

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Council Chamber, Crook - Crook Council Offices on **Friday 22 June 2018 at 10.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor R Crute (Chairman)**

### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors A Patterson (Vice-Chairman), E Adam, A Batey, R Bell, M Clarke, P Jopling, H Liddle, J Makepeace, C Martin, O Milburn, F Tinsley, J Turnbull and L Taylor

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Hawley, L Maddison, L Pounder, J Robinson, J Rowlandson, H Smith and A Willis.

### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitutes.

### **3 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations on interest submitted.

### **5 Transformation Programme Update**

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided an update on progress in the Council's Transformation Programme (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transformation provided an overview of the programme and its outcomes which would be achieved by utilising the "Inspire brand" and three broad areas of interconnected activity, which were: Inspiring Change, Inspiring People and Inspiring Places. Paragraph 13 of the report detailed progress in those areas and highlighted key achievements and milestones.

Councillor Jopling asked what commercial options the council was exploring to sustain income and expand business. The Head of Transformation advised that the council would build upon initiatives and maximise opportunities in respect of Atom Bank, Chapter Homes, development of Forrest Park and other options within

facilities management. He did however remind members that the council was not intending to compete with other businesses but would where possible maximise income by shifting thinking.

Further discussion took place regarding the libraries review and it was noted that this process had just started and further updates in this regard would be provided at a later date. In addition a query was received from Councillor Martin regarding the closure of the DLI and whether there had been any joined up thinking regarding its relocation alongside the move for the County Records Office. The Head of Transformation advised that the DLI closure was a separate project and had not been included as part of the Transformation Programme.

Councillor Adam commented that he was grateful for the opportunity to view the new offices at Crook, however what arrangements there would be for hot desking / use of meetings rooms etc. for councillors in the future.

In response the Head of Transformation advised that a review of how services would be provided in localities and various member training and development sessions would be held. With regard to the Members Portal, Councillor Crute advised that this had been previously discussed by the committee and would be further reviewed as part of the committees work programme.

Further discussion ensued regarding the proposed new HQ and the Head of Transformation advised that a planning application would be submitted in July/August of this year and a pre-application consultation period would commence early July.

Councillor Makepeace commented that whilst he supported the rationalisation of the council's building assets he did feel that the council were not so successful in cleaning up the area once a building had been vacated and many had been left in a dilapidated state. The Head of Transformation advised that the comments had been taken on board and reiterated that a full review of the asset service was to be undertaken to ensure that the council were achieving the best out of the portfolio.

Further debate took place regarding the work which had been undertaken at Crook and the longer term benefits for the workforce and the savings that would be achieved. It was noted that all staff involved should be congratulated and formal thanks be passed on to those staff at Crook.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **6 Customer Feedback: Quarter 4 and Annual Statutory Representations**

The Board considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources, Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented the Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions report for 2017/18 Year End; the Annual Statutory representations report for the Children's Social Care Services 2017/18; and the Annual Statutory Representations report for Adults Social Care Services 2017/18 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Makepeace commented that he was aware of a number of issues which residents had raised as causing discontent; including the street lighting energy reduction project (SLERP), tree crowning/cutting back and maintenance of areas owned by Housing Associations.

Councillor Bell in referencing paragraph 35, noted that it was important that those individuals who required additional support to progress their Universal Credit claims were assisted and offered suitable help. He further asked what broader support outside of Universal Credit would be available for digitisation. The Head of Digital and Customer Services advised that staff were available to help customers at Customer Access Points and Libraries.

Councillor Batey noted that she was aware that some residents had been let down by the bulky waste collection services whereby collections had been delayed and promises made by call centre staff had not been fulfilled. She further commented that as previously discussed the CRM system did lack in information relating to reference/case numbers. The Head of Digital and Customer Services in response, advised that he was not aware of the delays in the bulky waste collection service although did acknowledge that work was being done to improve the calendar booking system. With regard to the comments raised relating to the CRM system, Councillor Crute suggested that this be raised when the update of the recommendations of the CRM review is brought back to a future COSMB.

Councillor Turnbull further queried when the council's tree policy had last been reviewed and also noted that he was aware that there were some issues regarding incorrect meeting information being posted to the council's twitter feed.

Councillor Crute suggested that the queries raised regarding the council's tree policy be referred to the suitable committee. The Head of Digital and Customer Services further noted the issues raised regarding miscommunication via twitter and advised that he would follow this up.

Councillor Tinsley raised a query with regard to statutory complaints within Adults Services and Children and Young People's Services and whether the number of complaints was linked to the volume of caseload that was being dealt with by officers. The Head of Strategy advised that this could be further addressed in the following report.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **7 Quarter Four 2017/18 Performance Management Report**

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which presented progress against the council's corporate performance framework by Altogether priority theme for the fourth quarter of the 2017/18 financial year (for copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported that during 2017/18, 69% of performance indicators improved with 4% maintaining performance. The Head of Strategy went on to provide a summary

of key performance improvements and further provided details of key challenges and changes to reporting arrangements.

Members were referred to page 32 of the report onwards which provided details of performance across the 6 themes in a visual format which highlighted key messages.

Councillor Tinsley in referring to paragraph 47 of the report noted the worsening of sickness absence across the quarter and that the highest contributing factors were due to mental health and workplace stress. He therefore queried whether this was as a result of staff reductions and increasing workloads. Furthermore, in offering comparisons to the private sector he queried whether it was known what the 5 year trend for sickness absence was and what was being done to address it.

The Head of Strategy, in response advised that benchmarking was a difficult task as Durham County Council were not the average public sector organisation given its scale, nature of work and large profile of staff who were over 50 years of age. She further noted that sickness absence performance had improved since last year however management team were focussed on the issue and were mindful of the pressure faced by staff due to increasing workloads.

Further discussion ensued as to where the target figure had been derived from. It was noted that this had been calculated on the basis of looking at each service grouping, what had been achieved and setting a challenging but realistic target for each.

Councillor Jopling raised a query regarding long term sick and how it potentially could skew the figures. The Head of Strategy, acknowledged this issue, however noted the vigorous HR procedures which were in place and the work which was being done to improve workspaces to help assist people in getting back to work. She further noted that this was an area which was being looked at by the Health and Wellbeing at Work Strategy. In addition, Councillor Bell raised a query with regard to schools and academies and the Head of Strategy also advised that school improvement had been looked at by the Children and Young People's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **8 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/2018**

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which presented the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18 for comment and approval prior to its submission to the County Council meeting on 18 July 2018 (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be approved for submission to County Council.

**9 Review of the Committee's Work Programme 2018-19**

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided an updated work programme for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) 2018-19.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

**10 Update in relation to Petitions**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided a quarterly update in relation to the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

**11 Notice of Key Decisions**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which presented the list of key decisions that were scheduled to be considered by the Executive (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:** That the content of report be noted.

**12 Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided an update of overview and scrutiny activity from 20 April – June 2018 (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

Signed.....  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Date.....