

MINUTES OF: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 15th June 2026

Present: Councillor Ashworth (Chair), S Smith (Vice Chair), Bauld, Driver, Eaton, Harrison, Kenyon and co-opted member James Heaton

In attendance: David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Chloe Balcombe, Communications and Engagement Manager
Carolyn Sharples, Executive and Democratic Services Manager

Also present: Councillor Lythgoe

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting on 30th March 2026 be approved as a correct record.

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 The Rossendale Health Plan Update had been circulated to members, along with responses to outstanding queries from the previous meeting.

6.2 Thanks was given to the former Chair of the committee, Councillor Samara Barnes.

6.3 Members discussed their recent visit to the Revive Hub on Friday 12th June which was one of the actions coming out of a recent task and finish group. Members commented on how impressive and well-run the facility was, and how it was much needed in Rossendale. It was agreed to send a note of thanks.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

7. Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy

7.1 The committee considered the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy.

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

- Usage of the EV chargers varied but John Street car park in Haslingden was the most utilised.
- There was evidence we needed more chargers as demand continued to grow.
- Some chargers belonged to Lancashire County Council, supermarkets or were privately owned.

- There was site problems associated with chargers on terraced houses, such as access across the pavements, however solutions were being tested such as sinking cables into pavements to make them a non-trip hazard.
- There were a number of ways to finance them, such as getting private sector to do it and they get all the income, or we could invest in it and get all the income, but this came with risk regarding how well used it would be.
- There were a number of private sector firms interested and if this was the option being progressed it would have to go out to tender.
- The Levi scheme was going through procurement and starting to be rolled out.
- The Council was also looking at existing facilities and projects to see where funding could be used to support this work.
- The EV chargers for 100 terraced houses would initially be based on expressions of interest after advertising.
- No planning permission was required in adding EV chargers to residential properties, however there were some exceptions e.g. listed buildings.
- Even though the government was reducing the electric vehicle sales target, growth seemed likely to increase, particularly with the increase in cheaper brand new Chinese cars.
- It was a positive report which contributed towards 2030 commitments.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy and recommended that Cabinet approve the strategy.

8. Communication Strategy and Annual Action Plan Update

8.1 The committee considered the Council's Communication Strategy and Annual Action Plan Update.

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

- Communications on social media were more user friendly and there were more communications going out around what was going on and what the Council was working on.
- A communications calendar had been set up for the next 12 months giving more opportunity to plan work in such as videos and pictures, including with councillors for particular areas.
- Meetings had taken place with the Economic Development Team on the wider projects as well as meeting with individual departments to assist in forward planning.
- Councillors could contact the Communications and Engagement Manager to have a conversation if they thought they had something press worthy.
- Myth busting, tackling misinformation and replying to comments was also important.
- It was good to put a face to people behind the projects to help change the sentiment of comments being posted.

The committee noted that communications had massively improved, particularly in keeping councillors up to date before communications were being sent out. Communications were also more user friendly for public around what was going on. This deflected a lot of queries that would normally have been sent to councillors. It was good to help constituents understand the Council's work and give people more context and a better understanding.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Council's Communication Strategy and Annual Action Plan Update.

9. Quarter 4 Performance Management Report

9.1 The committee considered the Council's performance during Quarter 4.

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

- The decarbonisation targets were set in 2020 and increased by 10% every year, then were recalculated. The data didn't include all the information that should be included so the figures were likely a one off anomaly.
- A full calculation was required going back to 2020 using the full data.
- Two EV bin wagons were coming and Marl Pits was being decarbonised by the end of the year. Lighting in buildings had also been updated and would be included.
- Marl Pits work had been procured and works were expected in September. Closure was expected to be less than a week. Timescales would be checked and relevant communications provided.
- As well as carbon savings there were financial savings and it would make the Council more efficient financially. Hive systems provided better management for heating.
- The sickness target was based on the old Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI).
- Highest number of days lost was owing to stress, anxiety and depression. A Stress Risk Assessment was done initially to help support staff and signposting and referrals were done as appropriate.
- The next highest sickness lost was to back/neck and muscular/skeletal and the Council could pay for physio sessions if a GP note was provided.
- As staffing numbers were low, it made a big impact on the outturn figure. The actual figure should have been 10.18 rather than 12.27 as detailed in the report, as the figures had picked up sickness days for April and May.
- HR provided advice to managers in helping them to manage sickness using the robust Sickness Absence Policy.
- It could be an option to look to tweak the policy to make it more difficult to refuse physio treatment where recommended.
- It could also be an option to see if the cost of absences outweighed the Council providing financial support towards counselling sessions where managing stress, anxiety and depression was concerned.
- There was also an employee assistance programme which signposted to other services.
- It was agreed to look into whether free counselling could be reconsidered.
- It was agreed to look into making access to the physio more accessible e.g. by removing the need for a GP note.
- All councils used different matrix's e.g. Bradford Factor 1. It would be looked into whether our target and reporting was suitable.
- In relation to gravestones, work was ongoing in the cemeteries across the borough with different contractors working on the different types of graves and monuments.
- It was agreed that grass cutting would be looked into, although it was recognised that work in the cemeteries was taking priority.
- There had been a positive response to food waste pick up.
- Two temporary accommodation properties were up and running and one was being finalised. Two more were under offer.
- There had been a number of Environmental Health vacancies and recruitment had been unsuccessful. Shared services had also been considered but this had not been possible.
- Corporate Support had partially been disbanded to provide support back in the service areas with one person supporting Environmental Health and one supporting Licensing.

- The phone systems were also being reviewed for getting through directly to the correct departments.
- A major reshuffle was taking place but this could take a while.
- In relation to Rawtenstall market, toilets were available on the bus station and opening corresponded with the market opening times.
- Effluent tanks had been provided to dispose of relevant waste on the market, which was taken away on a regular basis.
- Enforcement could be considered for any antisocial behaviour.
- To look into effluent capacity and the possibility of signage to direct people to the toilets.
- Staff attitude over waste collection had been positive and communications have been good.

It was agreed to pass on the thanks of the committee to the Council's teams over the massive amount of achievements made.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Council's performance during Quarter 4.

10. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025-2026 and Work Programme 2026-2027

10.1 The committee considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26 and Work Programme 2026/27.

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

- It was planned to do a deep dive into regeneration projects rather than task and finish work.
- It was planned to pick out issues from future quarterly reports and look at these in more depth rather than trying to cover the whole thing.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26 and Work Programme 2026/27 and recommended their approval to Council.

11. Valley Plan Outturn Report 2025-2026

11.1 The committee considered the Council's annual Valley Plan update and associated achievements for 2025-2026.

11.2 Members made the following comments:

- There had been a massive amount of activity and it would be good to add this to the social media posts to show just how much was being achieved.

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Council's annual Valley Plan update and associated achievements for 2025-2026.

12. Forward Plan

12.1 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.

Resolved:

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

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8:10pm)

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date