

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6.00 P.M.

10TH SEPTEMBER 2025

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillors Martin Gawith (Chair), Chris Hanna (Vice-Chair), Suhir Abuhajar, Maria Deery, Abi Mills, Sue Penney and Joyce Pritchard

Also in attendance:- Councillors Tim Hamilton-Cox and Ross Hunter

Budget and Performance Panel members submitting apologies for minute 20: Councillors Colbridge and Metcalf-Reiner

### Officers in attendance:-

Alex Kinch  
Paul Thompson  
Shaun Crossman  
Claire Dubelbeis  
Stephen Metcalfe  
Jenny Kay

Chief Officer - People and Policy  
Chief Officer - Resources and Section 151 Officer  
Technical Manager – Information and Comms  
Projects and Performance Manager  
Principal Democratic Support Officer  
Civic & Ceremonial Democratic Support Officer

### **17 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2025 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **18 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR**

There was no Urgent Business.

### **19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **20 UPDATE ON THE FIT FOR FUTURE PROGRAMME**

**It was noted that all members of the Budget and Performance Panel had been invited to attend for this item.**

The Chair welcomed the Chief Officer – People and Policy and the Projects and Performance Manager to the meeting on Teams.

Members were given an overview of the Fit for Future programme. It was reported that Phase 2 of the programme was now underway. This second phase commenced in June 2025 and introduced 13 new projects following on from Phase 1 which had started in May 2024 with many of the phase 1 projects ongoing. It was reported that Benefits Review Plans were in place for all phase 1 projects and were being created for the new Phase 2 projects. Members were advised that the purpose of these plans was to show the potential benefits and measures for each project.

The Committee was informed that the majority of the work carried out was resourced from within existing service provision, with the exception of the use of 2 Business Analysts who were used when required.

Members asked a number of questions regarding the Fit for Future programme relating mostly to the monitoring, outcomes and milestones of the projects. Information was also requested on the commercial activity of the City Council's cafes at Williamson Park and Salt Ayre Leisure Centre. The Committee agreed that more information should be provided for the Committee at a future meeting as set out below.

It was also suggested that Chief Officers could attend to update the Committee on their specific projects including details of financial savings such as for the Customer Services BAU project.

***Resolved :-***

That the Committee request further information in relation to the Fit for Future Programme to include :

1. Monitoring, milestones and outcomes of the individual projects to enable the Committee to scrutinise success and that Benefits Review Plans include the projects progress (to show future savings).
2. Service implications, efficiencies and savings to date for each project.
3. Specific information on the City Council's commercial activities such as Williamson Park and Salt Ayre Leisure Centre cafes to include outturn over the last 3 years and future plans.
4. An update on the Waste Collection Policy Implementation Group that was established to deliver the Government's Waste Strategy.

## **21 USE OF AI TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE**

The Chair welcomed the Chief Officer - Resources and the Technical Manager – Information and Communication to the meeting.

Members were given a presentation which detailed the Copilot project that was currently being trialled by the Council. It was reported that Microsoft 365 Copilot was an AI-driven assistant integrated into the Microsoft 365 suite, created to boost productivity and support better decision-making. Copilot automated repetitive tasks and minimized manual effort, which would enable users to concentrate on more important activities and increasing overall efficiency.

The trial included up to 150 users from the Council's Leadership Team, Cabinet Members and staff volunteers to evaluate Copilot's impact. Workshops for Copilot Studio would take place for interested departments and two teams would be selected for deep Dives sessions to help determine where Copilot can best be used.

The Committee was informed that the project would be evaluated to assess benefits and lessons learned by 2026.

Questions were raised over the accuracy of AI, environmental concerns including data centres, offsetting risks and shared learning.

***Resolved :-***

That the update be noted.

**22 FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS**

The Forthcoming Key Decisions were noted.

**23 CITY COUNCIL COMMISSIONED CONSULTATIONS**

There were no consultations to consider.

**24 DECISIONS THE CHAIR HAS BEEN CONSULTED ON**

The Chair advised that there had been no decisions he had been consulted on.

**25 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the updated Work Programme.

Members considered the recent letter that had been circulated relating to the outcome of the recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment. It was agreed that this would be added to the Committee's Work Programme with representatives from Lancashire County Council invited to report to a future, or additional meeting of the Committee. This would be to inform of the findings of the CQC Assessment and the progress already being made, with all other members of Council invited to attend to allow them all to be briefed.

It was further agreed that the following scheduled dates of the Committee were amended :

- 15<sup>th</sup> October move to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025
- 26<sup>th</sup> November move to 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025
- 2<sup>nd</sup> April move to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026

It was also agreed to write again to the Chief Executive of Lancashire County Council regarding Flooding in particular the Lancaster City Surface Water Management Plan, as no response had been received. It was also agreed that a letter be sent to the relevant County Council Cabinet Member.

***Resolved :-***

That the updates above be actioned.

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Chair

(The meeting ended at 7.06 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Jenny Kay, Democratic Support - email [jkay@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:jkay@lancaster.gov.uk)**

