

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

6.00 P.M.

4TH JUNE 2025

PRESENT:- Councillors Chris Hanna (Chair), Ruth Colbridge, Ross Hunter,
Isabella Metcalf-Riener, Sue Penney, James Sommerville and
Jackson Stubbs

Also in Attendance: -

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox (Cabinet Member for Finance and Property)

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Hamish Mills
Councillors Martin Gawith, Abi Mills and Joyce Pritchard (Overview and
Scrutiny Committee Members)

Officers in attendance:

Paul Thompson	Chief Officer - Resources and Section 151 Officer
Alex Kinch	Chief Officer - People and Policy
Joanne Wilkinson	Chief Officer - Housing and Property
Dawn Bradley	OD Manager
Claire Dubelbeis	Projects and Performance Manager
Stephen Morris	Commercial Property Manager
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer

At the commencement of the meeting the Chair welcomed Councillors to the meeting and thanked the previous Chair, Councillor Ross Hunter, for the way he had chaired meetings of the Panel.

1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed:-

“That Councillor Ross Hunter be appointed Vice-Chair of the Budget and Performance Panel for the Municipal Year.”

Resolved:-

That Councillor Ross Hunter be appointed Vice-Chair of the Budget and Performance Panel for the Municipal Year.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2025 were approved as a correct record.

3 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

The Chair advised that there were no items of urgent business.

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations were made at this point.

5 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT

The Projects and Performance Manager provided an update on the Authority's progress in updating the Strategic Risk Register. It was noted that if the Panel wished to consider Appendix B to the report then this would need to be considered in the exempt part of the meeting in accordance with paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Panel was advised that there were currently 26 Strategic Risks open on the register.

The Council's Strategic Risk Register was appended to the report for the Panel's consideration and showed the changes made during the last quarter covering the period 24th February to 12th May 2025.

Members asked questions on specific items of risk including SR02 in particular the control measure and queried why this was for the Panel as the Panel did not mitigate risk and requested that the control measure for the Panel be removed, SR05 and whether this was adequately resourced and SR12 and whether this was more of an operational risk. Responses were provided by the Chief Officer - People and Policy, the Chief Officer - Finance and Resources and the Projects and Performance Manager.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, thanked the Projects and Performance Manager for her report.

Resolved: -

That the report be noted.

6 PROJECTS AND PERFORMANCE - Q4 2024/25

The Panel received a report from the Chief Executive that provided Members with an update on corporate performance and strategic projects during quarter four of 2024 - 25 (January to March 2025). It was noted that the report had been updated to show some analysis as well as guidance.

Members of the Panel asked a number of questions including guidance on best practice, on the Council Parks, Salt Ayre – admissions and sustained growth, queries regarding staff sickness absences, occupancy rates for commercial property, Williamson Park Café, queries on amber status projects that had remained at this status for some time and reasons for this such as resourcing.

The Chief Officer – People and Policy responded to queries regarding staff absences at the meeting. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Property responded to queries regarding Williamson Park.

The Chief Officer – Housing and Property advised that queries regarding commercial property would be responded to later in the meeting.

The Projects and Performance Manager advised that she would provide additional information in order to respond to the queries that could not be answered at the meeting.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, thanked Officers for the report, verbal updates and for answering questions.

It was moved by Councillor Chris Hanna, seconded by Councillor Sue Penney and agreed: -

“That the Panel look at individual amber status projects at future meetings.”

Resolved: -

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Panel look at individual amber status projects at future meetings.

7 DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES/STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT/PERFORMANCE INDICATOR AND PROJECT REPORTING SYSTEMS/BENCHMARKING

It was noted that all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been invited to attend for this item.

The Chief Officer – People and Policy, the OD Manager and the Projects and Performance Manager were in attendance for this item to inform the Panel on the issues previously raised. The Panel was informed of the number of vacancies the Council currently had, the number of staff employed, with some vacancies that were being held due to service reviews, recruitment processes and details of turnover figures for the financial year. The Chief Officer – People and Policy advised that he would provide this information in detail after the meeting.

The Panel was informed of ongoing developments in HR&OD including a data suite that will be considered by P&OD Committee in July 2025, a People Plan, a new Recruitment Strategy, a new online recruitment page, media postings and also HR&OD being proactive and attending jobs fairs. The Council had achieved IIP Silver status in 2020 and 2023, continued to collaborate with other district councils and the LGA, had made onboarding easier, had provided an employees benefits platform, would also be developing better role profiles, work to be undertaken on workforce planning and had recently arranged a schools question time event where students had the opportunity to ask about employment prospects at the City Council

Members of the Panel raised questions regarding the numbers in categories of vacancies and the direction of travel, issues regarding capacity, whether continuing with the current number of vacancies was shoring up the Council's budget, whether there was budget pressure to reduce the headcount, workforce planning, queries regarding the living wage, knowing whether the headcount can be benchmarked against other comparative councils with some caveats, benchmarking clubs and the choice of KPIs and recent changes to these.

Officers responded to the questions raised.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, thanked Officers for their attendance, verbal reports and for answering questions.

Resolved: -

- (1) That the verbal reports provided at the meeting be noted.
- (2) That the Chief Officer – People and Policy to provide information on the queries raised by the Panel.

8 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved and seconded:-

“That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.”

Members then voted as follows:-

Resolved unanimously: -

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

9 DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES - TO INFORM ON THE HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR MAINWAY

The Chief Officer – Housing and Property reported orally to the Panel on the issues previously raised and then answered questions.

Resolved: -

That the Chief Officer – Housing and Property be thanked for her attendance at the meeting and oral report to the Panel.

10 COMMERCIAL PROPERTY INCOME

The Chief Officer – Housing and Property provided a presentation to the Panel and, together with the Commercial Property Manager, then answered questions.

Resolved: -

That the Chief Officer – Housing and Property be thanked for her informative presentation to the Panel.

At this point the press and public were re-admitted to the meeting.

11 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel was provided with a report that contained updates for consideration. It was reported that in accordance with the Constitution all Councillors, the Chief Executive and the public had been asked for issues that should be considered for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme. Comments would then be obtained on the issues from Senior Leadership Team and following a meeting with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, this Panel and the Pre-Decision Scrutiny Champion recommendations would be made for consideration. These will then be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any items that are within the Terms of Reference of the Panel will be reported as part of the Work Programme report. The following items were put forward by Members of the Panel for consideration as part of the process for inclusion in Scrutiny Work Programme(s):

- Use of AI to improve our performance – to look at any co-ordinated activity (i.e. Lancashire County Council).
- Health and Safety – violence and aggressive behaviour against staff.
- To consider the number and type of claims that people are making (liabilities) against the Council.

It was reported that the standard items considered by the Panel were appended to the report.

The Panel was asked to consider its Work Programme in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Property suggested to the Panel that an additional meeting be arranged in July 2025 so that the latest information regarding the quarterly outturn report could be scrutinised. The Panel resolved as follows:

Resolved: -

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the following items be put forward for comment by SLT and consideration as part of the process for inclusion in Scrutiny Work Programme(s):
 - Use of AI to improve our performance – to look at any co-ordinated activity (i.e. County Council).
 - Health and Safety – violence and aggressive behaviour against staff.
 - To consider the number and type of claims that people are making (liabilities) against the Council.
- (3) That an additional meeting of the Panel be arranged to be held on 8 July 2025 commencing at 6.00pm at Lancaster Town Hall to consider the latest information regarding the quarterly outturn report.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Stephen Metcalfe, Democratic Support - email sjmetcalfe@lancaster.gov.uk**