

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Friday 21 June 2019 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor R Crute (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, R Bell, M Clarke, A Hopgood, P Jopling, B Kellett, L Maddison, J Makepeace, R Manchester, C Martin, C Potts, J Rowlandson, H Smith, F Tinsley, J Turnbull, M Wilkes, A Willis and J Nicholson (substitute for A Shield)

Also in attendance:

Councillors J Considine and A Patterson

The Chair welcomed new members to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Batey, D Boyes, J Chaplow, H Liddle, O Milburn, J Robinson, A Savory and A Shield.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor J Nicholson, substitute for Councillor A Shield.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 4 and 18 March 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to Councillor H Smith being added to the attendance of the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2019.

Matters Arising

With regards to matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2019, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager confirmed the following:

- Minute no. 5 paragraph 2 - Councillor Wilkes requested further information regarding gaps identified in savings targets. The response from the services was that a rigorous process was in place for all targets and they were aware of issues in advance to make alternative provision if necessary. He added that the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services was attending the meeting on 23 July and would be able to answer any further questions;
- Minute no. 5 paragraph 3 - Councillor Batey asked for a breakdown of female to male staff ratio which had been provided to members following the meeting;
- Minute no. 6 paragraph 8 – Councillor Patterson asked for a breakdown in relation to complaints that relate to third party providers which had been provided;
- Minute no. 6 paragraph 9 – Councillor Tinsley asked for comparative data regarding Ombudsman’s complaints which will now be included in future reports;
- Minute no. 7 paragraph 7 – Councillor Wilkes raised issues around attendance management which had been incorporated in the work programme and a follow up report would be reported to a future meeting;
- Minute no. 7 paragraph 17 – Councillor Liddle asked about the Suicide Prevention Plan. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that the plan had not been finalised yet, however it was included in the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme;
- Minute no. 9 paragraph 3 – Councillor Martin queried if the Board would be considering the governments review of scrutiny statutory guidance. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager confirmed that the guidance had now been issued to all Board members and was being considered by the Constitution Working Group on 8 July and would then be reported back to the Board on 23 July 2019.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Quarter 4 2018/19 Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act ('RIPA') during the period 1 January 2019 until 31 March 2019 (Quarter 4) to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose (for copy see file of minutes).

The Governance Solicitor advised that there had been one RIPA Directed Surveillance operation and no Covert Human Intelligence Surveillances applications made during Quarter 4.

Resolved:

That the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period 1 January 2019 until 31 March 2019 be received and note that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that it remains fit for purpose.

6 Quarter 4 2018/19 Performance Management

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council's corporate performance framework (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager reported the key performance messages for the quarter by priority theme.

Councillor R Bell referred to the Altogether Wealthier theme and the recycling plant at Seaham and asked if it was possible to show that County Durham's recycling waste was being processed responsibly. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager would enquire if figures could be obtained.

In response to a question from Councillor Kellett regarding the key employment rate statistics for males, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager confirmed that the figure was inclusive of full time and part time employment and would provide a breakdown in future reports.

Councillor Kellett further commented on the percentage of business surviving in the first 5 years and queried if there was an explanation why Durham's first year figures were better than the North East and England figures, however by year 5 this had reduced significantly.

Councillor Crute added that questions have previously been raised at Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with regards to

the value of the jobs identified in the employment figures. He highlighted the large gap between household disposable income and the national average which needs addressing.

Councillor Hopgood referred to the recycling matters campaign and suggested it would be beneficial for the public to see the monetary aspect of recycling and show the additional benefits that could be made to local services if people recycled correctly. She highlighted that every Council in the Country has a different recycling policy which causes confusion for residence who move into the area.

Councillor Hopgood then referred to page 65 of the report and asked if there was an explanation to why the figures for cleanliness of pavements and roads, road markings, maintenance of verges/trees/shrubs and weedkilling on pavements and roads have all reduced from 2016. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that figures come from the National Highways and Transport Survey and explained that statistically the figures could be the same as a survey result procures an estimate of the satisfaction levels of the whole population plus or minus a confidence interval based on the sample size.

Referring to gross value added (GVA) figures, Councillor Tinsley felt it was important to look at the gross domestic product (GDP) figures. He was concerned that the figures do not match with an improving economy in terms of employment and asked that GDP figures be provided next time.

Councillor Crute referred to the table on Page 78 of the report in relation to the value of GVA growth from jobs created. He queried the figures as there seemed to be a discrepancy between the figures show 12 months earlier.

With regards to recycling, Councillor Adam advised that the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee have discussed the 'bin it right campaign' on numerous occasions and were continuing to look at the issue. He added that 18% of recycled material was contaminated which needs addressing and was on the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny work programme to look at specific areas.

In relation to the point raised by Councillor R Bell regarding recycling products, Councillor Adam read out a statement from officers of the Council. The Board were reassured that recycling was carried out appropriately in County Durham and no recycled plastics were being discarded abroad. He added that controls were in place by Government and the Environment Agency.

Responding to a query from Councillor Makepeace regarding safeguarded jobs, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager clarified that the Council work with companies to ensure job levels are retained.

Councillor Crute responded to a question from Councillor Makepeace regarding maintaining social worker caseload levels. He advised that Children and Young People's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out a piece of work looking at the role of the social worker through a child's perspective. One of the issues from the review was the number of caseloads each social worker was assigned and the impact that was having on the quality of service. Another main factor was recruitment which was being addressed by the social worker academy which has been established.

Councillor Makepeace referred to the crime figures and expressed concern regarding incidents that are no longer recorded as crimes such as traffic violations which are not being investigated and are reflected in police performance, however public satisfaction figures have not increased. He asked if it was possible to have a list of issues that were no longer investigated.

Councillor Crute added that the crime figures reported at PAC meetings were rising and there was concern with public perception regarding the police and Council's ability to tackle antisocial behaviour. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained there were two perception measures of the survey, one is the public's satisfaction with the police which is increasing and the other is the public's satisfaction with the police and Council working together which is going down. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager gave examples of certain categories recorded as crimes but not pursued by the police.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Makepeace regarding tree maintenance, Councillor Adam advised that the policy has been reviewed by Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and clarified that trees were being maintained. He added that the policy recognises the need to balance the requirement to protect trees and the actions required if trees are dangerous or causing any health and safety issues.

Councillor Turnbull commented on the conflicting instructions with regards to the recycling instruction on the bags that are posted through doors. After making enquiries with the service he was told that the Council's policy was to put the bags in the recycle waste, not the garden waste. Councillor Crute added that manufacturers contribute to the confusion by printing the recycling instructions on products as recycling differs in different parts of the country. He hoped that guidance published with the campaign would clarify the issue.

Councillor R Bell was interested to see the new recycling centre at Seaham in operation and agreed with Councillor Hopgood comments regarding publicising the benefits of recycling correctly.

Councillor Wilkes referred to Page 37 of the report regarding 70,000 passengers expected to use Horden train station each year. He expressed

concern with the calculations of passengers per train and advised that with the £10million investment there should be more advertising and promotions focusing on attracting people from further afield. He asked what has been done to get things off the ground and to make it successful. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that he would provide Councillor Wilkes with background information.

Responding to a query from Councillor Jopling regarding food waste, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that an independent evaluation on food waste had been planned, however central government were in the process of introducing a draft national food waste strategy. He referred to the cost implication for the Council with regards to the evaluation and introduction of a food waste strategy. It was anticipated that funding would be received from central government when the national strategy is introduced.

Resolved:

That the Board considers the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance.

7 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which presented the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19 for comment and approval prior to its submission to the County Council meeting on 17 July 2019 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Hopgood commented on the wording referred to on page 112 of the report regarding cooptees and suggested the wording 'act as a non-political voice' be changed to 'act as an independent voice'.

Responding to a comment from Councillor R Bell regarding the increased use of twitter, Councillor Crute confirmed that officers would be reporting any significant issues raised via twitter back to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Councillor Crute thanked officers for producing the report and thanked Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny and cooptees for their input over the last year.

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

8 Work Programme 2019/20 for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided the opportunity to review and refresh the work programme for 2019/20 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Tinsley referred to the Council's carbon emissions policy in relation to electric vehicles and the vast changes in this sector. He felt there was a crossover of priority themes and suggested a joint committee be arranged which would be better suited to consider the issue. Councillor Crute advised the matter would initially fall within the remit of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, however he was happy to discuss outside the meeting.

With regards to attendance management, Councillor Hopgood was hopeful to see a different approach from what had been done previously and suggested the option to look at outsourcing of sickness absence management. Councillor Crute took the comment on board, however he explained that it was best practice to look at previous review recommendations with a view to considering a fresh approach.

Resolved:

That the content of the work programme for 2019/20 be agreed.

9 Update in relation to Petitions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided information on the quarterly update in relation to the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority (for copy see file of minutes).

The Senior Committee Services Officer advised that since the last update three e-petitions had been submitted, all of which had been closed and no new e-petitions had been received.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

10 Notice of Key Decisions

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

The Senior Committee Services Officer informed the Board that the following were new to the plan:

- Update on Planning of Budget and Development of Service Plans;
- Bowes Museum Update;
- Selective Licensing Business Case;
- County Durham Housing Strategy and County Durham Homelessness Strategy.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

11 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 information update of overview and scrutiny activity from 19 March 2019 to June 2019 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.