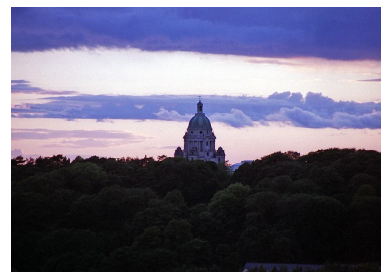


OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23





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.

The Chair welcomed Chief Inspector Dave Britain, Inspector James Martin and Sergeant Lindsey Brown to the meeting

The Committee was given an overview of the work that had been undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership over the last 12 months.



Following the review of the Lancashire Strategic Assessment and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment the Partnership had set the following priorities earlier in the year:-

- Anti-social Behaviour.
- Youth Alcohol Issues
- The development of a Suicide Prevention Action Plan

The Community Safety Partnership had also seen the introduction of the Public Space Pro-

tection Order in December 2021 and the Bay Cycleway CCTV project.

It was reported that a 25% reduction in reports of anti-social behaviour had been seen within the district but knife crime had increased. With regards to youth alcohol issues, a district wide Community Alcohol Partnership had been established. This Partnership had undertaken test purchases and a programme of education packages in schools for over 14 year olds was being undertaken.

Members were advised that the Suicide Prevention Plan had been developed to address the increase in suicides within the district and the increasing issue of young people experiencing mental health issues since the lockdown.

The Committee went on to discuss the Public Space Protection Order that was in place. Information was provided on the national introduction of 20 thousand new police officers and the need to get 'bobbies on the beat'



COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Committee was also provided with an update from the Head of Public Realm on the current projects being undertaken in 2022/23 and future developments for 2023/24 for the Lancaster District Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to ensure that the Lancaster District continues to be a safe place in which to live, work and explore.



Data provided by both Lancashire Police and Lancaster City Council show that there has been a decrease in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents reported over the last 12 months, however, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service are experiencing an increase in deliberate secondary fires, such as waste bins set alight and further analysis is required to look at the reasons behind this.

There has been an increase in other crime categories such as dwelling burglaries, robbery of both individuals and businesses and violent crime. The cost of living crisis and the loss of services during the Covid pandemic are both believed to be a contributing factor. Crime with bladed weapons such as knives are also on the increase.

The police and Morecambe Town Council have succeeded in 'The Knife Angel' being displayed in the district in 2024. There is a corresponding Education package that will be provided alongside the visual display.

A district wide Community Alcohol Partnership has been established. Co-ordinated test purchases have taken place and there have only been a handful of premises that have failed these tests. There is also a programme of work being undertaken with schools to provide bespoke education packages for 14-year olds as research has shown that this is a vulnerable age group.

The Suicide Prevention Action Plan has been developed to address the higher than average rates of suicide in the District. Again there has been a significant increase in young people experiencing mental health issues due to the lockdown. Work is ongoing with non-statutory partners to look at the infrastructure in the district and to see where action can be taken to help prevent these tragedies.

Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in partnership with the local neighbourhood policing teams has focussed on education rather than enforcement, however 2 Fixed Penalty tickets have been issued for persistent breaches.

In response to surveys of residents who indicated that the Bay Cycleway was a place where people and particularly women felt unsafe CSP funding was secured for the installation of CCTV cameras between Morecambe and Lancaster. Clearance of some branches of the tree canopy were also planned to allow for more effective lighting commencing around the Millennium Bridge.

ANNUAL HEALTH CARE MEETING

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has established an annual meeting to discuss healthcare matters in the district. At the meeting in February the Chair welcomed Peter Tinson and Hilary Fordham from NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board and Amy Williams and Dr Gavin Torr of Lancaster Medical Practice.

Hilary Fordham and Peter Tinson provided the Committee with an overview of the changes to the health and care system brought about by the Health and Care Act 2022.

- The eight Clinical Commissioning Groups in Lancashire and South Cumbria were replaced in July 2022 by the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.
- This new body takes on the NHS commissioning function previously held by the CGC's as well as responsibility for Community Pharmacies, Dentistry and Eyecare.
- A new statutory committee, the Integrated Care Partnership, has also been established to enable partners to develop joint strategies to address long-term challenges which cannot be addressed by a single sector or organisation.

Dr Gavin Torr and Amy Williams addressed the Committee with updates on the improvements to the level of service provided by the Lancaster Medical Practice along with a presentation outlining the services provided by the Practice during 2022 and the start of 2023 including:-

- Patient Pathways by which patients are treated.
- Activity including number of appointments and home visits delivered, medications issued and documents processed.
- Prescription processing times.
- Call handling metrics and average telephone queue times from April 2022 to January 2023.

Following the presentation the committee posed questions relating to the provision of healthcare in the district. Discussion followed on issues including the proposed relocation or refurbishment of the RLI, difficulties faced by residents accessing services, urgent care triage, out-of-hours care, access to face-to-face services for residents in deprived areas and the provision of Health Visitors under the new authority.

The Chair thanked the guests for their attendance.

BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL



Throughout the year the Panel has undertaken scrutiny on various reports. Quarterly reports on performance, projects and resources have been provided. Also throughout the year the Panel has received a presentation and information regarding the Financial Overview and Strategic Direction for each Directorate. The Panel has also received reports and presentations on the following topics.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) for 2022/23 which included the Annual Investment Strategy, which was approved by Council in February 2022, with the Mid-Year Review submitted for scrutiny to the Panel in November 2022. There were no policy changes to the TMS; the details in the report updated the position in light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already

approved.

BUDGET CONSULTATION

In February 2023 the Panel held its annual Stakeholder meeting. A presentation from Councillor Anne Whitehead, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance, and Resources was provided on the City Council's Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2023/24. The presentation contained details regarding:

- Revenue Budget
- Core Income
- General Fund Revenue Budget Projections
- Council's Core Plan 2030 -Strategic Priorities and Outcomes.
- Outcomes-Based Resourcing
- Savings and Budget Proposals
- Senior Leadership Team Restructure.
- Back-Office Support Functions.
- Assets and Hospitality
- Fees and Charges
- Visitor Services
- Arts, Culture, Heritage and Events
- Business Support
- Lancaster City Council

component of Council Tax 2022/23 to 2025/26

- General Fund Revenue Budget
- Future Strategy

Councillor Whitehead also responded to questions from members of the Panel, and also from members of the public. Other Cabinet Members and City Council officers in attendance also assisted with responses to queries.

The Panel raised a number of issues including:

- Cost savings/processes involved
- The Platform
- Visitor Information Centres
- The OBR process
- Salt Ayr Leisure Centre
- Frozen posts, staff pay and inflation
- Risk assessments
- Future use of council buildings

It was resolved that Cabinet be asked to revisit the Platform issue contained within the budget proposals.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to look at the Corporate Plan priorities for 2030, with a meeting being arranged for each priority, to add value by considering to what extent the Council has delivered on the outcomes.

A sustainable District

In October the Committee was given details on the City Council's progress in tackling Climate Change since the Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 with the aim to be Zero Carbon by 2030.

In Public Realm, route optimising had seen a reduction of 37 tons in CO2 emissions with the Council now in possession of 2 electric bin wagons. Recycling has continued to increase and a pilot in Heysham introducing recycling was about to start. The Council has planted 12,000 trees and was working with Community Interest Companies to introduce more biodiversity in the district.

Salt Ayre Leisure Centre previously comprised of 30-35% of the Council's total energy consumptions - £6.8 million of Government funding was secured to install a heat pump, 1.1 MW solar array, glazing and LED lighting making the building carbon neutral. Work was undertaken on ten other buildings to provide improvements such as glazing and LED lighting.

Members were given details of the Co-Wheels project and information on future projects such as a solar array at Burrow Beck, replacement boilers, heat networks and work on the Council housing stock.

An inclusive and Prosperous Local Economy

In December the Chair welcomed the Head of Economic Development and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Sustainable Economic Prosperity to the meeting. The Committee was provided with a presentation on the work the Council was undertaking on the Council priority 'An Inclusive and Prosperous Local Economy'.

It was reported that the Lancaster District Economy was estimated to be worth £2.9 billion in 2020 with the creative and cultural sector in the Lancaster District contributing £90 million a year with 7.7 million visitors per year to the district. There were 4,500 businesses operating providing 57,000 jobs with growth sectors being Digital, Energy and Low Carbon and also Research and Education. In terms of delivering the priority it was reported that the Council was focusing on helping the local economy by supporting the creation of employment opportunities, sector specific growth such as digital and green technology, developing skills provision to support businesses and attempting to retain talent within the district which would boost the local economy with higher wages and skills.

Members were advised that the Council worked with its partners to support Community Wealth Building/Inclusive Growth by supporting social enterprises and co-operatives. The Council also assisted with putting together funding bids for Economic Prosperity and Resilience, Culture and Heritage, UKSPF, Social Value and Community Wealth Building.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

It was reported that the Marketing and Tourism team worked to generate footfall and spend in the local economy, helping to sustain businesses and in turn business rates. Cultural activities to support wellbeing, education and the local economy were supported by providing access to cultural and heritage activities across the district for all residents as well as providing volunteering opportunities.

The importance of partnership working was reiterated with the Council relying on active and collaborative partners to deliver all aspects of work from anchor institutions.

The Committee went on to discuss the Platform and the Ashton Hall as performance spaces. A number of questions were raised relating to the Grand Theatre, best practice, the Musician's Co-op and local graduate retention figures.

Healthy and Happy Communities

At the February meeting the Chair invited the Director of Communities and The Environment, the Head of Public Realm, and the Head of Housing to the meeting along with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Arts, Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing, and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services. Each Officer addressed the committee in turn with an overview of the contribution to the 'Healthy and Happy Communities' council priority made by their service.

The emphasis was on the preventative healthcare benefits of the services provided by the Council such as Housing, Public Protection, Salt Ayre Leisure Centre and the provision of open public and green spaces.

The Committee was also updated on the work of Customer Services and Community Connectors.

Councillor Sandra Thornberry, Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing, informed the Committee of the publication of the arts and heritage research audit carried out by Counter-culture LLC and how this would be forming the basis of a draft strategy in conjunction with the Cultural Heritage Cabinet Advisory Group.

Councillor Jason Wood, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services informed the Committee that the reports produced on Customer Services for the benefit of Cabinet and Group Leaders will now also be shared with Scrutiny Committee Chairs.

TASK GROUPS AND WORKING GROUP

PLANNING INFORMAL TASK GROUP

The Planning Informal Task Group began work in January after the outcome of the LGA Peer Review of the City's Planning and Place Service became available. This was a review requested by the City Council and has been an independent and comprehensive process. The Peer Review helps local planning authorities assess what they are trying to achieve; how they are going about it; what they are achieving and what they need to improve. The group had the benefit of the work of the LGA peer review team, which meant that a focus could be made on recommendations in the report of the peer review. It also gained additional perspectives from smaller professional users of the planning service and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Regulatory Committee, as well as the experiences of members of the task group itself in relation to planning services in the District and contacts they had had from residents. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report of the Informal Task Group and made a number of recommendations, which were considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 11 April 2023.

MORECAMBE FUTURE HIGH STREET BID TASK GROUP

Following the Council's unsuccessful bid under HM Government's Future High Streets Initiative, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee established an informal task group to consider why the bid had been unsuccessful. The purpose of the Informal Task Group was to assist in ensuring that any future bids that were submitted by the City Council were given the best chance of success in accessing the necessary funding for the sustainable economic priorities of the local community. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report of the informal Task Group and made a number of recommendations, which were considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 11 April 2023.

RECYCLING WORKING GROUP

The Committee was requested by Council to set up a working group, open to all Councillors, to investigate best practice in achieving higher recycling rates by consulting with other councils, residents and City Councillors. For example asking residents and members what they want to know about recycling, how this might be presented and how they wish to be kept informed..

The Working Group has met on a number of occasions including holding a public meeting to hear people's ideas on how to tackle fly-tipping.

HOLDING CABINET TO ACCOUNT AND CALL-IN

HOLDING CABINET MEMBERS TO ACCOUNT

Overview and Scrutiny Members continue to hold Cabinet Members to account. This takes 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.

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 have been no requests for Call-in this municipal year.

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.

Overview and Scrutiny welcomes the opportunity to submit a response during the consultation phase of a decision.

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	Councillor Mandy King
Lancaster, Morecambe and District Fairtrade Group	Councillor Abi Mills



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 2022/23:

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