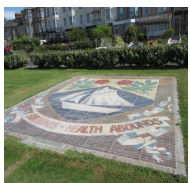


OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21





Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for the performance of all Scrutiny functions (under the Local Government Act 2000) on behalf of the City Council.

Budget and Performance Panel

The Budget and Performance Panel has specific responsibility for providing overview and scrutiny to issues regarding the City Council's performance, budget and financial issues.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Each year a Community Safety meeting is arranged.

Councillor Colin Hartley, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety, Chief Inspector Chris Hardy and Sergeant Lindsay Brown from Lancashire Constabulary and Mark Davies, the Director for Communities and the Environment, attended the meeting.



Issues discussed by the Committee included:

- The upcoming May Elections.
- Speeding.
- Drug dealing.
- Off road motorcycles.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Acting in its capacity as the City Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006 and Crime and Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, the Committee was given an overview of the work that had been undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership and Lancashire Constabulary on a number of issues raised by the Committee especially with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also reported was the partnership work that was being undertaken, not only the ongoing work with the Council, but with local universities, youth services and the third sector, was highlighted as a particular success in the past year.



LANCASTER CITY CENTRE MOVEMENT AND PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

At the Committee's October 2020 meeting the Chair welcomed Mr Andrew Hewitson, Policy Officer of Lancashire County Council to the meeting.

Mr Hewitson provided a presentation on the Lancaster City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy.



The main issues contained within the presentation were:

- **Route Options Report**
- **Strategy Structure**
- **Baseline Assessment**
- **Ease of Movement for;**
 - ⇒ **Pedestrians**
 - ⇒ **Motor Traffic**
 - ⇒ **Cycling**
 - ⇒ **Services**
- **Implications for City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy**
- **Opportunities**
- **Route Options**
- **Consultation**



Following the presentation the Committee raised a number of issues with officers from Lancashire County Council, including; where the funding would come from, where the traffic would move to should the plans go ahead and the implications it would cause for local residents should the bus station be removed.

Questions were also asked relating to; parking on the sea front and vehicles parking on the pavement and therefore restricting space for pedestrians and wheelchair users.



COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPACT UPDATES

The Budget and Performance Panel received regular updates, throughout the year, on the financial impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Chief Finance Officer attended the Panel's June 2020 meeting and provided an update on the financial implications of the pandemic in line with the Ministry for Homes, Community and Local Government (MHCLG) submission for May 2020.

The report set out best and worst scenarios for the Council's finances in 2020/21.

The financial implications of the pandemic were divided into 3 categories;

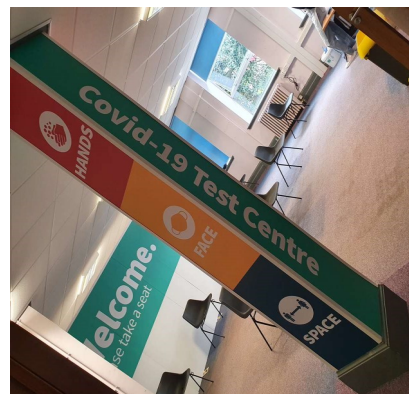
- New costs - costs arising purely as a result of the Council's pandemic emergency response.
- Increased costs - resulting from increased need in some service areas such as temporary accommodation or the purchase of additional personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Loss of income - such as car parking and other fees and charges.

The report included financial modelling and scenarios as well as estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's General Fund Budget and Reserves.



The analysis focused primarily on 2020/21 but the Panel were advised that it was anticipated that COVID-19 would have a longer lasting impact on the Lancaster District impacting on both medium and long-term financial planning.

The Panel received a further update in July 2020 with additional details of the financial impact of COVID-19 in line with the June 2020 MHCLG submission.



The Panel was advised that the largest financial impact to the Council was exposure to loss of income from fees and charges.

The closure of Salt Ayre Leisure Centre under COVID-19 restrictions and the loss of income from the district's car parks were among the examples of lost income directly resulting from the pandemic.

The Panel continued to receive regular updates on the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through regular Budget and Policy Framework Update Reports.

BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL



TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Panel's views were sought on the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22. This was an opportunity for the Panel to consider and make comments or recommendations on the Strategy prior to its formal presentation to Council in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

BUDGET CONSULTATION

In January 2021 the Panel virtually held its annual Stakeholder meeting.

A presentation from Councillor Anne Whitehead the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance, and Resources was provided on the City Council's Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2021/22.

The presentation gave an

update on the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cabinet Member also advised on other achievements regarding housing and economic development and regeneration. Detail regarding Recovery and Build Back Better, Outcomes, Savings, Additional Resources, Council Tax, Funding Assumptions, Fees and Charges, General Fund Revenue Budget and Future Strategy was also provided.

The Panel raised a number of issues including; budget proposals, Investment Strategy and Capital Programme, commercial property and non-reserve growth items and income from business rates and income tax.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Panel considered the draft strategy in September 2020 and then again in November 2020 following its presentation to Cabinet in October 2020.

Councillor Erica Lewis, Leader of the Council and Councillor Anne Whitehead, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources attended the November meeting.

The Panel asked a wide range of questions and requested clarity on the social value matrix and how social value would be measured or judged prior to consideration of the Strategy by Full Council.



DISCUSSIONS WITH CABINET MEMBERS

Each year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee invite Cabinet Members to provide an overview of their portfolio and to answer questions from the Committee. This year two Cabinet members have attended Committee meetings.

In September 2020 Councillor Caroline Jackson, attended the meeting, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and;

- Council Housing
- Homelessness
- Private sector housing
- Social Housing
- Caravan sites
- Traveller sites
- Refugee housing
- Household support & resilience

Councillor Jackson provided an overview of her portfolio.

A number of questions were asked in relation to Local Authority Trading Companies, camper vans, Mellishaw Traveller site, housing waiting lists, affordable housing grants and private rental evictions.

Councillor Jackson was welcomed back to Committee in March 2021. This time an update was provided on the newly established LATCo for Housing and other areas of the Housing Portfolio, in particularly the impact of COVID-19 on the Housing Service.

Also discussed was the Government's white paper on social housing, the possibility of introducing the Selective Landlord Licensing scheme, Mainway, private landlords relating to antisocial behaviour and the latest position on repairs to Council houses.

In January 2021 Councillor Janice Hanson attended the meeting. Councillor Hanson is Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Regeneration and Planning and;

- Economic Regeneration
- Planning including Local Plan
- Conservation & Urban Design
- Development & Building Control
- Compulsory Purchase
- Climate Change Resilience
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Transport Policy & Parking

The Head of Planning and Place and the Head of Property, Investment and Regeneration also attended the meeting.

Councillor Hanson provided the Committee with a presentation which gave an overview of her portfolio.

A number of questions were asked relating to such issues as the Planning Service, delays in planning applications due to a shortage of planning officers, transport in Carnforth, sustainable neighbourhoods, Bailrigg Gardens, UN sustainability goals, the Eden Project, Park and Ride and the Morecambe Future High Streets regeneration bid. It was agreed that the Committee would receive a briefing once the feedback from the unsuccessful Morecambe Future High Streets regeneration bid had been received.

Councillor Anne Whitehead, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources, has regularly attended meetings of the Budget and Performance Panel.

WORKING & INFORMAL TASK GROUPS

RECYCLING WORKING GROUP

The Recycling Working Group first met in March 2020 and met again in February 2021.

Initiatives such as a route optimisation system and a new green waste system were being modelled to increase efficiency and would be introduced later in the year. The mapping of fly tipping on the GIS system was also now being undertaken.

The Group discussed the possibility of communal recycling which could be introduced in parts of the district, but would probably not work in all areas. The next meeting of the Group is scheduled for June 2021.

TASK GROUPS

At the March Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting it was agreed that a new Housing Recovery Informal Task Group would be set up to consider the impact of COVID-19.

The Committee also agreed that the Property Portfolio Informal Task Group would be re-scoped and refocused.

The Morecambe Future High Street Bid Informal Task Group had its first meeting in March 2021, reported its recommendations to the April meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which were, as amended, submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

HOLDING CABINET TO ACCOUNT AND CALL-IN

HOLDING CABINET MEMBERS TO ACCOUNT

Overview and Scrutiny Members continue to hold Cabinet Members to account. This has taken place through the Call-in process and considering items of business at Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Budget and Performance Panel and also through arranging for Cabinet Members to come to meetings to discuss issues and developments within Cabinet portfolios, as well as through meetings of Pre-Scrutiny Members.

CALL-IN

Call-in is one of a number of ways in which Overview and Scrutiny can hold Cabinet to account.

The choice to 'Call-in' a Cabinet decision is used sparingly at the City Council, and with care.

There was one request for Call-in this municipal year.

The Call-in considered a decision made by Cabinet in July 2020 in relation to the Property Investment Strategy - Investment Proposal (Phase 3 Business Case). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee made recommendations to Cabinet.

PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

Pre-Scrutiny is the process mainly based on officers providing briefings on Cabinet reports and the study of the City Council's published 'Key Decisions' contained in the List of Forthcoming Key Decisions. With this information the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can select issues that add value and, if necessary, consider before a decision is taken.

This process can help to add value to decisions at the pre-decision stage, can widen consultation to include Non-Executive Councillors and it can also help to minimise the use of Call-in.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomes the opportunity to submit a response during the consultation phase of a decision and encourages this approach.

OUTSIDE BODIES

At the request of Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has made the following appointments to outside bodies.

Representatives are asked to report back, if necessary, to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of these bodies.

| OUTSIDE BODY | OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEMBERSHIP |
|---|---|
| Homelessness Forum | Mandy King |
| Lancaster, Morecambe and District Fairtrade Group | David Whitaker |



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Budget and Performance Panel would like to thank the following for their contribution to the Scrutiny process during 2020/21:

- Cabinet Members who have appeared before Overview and Scrutiny bodies;
- Representatives from organisations, which have delivered presentations to the Committee/ Panel this year;
- Officers who have attended meetings and participated in the work of scrutiny;