

MINUTES OF: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 21st September 2022

Present: Councillor Johnson (Chair)
Councillors Coogan, Foxcroft, McMahon, Marriott, Morris, Smith and Thompson

In attendance: Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Lee Childs, Facilities Manager
Mandy Lewis, Director of Economic Development
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager

Also Present: Councillor Ashworth
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1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Janet Eaton, Councillor Rooke and Councillor Procter (Councillor Smith subbing).

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the following meetings be approved as a correct record:

- 11th July 2022
- 8th August 2022

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

5. Question Time

There were no public questions.

6. Chair's Update

6.1 A Council Tax Support Scheme briefing note had been circulated to committee members for information only. This item normally came to the committee when substantial changes were being made to the scheme. Whilst no substantial changes were being made, the Capita Operational and Governance Board recommended sending a briefing note to the committee to provide detail regarding why no proposal for change was being made at this time. Any queries could be directed to the Service Assurance Team Leader.

6.2 Since the last ordinary meeting, a call-in had been received and a special meeting held on 8th August. Details of the meeting were included in the minutes at item A2. In addition, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny were currently providing officer training on new call-in guidance, and the Committee and Member Services Manager had agreed to report back if the new guidance would impact on the Council's current procedures.

6.3 In relation to queries raised at the previous meetings, the following clarification was given:

- At the last committee meeting it was agreed to provide clarification on the garage plots being transferred back to the Council. The Property Services Manager confirmed that only those plots that Rossendale Council hold title to were transferring back. Therefore there would be some plots that remain with Together Housing.
- The committee had previously asked for clarification on how to get in touch with officers regarding ward and constituent issues. It was clarified that members should ring the general Council number 217777 and speak to Corporate Support who would log the issue and allocate it to the relevant team for action.

In response to the updates the following was agreed:

- Councillor Morris would be re-sent the clarification on the garage plots.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

7. Water Hygiene and Asbestos Policies Approval

7.1 The Facilities Manager introduced the Water Hygiene and Asbestos policies.

7.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- HSL headquarters were based in Warrington and they physically came to do the inspections and surveys annually.
- Water hygiene risk assessments were completed for each Council owned building and would identify actions, timescales and any remedial work needing to be completed.
- Assessments were available online for officers to view as soon as they were completed.
- An engineer tested the water in the pools monthly, and chlorine would be adjusted accordingly.
- Following the updated surveys which were carried out on our buildings, it was confirmed that there were 12-14 buildings with asbestos and no issues had been found.
- In relation to the above, it was confirmed that Whitworth Pool was currently closed.
- Town and County Planning Association (TCPA) regulations did not cover asbestos, so planning conditions could not be applied to developments, but the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) could get involved where issues were raised, particularly if serious in nature relating to private developments.
- Removal of asbestos garage roofing was classed as low risk and there was a guidance pamphlet available.
- In relation to the Haslingden pool site, the owners had received the relevant surveys including asbestos.
- Private developments would be dealt with by private inspectors depending on the nature of the site, and responsibility was with the individual owners.

Resolved:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the new Water Hygiene and Asbestos policies.
2. The committee recommended the policies to the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) and Cabinet for approval and adoption.

8. Quarter 1 Performance Management Report (April, May & June) 2022/23

8.1 The Head of People and Policy introduced the Quarter 1 performance report.

8.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- There was now a separate performance meeting dealing with specific operational issues including bin collection.

- If a missed collection was reported, the cameras could be viewed to see if bins had been presented at the correct time, or if there were issues with parked cars preventing the collection taking place.
- There were still issues with missed collections owing to parked vehicles and lack of access now more people were working from home, and the Operations Team were trying hard to mitigate these issues.
- In comparison to the number of collections made, the proportion of missed bins was low.
- There was a need to consider if the right target was in place and if it was reported in the right way. This would be considered including the suggestions to report on the total percentage collected or missed, rather than number per 100,000.
- It was acknowledged that more detail on what was being done needed to be made apparent in the update note in the report.
- Agency staff were still being used where HGV drivers were required and the Council was upskilling 4 puller-loaders to complete LGV driver training.
- Recruitment was challenging and meetings with other authorities revealed they were experiencing similar difficulties.
- The Council was currently reviewing the recruitment and retention plan, including workforce succession planning.
- The Council was doing well in relation to training roles and apprentices and was looking to keep the graduate in HR and recruit an entry level graduate in Parks and Open Spaces.
- As Council workers could access their pension from age 55, succession planning for an aged workforce was considered from age 55+.
- For professional positions, market supplements were considered where recruitment proved difficult.
- Shared roles and services had also been considered, but had been unsuccessful owing to partner authorities experiencing similar recruitment issues.
- Jobs titles were also being re-branded, promoted and advertised in different ways, such as LinkedIn, Greater Jobs, Indeed, etc.
- Retention plans included providing training and development, and ensuring training costs had to be paid back if the member of staff left within a given period of receiving their qualification via training agreement.
- Flexible working was being reviewed through a staff survey and focus groups. Work life balance was important for most staff and could be used to attract new applicants.
- Work was also being done on trust and appreciation, as well as providing staff support, with managers trying to gain an understanding when things were not working as planned.
- Positive member/officer relations was also important, as negativity impacted on the working environment.
- The Dark Lane developer had not dealt with the contamination issue, but was now fully engaged and awaiting the outcome of the further sampling. If samples were clear the conditions could be discharged. Together Housing had informed at the member briefing that they would ensure the situation would not happen again. They had also volunteered immediately to remunerate resident costs.
- Leases had been signed on some of the bus station units and whilst not yet occupied, the units were currently being fitted out.
- The situation with the toilets and the food outlet on the bus station site would be looked into, as well as the visual impact of the tarmacked area where the service pipes had been laid.
- The recycling pilot which was due to start in September had been delayed until October following the announcement about the passing of the Queen.

- It would be looked into to see if comparison figures could be added to show the figure from the previous quarter as well as the figure from the same quarter the previous year, however it was noted that the targets were not always like for like.

The Head of People and Policy asked committee members to send questions in advance to assist in preparing relevant responses for the meeting, or to enable a relevant officer to attend the meeting to provide a service update.

Resolved:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the performance of the council as detailed in the report.
2. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified the following for further action:
 - To request more relevant detail from Operations and other service areas, particularly in relation to mitigating action being taken in the update sections.
 - To review the missed bin collection target and how this was reported and consider moving to reporting on the percentage of bins collected.
 - To look into the situation with the toilets on the bus station regarding the new food outlet, as well as the tarmacked area where the service pipes had been laid.
 - To see if comparison figures could be added to the quarterly report to show the figure from the previous quarter as well as the figure from the same quarter the previous year.

9. Annual Equality Report – Workforce Profile 2021/22

9.1 The Head of People and Policy introduced the Annual Equality Report and Workforce Profile.

9.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- The completion of the equality monitoring forms was not mandatory, so reporting only included information from those willing to complete the forms. This was assessed against the Rossendale profile.
- Work was being undertaken to boost applications from all protected characteristics and not just disability.
- Consideration would be given to including something as part of the job application process to say the Council welcomed applications from all candidates who fit the Rossendale profile, and that it was open and accessible to everyone.

Resolved:

1. Overview and Scrutiny considered the content of the Council's Annual Equality Workforce Report for 2021/22, and agreed the following specific actions or issues that needed to be taken forward arising from the content of the report:
 - To consider including something as part of the job application process to say the Council welcomed applications from all candidates who fit the Rossendale profile, and that it was open and accessible to everyone.
2. That Overview and Scrutiny continues to monitor the Council's progress on equality, and sufficient publication of equality information in line with current legislative and best practice requirements to ensure that the Council is operating fairly and equitably.
3. That Overview and Scrutiny recommends the Council to actively seek to boost the workforce profile in relation to disability.

10. Annual Council Feedback Review and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Enquiries

10.1 The Committee and Member Services Manager introduced the Annual Council Feedback Review and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Enquiries.

- 10.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:
- During this period some of the complaints related to covid grant funding owing to the eligibility criteria.
 - One Benefits and Tax complaint was investigated by the Ombudsman, this was in relation to a covid grant application and the applicant was given additional opportunity to submit the required evidence of eligibility.
 - There were different ways in which complaints could be submitted, including online form, email, letter, etc.
 - Written format was preferred in case a complaint was escalated to the Ombudsman as an evidence trail would be required, although complaints by telephone would also be taken where there was a specific need e.g. visual impairment, and clarification would be sought on the nature of the complaint for the evidence file.
 - The timescale for dealing with formal complaints was 10 working days as detailed in the report.
 - Compliments were shared on the regular reports to Corporate Management Team. Information was also shared on social media where officers had received thanks for specific work and the staff awards had also been restarted to enable staff to feel appreciated for the work they did.

Resolved:

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the different types of feedback received by the Council, in addition to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) enquiries and complaints for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

11. The Forward Plan

- 11.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for November.

Resolved:

The Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme items were noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.47pm)

Signed.....
 (Chair)
 Date