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**GOVERNANCE, STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY BOARD**  
**21/03/2024 at 6.00 pm**



**Present:** Councillor McLaren (Chair)  
Councillors Al-Hamdani, J. Hussain, Moores and Surjan

Also in Attendance:

Steve Hughes	Assistant Director Strategy & Performance
Chris Kelsall	Assistant Director of Finance (Capital & Transformation)
Andrew Mather	Constitutional Services
Amanda Richardson	Policy Manager, Strategy and performance

1           **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Woodvine

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 for the meeting to consider.

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

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings held on 25<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> February be approved as a correct record.

6           **POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION**

A report was submitted by Amanda Richardson, Policy Manager, and Laura Windsor-Welsh provided an update on the Oldham Poverty Truth Commission (PTC), which was completed at the end of 2022. The PTC, a national model developed by the Poverty Truth Network, aimed to address poverty by fostering direct experience, relationships, and humanizing individuals and systems.

The Oldham PTC brought together individuals with lived experience of poverty and those with power and influence across various sectors. It aimed to understand the causes and challenges of poverty and identify ways to address them. The commission was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Oldham Council, and Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group.

Over 12 months, the commission identified three key themes: improving points of contact for services, reducing stigma and raising hope, and creating supportive community spaces. Efforts to address these themes began during the commission's tenure, notably in response to the Cost of Living crisis, where grassroots commissioners collaborated on a response plan.

Following the commission's conclusion, the Oldham Poverty Action Network (OPAN) continued its work, supported by partners and funding. Task groups were formed to address specific areas such as community advice networks, volunteering initiatives, and systemic issues contributing to poverty. These efforts are aimed at implementing the PTC themes into actionable strategies.

Task Group 1 is focused on continuing the development and roll-out of the Oldham Community Advice Network, an online referral tool that brings together a range of crisis support providers and organisations in one system to ensure that residents who need help can access it easily and quickly, without having to re-tell their story.

Task Group 2 is currently focused on developing a model of volunteering which will 'reclaim volunteering for people experiencing hardship' and begin to operationalise routes out of poverty using a strengths-based approach.

Task Group 3 Continues to take forward the work of the PTC at a system level, building on the strategic links made by the lived experience commissioners through their engagement in the Planning for Real exercises and their direct engagement in the production of the Oldham Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan and other key strategies such as the Health Inequalities Action Plan.

Monthly meetings involving council officers ensure ongoing support and co-production, while updates are provided to relevant boards. Lived experience commissioners continue to be supported and have experienced positive outcomes such as volunteering and accessing employment.

The Scrutiny Board discussed how the Council and Members could best understand and support the work of OPAN. It was suggested that this might include incorporating a briefing into the Member Development Programme. Laura Windsor-Welsh reported that OPAN had produced a range of training webinars on YouTube which members were welcome to access.

**RESOLVED:** that the progress report be referred to a meeting of Leadership with a recommendation that the Council continues to support the work of the Oldham Poverty Action Network.

## **PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 3, 2023/24**

The Assistant Director Strategy & Performance submitted a report providing an overview of corporate performance against agreed service business plan measures for the Q3 period. The current reporting format had been developed as an interim solution, with a view to bringing more mature performance reporting online once the Business Insight, Performance and Strategy Programme (BIPS) Programme and Digital Services

Foundation (DSF) Project have been completed. Service level business plans included a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), both 'business as usual' and transformational, aimed at achieving the aspirations of the Corporate Plan and putting our residents first.

The Strategy & Performance Service were supporting services to review their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The aim was to ensure services have the right measures that demonstrate the right outcome or impact. Monitoring was also correlated to Oflog measures and any other statutory returns to avoid unnecessary duplication. This work would also support the ongoing development of service business plans. Members noted that some services had KPI's whilst others did not. It was explained that this was because some services and activities did not lend themselves to KPIs.

The Assistant Director of Strategy and Performance presented Summary performance reports: for Adults & Health, Children's Social Care, Economy & Environment, Education & Skills, and Governance & Resources.

Members commented that the overall presentation of the report was easier to follow and provided useful information.

A member asked if asked about the lack of a climbing tower at Castleshaw and the plans to resolve this issue. The Assistant Director undertook to check the situation and respond in writing to members.

A member suggested that comparisons with statistical neighbours could be useful.

Resolved: The Scrutiny Board resolved to:

1. Note the report including progress in implementing the business plan objectives and the progress being made.
2. Commend the areas of consistent good performance
- 3 Note the interconnection of these actions with ongoing activities in other portfolio and Scrutiny Board remits and key projects such as our Cost of Living Response and Don't Trash Oldham.

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### **REVENUE MONITOR AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2023/24 QUARTER 3**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Capital & Transformation) presented a report an update on the Council's 2023/24 forecast revenue budget position and the financial position of the capital programme as at 31 December 2023 (Quarter 3) together with the revised capital programme 2023/24 to 2027/28.

The forecast outturn position for the Revenue Budget 2023/24 was a projected adverse variance of £16.642m after allowing for approved and pending transfers to and from reserves. There

were significant variances contained within the projected net overspend within three areas forecasting pressures: Children's Services was forecasting a pressure of £14.240m ; Place and Economic Growth was forecasting a pressure of £5.442m; and Community Health and Adult Social Care was forecasting a pressure of £0.864m These would continue to be closely monitored for the remainder of the financial year with action taken to address variances and take mitigating action as detailed in the report. Favourable variances across the remaining portfolios totalling £3.903m were offsetting these pressures in these three areas.

It was reported that the position on the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) continued to improve and as at month 9 it was forecasting an in-year surplus of £2.117m, with an estimate that the year-end position would be a surplus of £3.561m. Action would continue to be taken with the aim of mitigating cost pressures and delivering and maintaining a surplus position. Oldham was taking part in the Department for Education sponsored Delivering Better Value in SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) which will 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.

No significant issues of concern were reported in relation to the HRA. The Collection Fund was forecasting an in-year surplus of £0.707m.

In respect of the Capital Position the report outlined the most up to date capital spending position for 2023/24 to 2028/29 for approved schemes. The revised capital programme budget for 2023/24 was £79.466m at the close of month 9, a net decrease of £30.839m from the original budget of £110.305m. Actual expenditure to 31 December 2023 was £52.765m (66.40% of the forecast outturn). It was likely that the forecast position will continue to change as the year draws to a close with additional re-profiling into future years.

**RESOLVED:** That the Scrutiny Board notes the following:

1. Forecast revenue outturn for 2023/24 at Quarter 3 being a £16.642m adverse variance.
2. Forecast positions for the Dedicated Schools Grant, Housing Revenue Account and Collection Fund.
3. Revised capital programme for 2023/24 and the forecast for the financial years to 2027/28 as at Quarter 3

## **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**

There was nothing to report under Rule 13 and 14.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm

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