

GOVERNANCE, STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY BOARD
04/12/2024 at 6.00 pm



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

Also in Attendance:

Cllr Taylor Cabinet Member for Decent Homes
Cllr Dean Cabinet Member for Thriving
Communities & Culture

Cllr Al-Hamdani
Sarah Johnston Oldham MBC
Chris Kelsall PFI Contracts Advisor
Lee Walsh Finance Manager - Capital and
Treasury

Steve Hughes Assistant Director Strategy and
Performance

Fran Lautman Customer Development Manager
Andrew Mather Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors
Harkness, Lancaster, Moores and Williamson.

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**

In respect of Minute 9 Work Programme 2024/25 Councillor
Kenyon pointed out that the agreed inclusion in the Work
programme of a workshop on contract monitoring had not been
included in the minutes.

The Governance Officer apologised for any omission in the
minutes and that after checking the work programme would be
updated accordingly.

RESOLVED that Councillor Kenyon's comments be noted and
the minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2024 be
otherwise approved as a correct record.

6 **HOUSING COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

The Head of Customer and Digital Experience submitted a report providing details of the number of complaints handled via the Oldham Council Tenants Housing Complaints Policy from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.



It was reported that the majority of the Council's housing stock was managed through PFI contracts with Housing 21 and Inspiral Oldham. Housing 21 managed 1429 properties under the PFI contract, and Inspiral Oldham managed 627 properties. Throughout the term of these contracts, the Council was landlord of the properties but Housing 21 and Inspiral Oldham were responsible for maintenance and management, including complaint handling.

The Oldham Council Tenants Housing Complaints Policy followed the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The policy outlined a 2 stage process. Complaints received were initially responded to at Stage 1 of the process. If the complaint not resolved to the tenant's satisfaction, they may request that it be escalated to Stage 2 of the process. Should a tenant be dissatisfied with how the Council has handled their complaint, they retain the right to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman (the Ombudsman).

During 2023/24, Oldham Council's Complaints Team did not receive any complaints from tenants directly.

Inspirial Oldham received 12 stage 1 complaints from tenants of PFI properties during this reporting period and 3 stage 2 complaints.

Housing 21 received 8 stage 1 complaints from tenants of PFI properties and 0 stage 2 complaints.

The main themes identified from the complaints made to Inspiral Oldham and Housing 21 included repairs and property maintenance, grounds maintenance and customer experience.

No decisions were issued by the Housing Ombudsman in 2023/24 in respect of the properties owned by Oldham Council.

In response to questions from members it was reported that the Housing Ombudsman had strict criteria for the operation of the complaints process including the way in which the process was advertised.

Members were invited to contact the Housing Contracts Manager regarding any housing complaints that they received and that these would be raised with the contractors.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

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CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2

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 Q2 period (July to September 2024). The CPR report for this Scrutiny Board contained information for the following service areas: Communications & Research; Customer Services; Finance; Procurement; Human Resources & Organisational

Development; and IT (Operations). Each services performance was assessed using a number of Key Performance indicators (KPIs) .Where KPIs had performance targets these were assessed as either 'Green' performing above target; 'Amber' performing less than 5% below target; or 'Red' performing at 5%or more below target.

In respect of Communications and Research there were 9 KPIs without set targets. The report highlighted progress which was being made in respect of four of these KPIs: Increasing pride in the borough; Increase resident satisfaction with Council Communications; Improving two-way engagement with our workforce; and Managing key reputational issues.

In respect of Customer Services it was reported that there were 12 Key performance indicators (KPIs) 4 KPIs had set targets of which 2 were 'Green', 1 'Red' and 1 'Amber', a further 8 KPIs were without set targets.

In respect of Human Resources and Organisational Development it was reported that there were 10 KPIs without set targets. The report highlighted three areas for further development: Number of vacancies advertised; New Starters; and, Employee Relations Cases. A Member commented that it would be useful for the Scrutiny Board to have a list of all of the KPI's for the service. A member also requested that a breakdown of the reasons given for leaving also be provided.

In respect of IT Services it was reported that there were 10 KPIs, 9 of which were 'Green' performing above target. 1 KPI 'Breached Tickets' was 'Red' performing below target but with an improving trend.

In Respect of Finance there were 8 key Metrics. Of the 6 metrics with set targets 4 were 'Green' with 2 'Housing Benefits - Average time to process change in circumstances', and 'Council Tax Reduction -Average time to process change in circumstances' performing significantly above target. However, 'Council Tax Reduction -Average time to process new claims' was 'Red' averaging an additional 10 days on the target of 20 days. The metric 'Valid invoices paid within 30 days' was 'Amber' 3.5% below target.

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.

REVENUE MONITOR AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2024/25 QUARTER 2

The Director of Finance submitted a report providing the Scrutiny Committee with an update as at 30 September 2024 (Month 6) 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 budget the forecast overspend position based on the Month 6 profiled budget was £9.956m which if not addressed would result in a year-end overspend of £19.912m (£21.065m at Month 4). This financial monitoring report follows on from the position reported at Month 4 and provided a warning of the potential year-end position if no further action was taken to reduce net expenditure. The management actions already implemented for 2024/25 had been factored into the Month 6 forecasts and that had resulted in a reduction in the position previously reported. Work was continuing across the organisation to address the position and it was anticipated that by the year end, the current outturn deficit position should have reduced even further. An update on the Month 6 2024/25 position was detailed within Annex 1 of the submitted report.

In respect of the Capital budget 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 is £99.505m at the close of Quarter 2 (£103.935m at Month 4), a net reduction of £4.430m. Actual expenditure to 30 September 2024 was £31.222m (31.38% of the forecast outturn).

RESOLVED:

1. The contents of the report be noted.
2. To note the forecast profiled budget, being an adverse position of £9.956m at Quarter 2 and the forecast potential adverse position by year end of £19.912m, with mitigations in place to reduce expenditure.
3. To note the revised reserves policy for 2024/25 as detailed at Appendix 2 of Annex 1.
4. The revised capital programme for 2024/25 including the proposed virements and the forecast for the financial years to 2028/29 as at Quarter 2 as outlined in Annex 2 of the submitted report be approved.

WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

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

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted.

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.

11 **RULE 13 AND 14**

There were no Rule 13 and 14 decisions to report.

12 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting, for the following two items of business, on the grounds that they contain exempt information under paragraph 3 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and it would not, on balance, be in the public interest to disclose the reports.

13 **PARTNERSHIP RISK DASHBOARD**

The Director of Finance submitted a report which identified the partnerships in which the Council has an interest. The Council has a wide variety of partnership each of which had its own risk profile. The report set out the assessment of risk for each partnership with an opinion as to whether there was anything which the Scrutiny Board needed to highlight to either Cabinet or full Council. The report did not identify any risk assessments which required a report to Cabinet or full Council.

RESOLVED:

That the report and current level of assessed risk on current partnerships to the Council be noted.

14 **NEW RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES UPDATE**

A report of the Strategic Director of Children's Service was submitted which gave an update on the progress on the delivery of three new residential children's homes which were approved by Cabinet on 18 March 2024.

It was reported that the creation of new children's homes can take a minimum of 12 months due to a significant number of factors and inter-dependencies. Two of the three planned homes were progressing well. A third property for purchase was being sought. The finished project would meet the criteria set out in the original decision by delivering three residential children's homes, providing a total of 8 placements for children and young people. This was one additional place above the 7 placements agreed, which would yield an additional savings return.

Members commented on the need to learn lessons from the delivery of the project particularly from delays, causes and what actions could be taken to avoid those delays.

RESOLVED:

That the report and progress to date be noted.

(NOTE: Councillor Al-Hamdani attended for this item and addressed the Scrutiny Board).

The meeting started at 6pm and ended at 8pm



Oldham
Council