

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 11 September 2024** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor S Zair (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Surtees, A Batey, R Crute, M Currah, D Freeman, P Heaviside, C Lines, B Moist, R Ormerod, K Shaw, M Stead, A Savory (substitute for G Hutchinson) and F Tinsley (substitute for J Miller)

Co-opted Members:

Mrs R Morris and Mr E Simons

Also Present:

Councillors C Hood, J Rowlandson and A Shield

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Binney, G Hutchinson, R Manchester and J Miller.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor A Savory was substitute for Councillor G Hutchinson and Councillor F Tinsley was substitute for Councillor J Miller.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the Special joint meeting held on 6 June 2024 and the meeting held on 8 July 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or interested parties.

6 Housing Strategy: Council House Build Programme and Houses in Multiple Occupation

The Committee received two reports of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and presentation which provided an update on the Council House Build Programme and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) issues that were raised by Members at the Full Council meeting on 17 July 2024, which resulted in the decision to defer adoption of the County Durham Housing Strategy (CDHS) (for copy of reports and presentation, see file of minutes).

The Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth introduced the item and advised that at the meeting of Full Council on the 17 July, members raised two distinct issues, the delivery timeframe and the composition of the proposed 500 units and the proliferation of HMOs in the county including the use of Article 4 Directions and the lack of reference within the strategy to DCCs approach to controlling the number of HMOs in the future. This had resulted in the deferment of the strategy. The Corporate Director continued by advising that feedback from the meeting would be used to inform amendments to the CDHS which would then be presented to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to the revised draft strategy being considered by Cabinet and Full Council.

The Housing Delivery Manager provided Members with the background to the County Durham Housing Strategy which provided a strategic framework to inform the actions and investment of the council and its partners through consultation with residents and stakeholders and the involvement of Overview and Scrutiny, with comments previously made by Overview and Scrutiny Members used to inform the development of the strategy and delivery plan.

Council House Build Programme

The Housing Delivery Manager gave a detailed presentation which provided Members with the background to the Council House Build Programme including the approval process, updated business case, revised financial model and details of the first three sites for delivery.

He clarified the composition of the 500 target and confirmed that the Council had always intended to deliver 500 new build properties, which remained unchanged. Acquisitions made during the lifetime of the project would be additional properties on top of the 500 target. He added that it was expected that the programme would continue to deliver beyond the 500 target and clarified that the wording in the Housing Strategy would be redrafted to ensure that the composition of the programme would be made clear.

Detail on the key elements of the delivery timeframe were provided and it was confirmed that the July 2023 report considered by Cabinet included the revised business case and supporting business plan as a result of Macro-economic changes with both inflation and interest rates rising significantly. Following the appointment of the main contractor and the increasing inflation and interest rates, it

had become apparent that the Council were unlikely to deliver the 500 new homes by 2026 and confirmed that the intention was still to deliver at pace on a rolling programme at multiple sites, however the timescales were currently being revisited.

Councillor Moist made reference to the Council meeting on the 17 July 2024 and expressed his concern that the County Durham Housing Strategy report and Delivery Plan had been presented to Council without coming back to Overview and Scrutiny. It was his understanding that Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee had equal parity to Cabinet and what was presented to Cabinet and Council regarding the Council House Build Programme was significantly different to what had been presented to Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He thanked Councillor Rowlandson for confirming the commitment to provide 500 new homes by 2026 at the Council meeting, however this detail was not included in the draft strategy that was presented to Council on the 17 July 2024.

He highlighted that the Council House Build Programme had first been presented to Members in 2019/2020, however no progress had been made until this year. He added that the draft strategy had been considered by Overview and Scrutiny in 2022, 2023 and 2024 and that Councillor Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets had been invited to the relevant meetings and had attended to answer Members questions when concerns had been raised about the target for new builds and delivery timescale.

Councillor Moist continued by commenting that a Board had been established with the responsibility of delivering the Council House Build Programme which consisted of senior officers, however no homes had been delivered and nothing had been done until Overview and Scrutiny expressed concerns in relation to the lack of delivery. He highlighted that the programme would reduce the cost currently incurred by the County Council for temporary accommodation and would provide real life changes for residents in County Durham. He highlighted that the main concern of the Committee was the delivery of council houses within the county and that a plan needed to be put in place that demonstrated that there was a strategy to deliver new council houses to the residents of County Durham.

He noted that the main contractor had been appointed in March 2024 which had been highlighted in the media, however, there had been no sign of delivery. He referred to the slide in presentation stating that the intention was to deliver at pace and asked for clarification. He confirmed that the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee wanted to see the programme delivery plan to monitor progress and that the delivery plan should identify delivery timescales with clear targets and milestones for the delivery for the various sites. With regards to challenges in relation to some of the sites, he emphasised that work needed to be undertaken to identify alternative sites and the delivery of the programme needed to be a priority of the Council. In relation to the procurement process, he commented that due diligence needed to be undertaken with relevant control processes in place in relation to the contractor and suggested penalties/bonuses for late/early delivery to ensure that they deliver within the relevant timeframes. He concluded by

highlighting the need for more management control and for the Board to ensure the Committee and residents of County Durham that the programme would be delivered on time and on budget.

The Corporate Director clarified that Councillor Moist's comment that nothing had been done since 2020 was inaccurate, adding that a commitment had been made in 2020 with due diligence to deliver 500 council homes and establish complex functions including construction and establishing the Housing Revenue Account. In addition, extensive detailed work had been undertaken with regards to design and development to ensure the feasibility of the programme, more in depth work in relation to the various sites with key milestones such as the appointment of the contractor and ensuring that governance arrangements were in place. It was explained that sites were initially identified with the best information available at that time, however after the detailed work to understand the viability of sites was undertaken, alternative sites may need to be recommended. It was noted that the CDHS is a wide-ranging strategy which requires working with many housing providers in the county to tackle issues such as homelessness. She confirmed that the delivery of council homes is a strategic priority for County Durham and a detailed action plan for the programme would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny.

The Head of Planning and Housing added that in consultation with the Committee, it had been agreed that a twelve-month delivery plan be brought forward. In relation to the concerns regarding the delivery, he confirmed that when developing such a programme from scratch it would typically take two years to ensure that all the relevant structures were in place with the expectation that the build would commence in year three. He explained that the COVID pandemic needed to be factored in and having considered the time taken to establish the structures and the impact of the COVID pandemic, the programme had made good progress. He was confident that the correct structures were in place to manage the programme and added that he chaired the Corporate Board and Councillor Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder was a member of the Board. He advised that he would be happy to come back to a future meeting of the Committee, if Members wished to review the strategy. The Chair confirmed that the Committee would want to review the strategy at a future meeting.

Mrs Morris asked whether the target of 500 new builds was enough, considering the demand for housing within the county. She noted that the target had originally been determined in 2020 and queried whether the target needed to be revisited. She asked for confirmation that the relevant infrastructure would be in place at the various sites across the county to support the additional 500 new homes and agreed that progress updates on the delivery of the programme are provided to future meetings of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Lines appreciated the clarification provided, however he recalled discussions at previous meetings where the figure of 500 new build properties had been confirmed and felt that officers valuable time could have been better spent developing the delivery plan. He was disappointed that this had been one of the

issues to defer the approval of the Housing Strategy at Council, which could potentially delay delivery of the new homes within the county. He added that the approach by the current Government may increase this figure further and commented that the adoption of the Housing Strategy should not be delayed any further.

Councillor Tinsley commented that it had been clarified that the programme would deliver a minimum of 500 new homes by 2026, however this raised another issue. He explained that the CDHS extended beyond 2030 and there was a need to define the number of new build homes beyond 2026. He added that Government could potentially double the housing requirement, therefore the number of new homes to be delivered by the programme beyond 2026 needed to be reviewed.

The Corporate Director commented on the bigger picture in relation to the delivery of homes in the county and highlighted the importance of working together with the private sector and social housing providers. She continued that there was a need for a round strategy and that the housing issues within the county will not be resolved by this programme, the private sector and social housing providers will be contributing. The real challenge in the county was delivering the affordable element of the target due to viability and infrastructure which needed to be addressed by stimulating the social aspect of the housing market and through the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Head of Planning and Housing acknowledged that the timeline had slipped and stressed that it is not 500 homes delivered by 2026. He advised that a new timeline would be brought back to Members once this had been determined. He confirmed that the county clearly needed more than 500 new homes and advised that more needed to be delivered for the programme to remain viable and for a Housing Revenue Account to be sustainable. He confirmed that infrastructure costs were included in the developments and explained that this was one of the reasons why some of the original sites were not viable.

Councillor Surtees commented that the composition needed to be clarified as it was not included in the report that was considered at Council and the CDHS had not been deferred at Council because of that issue alone. She highlighted that Members were advised at the Council meeting that deferment of the strategy would not delay ongoing work and progress of Council House Build Programme and added that a timeline of actions for the programme would be beneficial.

Councillor Rowlandson acknowledged that there had been a slight shortage of information reported to Members, however advised that there was an opportunity to further develop the programme and deliver more than the 500 new build homes going forward.

Councillor Moist commented that he intended his comments to be constructive and noted that Members recognised that the figure of 500 new build homes by 2026 would not be achievable when it was first reported to Overview and Scrutiny and that the target needed to be more realistic.

Councillor Shaw commented on the change in Government and priorities and the increased expectation in relation to meeting outstanding housing need and asked how this would be reflected in the CDHS going forward. The Corporate Director advised that Government were consulting on the updated National Planning Policy Framework and it was anticipated that the authority would receive an update before the end of December. She added that nationally there had been a significant increase and there was a need to reflect and determine the impact on the County Durham Plan. She advised that Members would be provided with an update on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the impact on the County Durham Plan.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted with Members comments on the Council House Build Programme shared with the Service Grouping to inform the County Durham Housing Strategy to be approved by Cabinet and County Council.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

The Head of Planning and Housing, informed members that he would be delivering the presentation and that the Planning and Policy Manager and the Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager were in attendance to assist with members questions. The presentation provided Members with the definition and background to HMOs and the current distribution in the county, highlighting that the vast majority were in the DH1 post code area.

He advised that there is currently no way to identify smaller HMOs, landlords with properties with five or more occupants must apply for an HMO licence from the Council which would be inspected regularly to ensure the property was safe and had access to amenities. HMOs with six or fewer tenants were considered permitted development and planning permission was not required. Private landlords in County Durham must also apply for a Selective Licence if the property falls within one of the 103 designated Selective Licensing areas within the county. He clarified that discrepancies between the data was due to not all HMO properties requiring a license.

With regards to the Article 4 Directions, the Head of Planning and Housing explained in the NPPF guidance they were limited to situations where it was necessary to protect local amenity or the wellbeing of the area and in all cases, based on robust evidence and apply to the smallest geographical area possible. It was noted that the Secretary of State had the power to intervene and reject the application if it does not meet the criteria. The only existing Article 4 Direction in County Durham was in relation to student accommodation which provided robust justification for the determination.

In relation to crime and anti-social behaviour, the authority is committed to improving housing standards and reducing anti-social behaviour and it was highlighted that there were no requirement or mechanism for Local Authorities to

intervene or input into who is a tenant of a property. However, if a residential property was licensed through the Selective Licensing Scheme or registered as an HMO there would be conditions attached to those licences. It was confirmed that the Local Authority would investigate reports of alleged contraventions of conditions or misconduct and would take the appropriate action based on the evidence.

With regards to how HMOs currently featured in the County Durham Housing Strategy, it was noted that there was an opportunity to include further reference to the issue, however it was highlighted that planning matters sit within the National Planning Policy Framework and that planning policy could not be enacted through the County Durham Housing Strategy. It was confirmed that wording on how all private sector HMOs were managed would be included in the housing strategy.

There is the possibility to include within the strategy reference about work being undertaken to identify new HMOs within the county and the option to look at planning powers to regulate HMOs as part of the review of the County Durham Plan. It was confirmed that the Strategy was a high-level plan with a 2034 timeline, however the Delivery Plan would be able to respond to any changes in policy. The Head of Planning and Housing suggested that Overview and Scrutiny consider reviewing the twelve-month Delivery Plan and continue to monitor the progress on a regular basis.

He concluded by advising that feedback from the meeting would inform the draft amendments to the County Durham Housing Strategy which would be presented to the Committee on the 4 November 2024 and once agreed the amended strategy would then return to Cabinet and County Council for adoption.

Councillor Crute commented that a number of Members had been approached by residents with concerns in relation to the establishment of HMOs across the county. There was some confusion as to what constituted an HMO and what the authority can and cannot do. Article 4 Directions was seen as rigid in approach and residents were unclear why this could not be applied to their local community. He continued that residents see a proliferation of HMOs in various communities throughout the county causing discontent and there was a need to get the message out to local communities what constituted an HMO, the role of the local authority in relation to HMOs, what an Article 4 Direction was and the evidence required.

He continued that reference had been made to the Delivery Plan however the plan would only deliver on what was included in the strategy and there needed to be a level of detail included with regards to the evidence required for Article 4 Directions. Engagement with local communities and stakeholders was needed to identify available options and he suggested a piece of work be undertaken in relation to the strategy rather than the delivery plan identifying what could be done now and what could be done in the future. He continued that there is a need for a two way conversation with local communities identifying what an HMO is, the Council's powers, the evidence required for an Article 4 Direction, the Council's role in relation to incidents of crime, antisocial behaviour and the impact on the local environment/community.

He highlighted that reference had been made to the lack of information regarding smaller HMOs and commented that some form of recording needed to be established which could then be linked to an engagement exercise with local communities, providing an opportunity for residents to report concerns in relation to HMOs and also the establishment of HMOs, allowing issues to be addressed immediately. He added that consultation with residents needed to be included within the CDHS Delivery Plan and that it was important for the Council to understand the scale of the emerging problem within local communities and build a database to explore issues further. Therefore, he recommended that a meaningful consultation and engagement exercise be undertaken with residents of County Durham as part of the County Durham Housing Strategy and that this needed to be included in the delivery plan.

Councillor Zair agreed that local communities were frustrated and that more consultation with local communities was needed.

The Head of Planning and Housing agreed to include the detail requested within the revised strategy and commented that he would be happy to meet residents in local communities to discuss issues in relation to HMOs.

Councillor Crute continued that there was a need for a specific consultation period in relation to HMOs, with a defined period for consultation built into the housing strategy. The Head of Planning and Housing commented that a consultation exercise would raise expectations in local communities and that he would advise against a specific consultation around HMOs, however something could be done around the private sector that would sit alongside the Housing Strategy.

Councillor Crute felt that a consultation exercise would make it clear what the authority can and cannot do which would manage expectations rather than raise expectations. He highlighted the importance of engaging with residents and stakeholders about this specific element of the Housing Strategy and commented that this was one of the reasons why the Housing Strategy was deferred at Full Council on the 17 July. The Head of Planning and Housing noted Councillor Crute's comments and would discuss with colleagues in the HMO Licensing Team and report back.

Councillor Tinsley commented that there was a disconnect with the strategy in relation to HMOs and highlighted that a lot of properties within County Durham were being converted into HMOs, however there was very little data on this and there was a need for a multi-faceted approach to the issue. He was pleased to see that the authority was responding to the consultation on the NPPF and suggested that in relation to Article 4 Direction requirements, that the Authority include in its response that there was a need to review the evidence base required to invoke Article 4 Directions. This would allow local authorities to take a preventative approach to reduce the number of future HMOs rather than the current reactive approach. The Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth confirmed that the

authority's response to the NPPF would be looked at further to strengthen the options available in relation to Article 4 Directions.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth confirmed that DCC's response to the NPPF would be further looked at and the levers in relation to Article 4 Directions reviewed.

Councillor Shield highlighted that there was also the humanitarian issue to be considered and the possibility of racial undertones. He noted that two briefings had been held in relation to the Asylum Accommodation Programme however they had been poorly attended. He advised that a further briefing for Members was scheduled to clarify the planned accommodation strategy which would affect areas in the county. He highlighted the importance of engagement with local communities and that Members had a role in both engaging with local communities and ensuring that the right information was provided.

Councillor Batey agreed with Councillor Crute's comments that there was a need for a strategic consultation with local communities throughout the county. Local communities need to understand what constituted an HMO, Durham County Councils powers in relation to HMOs, Article 4 Directions and how this was applied and the evidence required. She then seconded Councillor Crute's proposal. The Corporate Director commented that if Members wanted to seek views from communities on the development of the next stage of the Housing Strategy, this would impact the timeframe for bringing the strategy back to Members.

Councillor Crute commented that a defined period of consultation was required to get the message out into local communities with the comments made feeding back into the Housing Strategy. Public consultation would highlight issues in an area and he continued by highlighting the need to consider a simpler method to report HMOs. He added that the consultation should not impinge on the development of the County Durham Housing Strategy as this could be largely done online and would also demonstrate that the Council had listened to concerns in local communities.

The Corporate Director advised that by requesting a consultation she would need to seek legal advice, as there was a set process in relation to consultation which had to be followed, including the format and consultation period. She continued that a formal public consultation would delay the progress of the strategy and that the strategy would not be considered by Cabinet or Council before the end of the year. She confirmed that they would look at the full implications of a formal consultation.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the comments made by Members at the meeting would be captured and formulated into an Overview and Scrutiny response which would be shared with the Service Grouping to feed into the revised draft County Durham Housing Strategy which would come back to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration. Councillor Crute confirmed that he was happy with the suggested approach.

Councillor Shaw commented that 50 local residents had turned up at a local surgery expressing concerns in relation to HMOs. He highlighted that the County Durham Housing Strategy was a strategy for the residents of County Durham and expressed his concern about the impact of HMOs on local communities. He highlighted that family homes within the county were being converted into HMOs and that a charity had purchased twelve houses within the same local community to create HMOs which had a big impact on the local community and commented on the importance of engagement with local communities. He continued that Durham City was a different scenario to the rest of the county and that mining communities within the county with low-cost properties for purchase were now having issues with HMOs. He concluded by commenting that the County Durham Housing Strategy had to reflect the impact of HMOs on local communities and that HMOs would be delivered when required and not at the expense of creating an imbalance within local communities.

Councillor Stead highlighted that Members training in relation to HMOs was very important as residents were not always provided with the correct advice. He continued by suggesting that the Council may want to write to the new Government requesting that Local Authorities and Police Forces be provided with more powers in relation to HMOs. He made reference to the previous item on the Council House Build Programme and noted that the figure of 500 new houses had always been reported at the meetings he had attended. He understood why there was a large percentage of HMOs in Durham City, however he queried the reason for the numbers of HMOs in the Stanley and Annfield Plain areas. The Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager explained that this was a result of the Mears Group having properties in these locations.

Councillor Freeman commented that he was unclear about the motion and he was more comfortable with the approach suggested in relation to a formal response to the service, adding that he would not want the adoption of the County Durham Housing Strategy to be delayed any further. Councillor Shaw clarified that the debate was on the proliferation of HMOs and the impact on family homes and local communities within the county.

Councillor Heaviside asked for clarification as to whether the discussion related to HMOs in general or in relation to Asylum seekers.

The Chair confirmed that it related to HMOs in general.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth acknowledged that there was a need to communicate with the public and would consider the approach further.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted with Members comments on Houses of Multiple Occupation shared with the Service Grouping to inform the County Durham Housing Strategy to be approved by Cabinet and County Council.

7 Quarter Four: Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24 and Quarter One: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2024/25

The Committee received two joint reports of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth. The first report provided details for the final revenue and capital outturn position for the Regeneration, Economy and Growth (REG) service grouping in 2023/24 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager Resources and Regeneration gave an update on the final outturn for 2023/24 that looked at the revenue and capital for the previous year. In relation to the revenue account the service reported a cash limit underspend of £0.343 million against a revised budget of £57.322 million. Net adjustments on energy reductions of £1.805 million had been excluded from the REG cash limit outturn position. Also excluded was £1.554 million in respect of Leisure Centre income shortfalls post Covid (£0.825 million) and losses due to Leisure Transformation closures that were being covered corporately (£0.735 million) and £0.245 million linked to pay award vacancies.

The REG cash limit balance carried forward at 31 March 2024 was £ £1.462 million and other earmarked reserves under the direct control of REG totalled £28.018 million.

The report provided details of the areas of underspend and overspend within the service accounting for the outturn position. Capital expenditure incurred in 2023/24 was £125.951 million, representing 94% of the revised REG capital budget of £134.505 million. A request was made to the Member Officer Working Group to carry forward the £8.554 million underspend to the current year to augment the 2024/25 Capital Programme.

Resolved:

That the final outturn position against the 2023/24 revenue and capital budget be noted.

The second joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth provided details of the forecast outturn position for quarter one revenue and capital for Regeneration, Economy and Growth (REG) as at 30 June 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager Resources and Regeneration gave an update on the outturn position to date and advised that the original service revenue budget had been revised in year to incorporate various permanent budget adjustments.

The report showed the cash limits for each service and reported an overspend of £0.966 million against a revised budget of £59.026 million which took into account adjustments for sums outside the cash limit that were met from corporate reserves

and use of / contributions to earmarked reserves. The revised capital budget was £170.367 million with expenditure of £35.270 million as at 30 June 2024.

In summary, he highlighted that the financial outlook was challenging for all services and a robust monitoring process was in place throughout the year to help reduce the projected overspend. It was noted that the service had a healthy reserve balance to offset the overspend should the outlook not improve.

Mr Simons referred to the £3.6 million that would be drawn from reserves and asked how the reserves were structured. The Finance Manager explained that reserves were built up throughout the year from a variety of resources and underspends that could then be drawn on to meet the service's priorities. The Cabinet report summarising earmarked reserves would be provided to Mr Simons.

Responding to a query from Councillor B Moist regarding the reduced revenue with regards to the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Finance Manager advised that the Leisure Transformation Programme was to be considered at Cabinet on 18 September 2024. Additional costs had been identified with regards to health and safety that had not been factored into the consultant's projections. He noted that some of the schemes were projected as being self-financed and additional income levels would have to be built up, however the projection levels were not being achieved at this point and would continue to be monitored.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

8 Quarter Four 2023/24 Performance Management Report

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive which provided an overview of progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in the 2023-27 Council Plan and contained the most recent performance data available as of 31 March 2024. The information related to activity and events taking place in the fourth quarter of the 2023/24 financial year (January to March) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategy Team Leader presented the report and highlighted the key messages structured around the four thematic areas that were going well and issues that were being addressed.

Councillor B Moist commented on the format of the report and asked that acronyms not be used and more meaningful and concise information be reflected in the reports.

Councillor A Savory commented that she found the glossary on page 152 of the report to be extremely helpful.

Councillor A Surtees referred to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and asked whether the programme would be fully delivered and that all the money would be spent

before the end of March 2025. With regards to programme delivery, the Strategy Team Leader advised that there had been a definite increase from quarter one with more uptake on business support programmes and jobs created and would take a look at the performance output to the end of the financial year. She confirmed that there was a data lag in relation to some of the outcomes and that more current information would be available in the Quarter 1 Performance report. The Finance Manager added that they did not want to lose any funding and progress was constantly monitored to ensure that they were on target in relation to spend.

Councillor R Crute was concerned with the direction of travel with regards to households receiving energy advice from the Managing Money Better scheme (MMB) and queried whether there was alternative provision which would explain the low figures in the current climate. The Strategy Team Leader explained that they had seen increases in the number of households seeking advice during the previous energy crisis and that numbers had reduced with the introduction of the energy cap. It was anticipated that there would be an increase of referrals in the next quarter.

Councillor Crute then asked as to whether there was any benchmarking data available concerning the scheme.

The Strategy Team Leader explained that the figures were a local measure however she would make enquiries with the Service Grouping and clarify as to whether there was any comparative data at a regional level.

Resolved:

That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance (January to March), and the actions taken to address areas of challenge be noted.

9 Any Other Business

The Chair reminded Members that arrangements had been made for a Special joint meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on the 23 September at 1pm which would provide Members with an update on the Leisure Transformation Programme.