

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Corporate Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Thursday, 15 December 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor K. Cairns
Chair

MEMBERS

E. Burt
P.A.M. Dale (part)

K. Parry
A.W. Reid

OFFICERS

Allen, D.P.
Elsdon, A.
Lawson, S.

McKie, B.
Turnbull, N.

Scrutiny Officer
Director of Corporate Resources
Project Officer, Corporate
Resources
Group Assurance Manager
Democratic Services Officer

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dickinson, Gibson, Jones, Ledger and Robson.

15. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on Thursday, 6 October 2016, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

16. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions for December 2016 to March 2017. (A copy of the Forward Plan has been enclosed with the signed minutes and filed as Appendix A.)

Ch.'s Initials.....

Items added since the papers had been distributed, included:

- State of Northumberland and Corporate Plan Progress - to be considered by Cabinet on 10 January 2017.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

17. REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

17.1 Risk Registers Presentation

Barbara McKie, Group Assurance Manager, gave a detailed presentation on Risk Management, which included information about the difference between risk management in everyday lives and work; benefits; governance arrangements; the definition of risk, risk grading and grading classifications; risk management framework and methodology; where risk management took place in the Council's organisational structure and the frequency of monitoring and review. (A copy of the presentation has been enclosed with the signed minutes).

The Group Assurance Manager referred to her involvement in CIPFA's Risk Management and Counter Fraud Editorial Board and recently published paper on 'Corporate Governance and Risk Management' on the online information resource. It was agreed that a copy of the presentation, Risk Management Framework and aforementioned paper would be circulated following the meeting.

The committee discussed the biggest risks to the Council, the main one relating to local government finance and the controls that had been put in place to manage the risk. They also considered whether there were any common themes and the benefits of the risk workshops which enabled officers from across all directorates to have an input with different backgrounds.

In answer to a question, the Group Assurance Manager confirmed that a risk was included on a register within the hierarchy where it was best able to be managed and that it could be escalated to a higher level, if required, and de-escalated, as appropriate.

It was reported that key strategic risk owners attended meetings of the Audit Committee to provide an update on their key strategic risks, their controls and assurance sources.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

Ch.'s Initials.....

17.2 Financial Monitoring to October 2016

The committee received a detailed presentation in relation to financial monitoring up to October 2016 from Alison Elsdon, the Director of Corporate Resources. (A copy of the presentation has been enclosed with the signed minutes).

Key points highlighted included:-

- The overall position had improved since previously reported at the meeting in October, with most services now anticipated to have an underspend at year end.
- Receipt of £2 million Pathfinder Funding and the Better Care Fund of £1.229 million, within Adults Services, were identified as areas of concern and continued to be challenged.
- The impact of the National Living Wage had been built into budgets.
- Information was expected later that month on the local government financial settlement for 2017/18, and the possible impact of increases in council tax to cover social care funding.
- The main area of concern related to Children's Social Care although the overspend had reduced and was being monitored closely by the newly appointed Director of Children's Services. Budgets were impacted by the number of children becoming looked after which had increased from 390 at 1 April 2016 to 421 at 31 October 2016.
- Occupancy at Kylee House had recently reduced and figures adjusted accordingly.
- SEN Post 16 Students cost of transportation was overspent due to contract extensions. Geoff Paul, the Director of Planning and Economy was leading a group looking at transport needs across the Council. The group also included the Director of Education and Skills.
- Underspends within Corporate Resources related to staffing budgets, additional income in relation to recharges on pension deficits, airport special dividends, investment interest and recovery of benefit overpayments.
- £0.5 million more grant than estimated in the accounts had been received through the Bellwin scheme for financial support following the winter floods in 2015/16.

The committee discussed the continued requirement to provide care for the elderly and looked after children.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

Ch.'s Initials.....

17.3 Capital Monitoring Position 1 April 2016 to 31 October 2016.

The report presented an update on the delivery of the Council's capital programme and key revisions required as a result of the forecast outturn position at 31 October 2016. (A copy of the report has been enclosed with the signed minutes and filed as Appendix B).

The Director of Corporate Resources explained that a number of further amendments to the capital programme for 2016/17 were required in addition to those previously reported, following the in year review by the Head of Property Services and Capital Programme. These included:

- Up to £1.439 million additional monies for the South East Northumberland Strategic Link Road.
- Reprofiling of: loans to third parties; the flood damage programme; the Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund (Masonry Arch Structures); the Streetlighting Replacement and Modernisation Programme.

RESOLVED that the report be received and to recommend to Cabinet the revisions to the capital programme in relation to the re-profiling of the budget.

17.4 Performance Management

The committee received an overview of the Council's performance in the current financial year. Copies of the performance data as at 7 December 2016 and a background briefing note had been circulated prior to the meeting (and has been enclosed with the signed minutes).

Stuart Lawson, Project Officer, drew Members' attention to the update prepared for the meeting in respect of the areas previously identified and noted that performance in planning and children's social care had improved.

He reported that the Director of Education and Skills was scheduled to present an Annual Report to Schools 2017 to the Families and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January and Cabinet in February 2017.

The Project Officer agreed to liaise with colleagues at Gateshead Council regarding the frequency of road safety data. Members discussed the propensity of people to drive faster, the need to consider the consequences of this and the benefits of signage which stated the number of fatalities on a stretch of road which acted as a deterrent to speeding drivers.

It was reported that additional publicity was to be given to household items which could be recycled in the lead up to the Christmas period which was welcomed. The data in relation to waste was being monitored by the Director of Local Services and the Corporate Leadership Team.

Ch.'s Initials.....

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

17.5 State of Northumberland and Corporate Plan Progress

The report provided updates on information on the State of Northumberland and on progress in delivering the Corporate Plan. (A copy of the report has been enclosed with the signed minutes and filed as Appendix C).

A number of areas were highlighted which could impact on the Council's policies and budget. Members discussed the increase in the level of reported crime which was being reviewed by the Safer Northumberland Partnership. Other explanations put forward included the effect of austerity measures, the result of the referendum to leave the European Union, changes to guidance regarding the recording of incidents, increased public confidence in reporting crimes.

The committee discussed:

- The gap between the affluent, elderly population in Northumberland and the inability of young professionals who could not afford to live in the county. They queried how planning policies could be influenced to provide sustainable communities where residents could both live, work and develop businesses.
- The increase in car ownership and the need to make adequate provision when considering planning permission for residential properties, thus removing cars from roads, increasing road safety and enabling more children to travel to school by foot or bicycle and having a positive effect on child obesity.
- The disparity between income levels across the county which were very high in some wards, and very low in others.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and that the comments made by the committee above be referred to Cabinet as background information to support consideration of the budget and medium term financial plan.

18. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

Corporate Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members considered the committee's work programme (copy enclosed with the signed minutes and filed as Appendix D). The Scrutiny Officer noted that items within the remit of the committee could be referred to the Chairmen's Group for inclusion in the work programme.

RESOLVED that the work programme be agreed.

Ch.'s Initials.....

INFORMATION REPORT

The following report was for information only and could be accessed through Northumberland County Council’s Website. If a member of the committee would like further explanation of the report, or had questions they wished to put to the relevant Cabinet Member, he/she should contact Democratic Services Section in order that appropriate arrangements could be made.

19. POLICY DIGEST

The report, available on the Council’s website, provided details of policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches that might be of interest to members.

RESOLVED that the report be received. Information be noted.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

Ch.’s Initials.....