

MINUTES OF: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 10th November 2025

Present: Councillor Samara Barnes (Chair), Councillor Ashworth, Driver, Harrison, S Smith, B Bauld and Co-opted member J Heaton

In attendance: David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development
Chris Warren, Director of Resources
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Anne Storah, Principal Planner – Forward Planning
Ian Walker, Service Assurance Team Leader
Hannah Callan, Executive and Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received by Councillor McMahon.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting on 8th September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Driver declared an interest in item D3 and D5.

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 At the previous meeting members were asked to note and consider the Rossendale Playing Pitch Strategy and the Quarter 1 Performance Management Report which were both approved by Cabinet on the 17th September 2025.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

7. Consultation on Supplementary Planning Guidance Document for Houses in Multiple Occupation

- 7.1 The committee is asked to note that the consultation will be starting on Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), for a period of 4 weeks. Following the consultation, and appropriate amendments, the SPG will be taken to Cabinet for approval with a recommendation that it will be used in the determination of all planning applications for HMO's.

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

- It was confirmed that as part of the consultation, the document would be shared with the 1,500 email addresses from the local plan consultation list – plus letters sent out, listed on the website, notices will be displayed and statutory consultees will be contacted.

- The officer confirmed that the final report will be going to Cabinet in February and if approved will be adopted thereafter.
- The difference between a Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and a Supplementary Planning Document was clarified. It was confirmed that there would need to be a link within the Local Plan for it to become an SPD.
- It was clarified that as far as we are aware there have been very few compensations claims that we are aware of. However, it was confirmed that if a claim is made and agreed, it would not necessarily be in the public domain.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that the consultation will be starting on Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), for a period of 4 weeks and that following the consultation, and appropriate amendments, the SPG will be taken to Cabinet for approval with a recommendation that it will be used in the determination of all planning applications for HMO's.

8. Annual Council Feedback Review and Local Government Ombudsman Enquiries

- 8.1 The committee is asked to note the different types of feedback received by the Council, including Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) enquiries and complaints for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. The committee is asked to comment on the report and provide feedback to Council's Corporate Management Team.
- 8.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:
- It was confirmed that the Local Government Ombudsman complaint that was upheld could have been avoided if the complainant was kept informed throughout the process. The officers confirm that it was a very complex case and needed further assessment to be carried out in order to respond correctly.
 - The internal process of handling a complaint was explained to the Committee.
 - It was confirmed that if a Councillor sends a complaint to an officer, then it is logged with complaints.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the different types of feedback received by the Council, including Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) enquiries and complaints for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

9. Annual Equality Report 2024/25

- 9.1 The committee is asked to note and consider the Council's Annual Equality Report 2024/25 and continue to monitor the Council's progress as detailed in the recommendations of the report.
- 9.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:
- It was confirmed that data would be included within the workforce data section from the previous 2–3 years as it would show whether representation and disclosure rates are improving or declining. It will also allow the Council to identify which equality initiatives are working and which need review.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Council's Annual Equality Report 2024/25 and will continue to monitor the Council's progress as detailed in the recommendations of the report. The Committee proposed the below amendment to the report:

- To include comparative workforce data from the previous 2–3 years to show trends in gender balance, disability declaration rates, ethnicity representation and age. As

trend data demonstrates direction of travel and will show whether representation and disclosure rates are improving or declining. It will also allow Scrutiny, HR, and CMT to identify which equality initiatives are working and which need review.

10. Quarter 2 Performance Management Report

10.1 The committee is asked to note and consider the Council's performance during Quarter 2 2025/26.

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

- It was clarified that work is still ongoing to recruit within the Environmental Health team.
- In relation to the managing of the response time of Freedom of Information requests, it was confirmed that regular reminders are sent to the relevant officers and catch-up calls are made.
- It was confirmed that once the data from the Residents Survey are collated this would be shared with members.
- In relation to street sweepers, it was confirmed that the vehicle repair schedule was being looked at and that they are looking at bringing forward the repair of the street sweeper. It was also confirmed that the department has a vacancy which is causing additional pressures.
- It was clarified that there had been some miscommunication between Bethells and RBC in relation to Deardengate in Haslingden. RBC has amended Bethells schedule of works to ensure that most/if not all of the road is open before Christmas, with the remainder of the works being carried out after Christmas.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Council's performance during Quarter 2 2025/26.

11. Forward Plan

11.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. Members were encouraged to submit their questions in advance in relation to items on the next agenda and suggest services to attend future meetings in relation to the performance report which would be distributed when it had been published for Cabinet.

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

- It was agreed that members would submit questions in advance of the next meeting in relation to the visit from Lancashire Constabulary.

Resolved:

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

12. Exclusion of Public and Press

Resolved:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that it involves disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) under Part 1 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8:12pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date