 31 July 2024 (Month 4) of the Council’s 2024/25 forecast revenue budget position and the financial position of the capital programme together with the revised capital programme 2024/25 to 2028/29.

In respect of the revenue position the forecast overspend position based on the Month 4 profiled budget is £7.202m which if not addressed would result in a year-end overspend of £21.065m (£26.033m at month 3). This financial monitoring report follows on from the position reported at Month 3 and should be used as a warning of the potential year- end position if no further action is taken to reduce net expenditure. The management actions already implemented for 2024/25 have been factored into the Month 4 forecasts and this has resulted in a reduction in the position previously reported. Work would continue across the organisation to address this position and it is anticipated that by the year end, the current outturn deficit position should reduce even further.

In respect of the Capital position The report outlined the most up to date capital spending position for 2024/25 to 2028/29 for approved schemes. The revised capital programme budget for 2024/25 was £103.935m at the close of month 4 (£101.680m at Month 3), a net increase of £2.255m. Actual expenditure to 31 July 2024 was £17.397m (16.74% of the forecast outturn). It was likely that the forecast position will continue to change throughout the year with additional re-profiling into future years.

RESOLVED:

1. The contents of the report be noted.
2. To note the forecast profiled budget, being an adverse position of £7.202m at Month 4 and the forecast potential adverse position by year end of £21.065m, with mitigations in place to reduce expenditure.
3. To note the revised capital programme for 2024/25 including the proposed virements and the forecast for the financial years to 2028/29 as at Month 4 as outlined in Annex 2 of the report.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN - ANNUAL REPORT

Head of Customer and Digital Experience and Director of Legal submitted a joint report on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review of Complaints 2023/24. The draft report had been considered at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee which had requested a further report to this meeting to share steps taken to improve dealing with complaints and timescales.

In 2023/24, the LGSCO received 71 complaints/ enquiries relating to Oldham Council, an increase from 59 in 2022/23. Despite the increase, the overall number of contacts the LGSCO received regarding Oldham Council remains relatively low when compared to the number of contacts the Complaints Team receives from residents.

In total, the LGSCO issued 72 decisions relating to Oldham Council in 2023/24. The majority of cases were not taken forward for detailed investigation but of the 14 cases that were taken forward, fault was found in 12 cases, giving an upheld rate of 86%.

The Council had already identified a suitable remedy in 42% of the upheld cases, a good indication that the Council was receptive to feedback and identified appropriate ways to put things right.

The LGSCO's Annual Review showed that in 2023/24, the overall upheld rate for similar authorities nationally was 80%, and across the Greater Manchester authorities, the average upheld rate was 85%.

The report went on to outline actions that have been taken, or are in progress, to help reduce the risk of the issues complained of occurring again in the future:

- The findings of LGSCO decisions have been shared with management from relevant services in order learning can be considered and shared.
- A review of the non-residential charging policy and accompanying staff guidance within Adult Social Care is ongoing.
- A range of booklets providing information on Adult Social Care charges has been produced.
- The local policy for Approved Mental Health Practitioners has been reviewed and training has been provided to relevant staff.
- The s117 policy has been reviewed alongside colleagues from Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust.
- The Revenues service has ensured that relevant staff are aware of when to accept payment arrangements and signpost for additional support.
- Staff within the Revenues service have also been reminded of the process to follow when residents request that their call is escalated.
- The Housing service has refreshed training to ensure staff are aware of relevant policies, procedures and timescales.
- The Revenues service has revised wording in standard correspondence to provide greater clarity regarding the cancellation of summons costs.

RESOLVED:

That the report and actions that have been taken, or are in progress, to help reduce the risk of the issues complained of occurring again in the future be noted.

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THE OLDHAM PLAN UPDATE

The Assistant Director Strategy and Performance submitted a presentation giving an update on the Oldham Plan. The Oldham Plan is a partnership approach to developing a long term vision for Oldham which reflect the aspirations and priorities of our residents and which would act as a roadmap for delivering the borough's ambitions to 2030. The title of the plan will be 'Pride in Oldham, Together'.

The presentation provided feedback following extensive engagement and consultation with partnership organisations

concerning the content of the plan. In relation to Housing key requirements were: to increase housing supply; ensure safe and secure housing; identify sites for housing development; and a commitment to net zero by 2030.



In respect of Economy and Employment partners had identified the following themes: regeneration and investment; encouraging the green economy; inclusive growth; developing the night-time economy and leisure; and supporting business and innovation.

In Education partners had offered feed back on what they would want to see included to support: Early years; Post 16 education and training; skills for the future; and school improvement and attainment.

In Health and Wellbeing partners had offered feedback on developing the plans in relation to: Prevention through early intervention; supporting independent living; access to healthy food, green spaces and recreation; and supporting care leavers.

In relation to Public Spaces and Community Safety, partners had provided feedback on: encouraging community reporting of fly-tipping and empowering communities to take ownership of their local environment; Regeneration; youth crime prevention and public transport.

Members suggested that the four Scrutiny Board could usefully look at the themes, one at a time, in more detail as appropriate to each Board. The Chair suggested that the Scrutiny Steering Group could look at including this in Scrutiny Board work programmes.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

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WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Board considered its Work Programme for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

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KEY DECISION DOCUMENT

The Scrutiny Board considered the Key Decision Document which records key decisions that the authority is due to take.

RESOLVED: That the Key Decision Document be noted.

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RULE 13 AND 14

The Chair reported that he had agreed, under Rule 13, to the Shareholder Committee meeting held on 3rd October 2024 considering an item of urgent business in private on the grounds that discussions may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.05pm

