

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 21 February 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Darcy, in the Chair.

Councillor Goslin, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allen, Blight, McNamara (substitute for Councillor Hendy), Moore, Poyser, Ricketts, Stephens (substitute for Councillor Tuohy), Stevens and Tofan.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Hendy, Stoneman and Tuohy.

Absent: Councillor Bingley.

Also in attendance: Mike Atherton (Group Manager for Parking, Marine and Garage Services), Ross Jago (Head of Governance Performance & Risk), Kevin McKenzie (Policy and Intelligence Advisor), David Northey (Service Director for Finance), Chris Squire (Service Director, HROD) and Hannah Whiting (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 14:00 and finished at 15.51.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

29. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

30. **Minutes**

The Committee unanimously agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023 as a correct record.

The Committee unanimously agreed, after adjustment to reflect the considerations of recommendations forwarded to cabinet, the minutes of the Budget Scrutiny Select Committee Review meeting held on 6 & 7 December 2023 as a correct record.

31. **Chair's Urgent Business**

Due to the ongoing major incident in Keyham, and officers from the team being required to support, Agenda Item 9 (Serious Violence Duty Action Plan and Funding Proposal) had been deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

32. **Financial Monitoring Report**

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- a) Current net forecast overspend was £1.2 million;
- b) Overspending was present in many sections of the Council including: Children's Services, Community Connections, People's Directorate, Passenger Services and Homelessness teams;
- c) This was being partially offset by £3.5 million released as contingency from savings;
- d) Total Revised Capital Budget for Approval (2023/24 -2027/28) was now circa £723 million;
- e) Borrowing costs were continuing to be sustained at a substantially higher rate than in previous years.

Supported by David Northey (Service Director for Finance) in response to questions the following was discussed:

- f) The risk of non-fulfilment of Projects within the Capital Fund;
- g) The major investment into the purchasing of new homes for temporary accommodation;
- h) The release of contingency funds and the directorates from which it had been derived, which constituted the major change between periods eight and nine of the report;
- i) Comparisons between PCC and other local authorities' financial positions.

The Committee agreed to note:

- 1. The forecast revenue monitoring position at Period 9 as set out in the report in the sum of £1.204m;
- 2. The Capital Budget 2023-2028 was revised to £723.701m as shown in Table I of the report and that these would form part of recommended amendments to Full Council for approval at end of quarter 3.

33. **Corporate Plan Performance Report & Risk Update**

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- a) There were areas of strong performance evident from the report;
- b) There had been an increase in the Employment Rate;

- c) Anti-Social Behaviour incidents had lowered;
- d) The numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) had decreased;
- e) Child Protection Plans had reduced in the last quarter;
- f) 332 Households were prevented from being homeless, an increase of 115;
- g) Areas of poor performance were also evident;
- h) 'Stop Smoking' performance had decreased;
- i) Core stage-four performance had dropped around 10%;
- j) Dental waiting lists had increased by 30 children 315 adults.

Supported by David Northey (Service Director for Finance), in response to questions, the following was discussed:

- k) Preventative measures to address homelessness and provide temporary accommodation as well as the sources of income to approach these;
- l) The layout and presentation of the report, as well as the benefits and detractions of the reportedly increased pictographic data;
- m) Work being conducted in reference to engaging with citizens and combating disenfranchisement;
- n) The perceived increase in Carbon Dioxide emission rates;
- o) Multi-culturalism, inclusion, community cohesion and hate-crime levels.

The Committee agreed to:

- I. Note the Corporate Plan and Performance Report, Quarter Three 2023/24.

34. **Policy Brief** (Verbal Report)

Kevin McKenzie (Policy and Intelligence Advisor) introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- a) Consultation had commenced on, and members were invited to engage with, a new set of equality objectives, which were last set in 2020 and are accordingly reformulated every four years.

35. **HR & Organisational Development Priorities & Update**

Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR and OD) introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- a) There had been attempts to create continuity to HROD priorities during the time in which employment oscillated between interim and full-time service directors;
- b) Improvements had been made to induction services in response to survey feedback;
- c) The 'HR Poleway System' would be under review in the short-term;
- d) Staff well-being and absence levels were being examined and provisions to increase managerial discretion to manage sickness were in place;
- e) There were ongoing restructures taking place within Community Connections and Street Services;
- f) There had been formidable effort to ensure the PCC became an "employer of choice";
- g) There had been the addition of two grade levels at the top of the pay scale to maintain parity with other authorities but also an increase in the employment of apprentices.

Supported by Chris Squire (Service Director, HROD), in response to questions, the following was discussed:

- h) The intended future of staff relations, culture and engagement including unionism and union representation;
- i) Absence and sickness levels across the council and comparisons to other local authorities and the national average;
- j) Sickness rates amongst hybrid workers and across different departments, as well as preventative measures and measures to improve rates in future;
- k) The Display Screen Equipment (DSE) policy in reference to hybrid workers;
- l) The impact of budget constraints on the HROD function;
- m) Managerial responses to a perceived increase in workload for staff augmenting their standard duties to compensate for colleague absence.

The Committee agreed to:

- a) Note the report.

36. **Serious Violence Duty Action Plan and Funding Proposal**

This item was removed from the agenda.

37. **Petition - Plympton District Car Parks**

Mike Atherton (Group Manager for Parking, Marine and Garage Services) introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- a) The report presented changes around the provision of support to local business, including in regard to high turnover and churn;
- b) The commitment for the parking was for it to remain without-charge;
- c) 'Blue-Badge' holders were to be allowed an additional hour of parking time;
- d) New data and insights were utilised within the report, which derived from car park use over the previous months and weeks;
- e) The data displayed that there had been no decline in traffic numbers in the area.

Councillor Patrick Nicholson (Ward Councillor for Plympton St. Mary) rendered the following points of discussion:

- f) Acknowledged that this petition and change in parking restrictions had been received by Councillor Coker after a change of administration;
- g) Ridgeway Carpark and the carpark closest to the Co-op affected areas under the responsibility of Corporate Property; such as Harewood House and the Tennis Courts and the effects changes to parking would have on these venues;
- h) Concerns were additionally expressed that the report did not emphasise or concentrate on the impact for the greater Plympton community, including elderly residents and specific facilities (Plympton Clinic) within close proximity and the facilitation of the NHS and medical care, as compared to the impact on road users;
- i) Proposed a recommendation was made to Councillor Coker, as the relevant portfolio holder, to continue to investigate the impact on the aforementioned facilities.

Mike Atherton, supported by Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport), in response to questions, the following was discussed:

- j) The scope and scale of data for these reports and the scale of ongoing review of impacts after the implementation of parking schemes and related displacement of parking;
- k) The difficulty of analysis of the displacement effects of particular parking changes, as reports usually analysed the area of parking itself as well as specifically the immediate areas within proximity to this area;

- l) The use of this style of data reporting being implemented for other car parks in the areas, specifically Plymstock Broadway;
- m) Caution was expressed in reference to the continuation of requesting further reports in regard to this specific issue, especially in light of budgetary considerations and value-for-money;

- n) Car parks were consistently reviewed for performance and impacts on the surrounding area, however the proportion of officers being requested, and would be required for ongoing review of the area in the capacity being requested, would not be possible.

The Committee agreed to:

- I. Note the report.

38. **Tracking Decisions**

Tracking decisions were all marked complete. The Committee noted the tracking decisions document.

39. **Work Programme**

Ross Jago (Head of Governance Performance & Risk) affirmed that, as this was the final meeting of the Committee of the year, an assessment of the 24/25 municipal year work programme would take place within the new year.