

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor David Clarkson, Councillor Thomas Dyer,
Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor
Lucinda Preston, Councillor Clare Smalley, Councillor
Loraine Woolley and Councillor Pat Vaughan

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Adrianna McNulty, Jaclyn Gibson,
Daren Turner, Tracey Parker and Robert Marshall

18. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pat Vaughan declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Income and Arrears Monitoring Report'. Reason: His daughter worked in the Benefits Team.

Councillor Thomas Dyer declared a Personal Interest with regard to the agenda item titled 'Income and Arrears Monitoring Report'. Reason: He is a Director at Lincoln BIG.

19. Portfolio Holder under Scrutiny - Customer Experience and Review

Due to the absence of the Portfolio Holder the Customer Experience and Review Portfolio Holder Report was not scrutinised and therefore would be moved to a future meeting.

20. Performance Quarterly Monitoring: Quarter 1

Simon Walters, Director for Communities and Environment;

- a) presented a report to Performance Scrutiny Committee with an outturn summary of the council's performance in Quarter 1 of 2022/23
- b) explained that the full report was attached as Appendix A of the report, with the Strategic Measures Dashboard attached as Appendix B and the Annual Measures as Appendix C
- c) invited members' comments and questions.

Question: Could the notice period for staff in Customer Services could be lengthened as it took 3-6 months to train new staff.

Response: The notice period was being reviewed with HR.

Question: Could more publicity could be done for Yarborough Leisure Centre as the little pool was still open but wasn't well known by customers.

Response: Officers were liaising with Communications about publishing a further message informing the public that the little pool and the gym remained open. Once all the scaffolding had been erected there would be a further media push regarding the works that were taking place at Yarborough Leisure Centre.

Question: Car Park utilisation was lower than pre covid but improving. Members asked if there were and reason for this and what car parks were under performing.

Response: Car park income was improving and had been above target since April. In the last month there had been a slowing in income. Due to the time of year, all the uphill car parks were doing well while the down-hill car parks not so much (except Central car park). This was mainly down to new ways of working and commuters being on holiday etc. Once the summer break had ended, the figures would be reviewed further to see if the cost of living crises is having an effect also.

Question: Members asked why the performance target for Planning was behind if there were less applications.

Response: Only one planning target was not being met due to the complexity of some of the applications being reviewed

Question: Members asked if there were any customers waiting for Disabled Facilities Grant works to be carried out before they came out of hospital or nursing homes.

Response: There were no cases outstanding at present however Officers confirmed that they would carry out further checks.

Question: Would there be an intake of apprentices this year and how much funding had been received from the apprenticeship levy.

Response: Officers confirmed that once this information had been received they would feed it back to the committee.

Question: Members asked why call answer times had increased.

Response: This was mainly down to the reduction in staff and there were currently 3.5 full time vacancies within the team. There had been a lot of staff turnover and it took around 3-6 months to train a new operative. The move to online communications had not been as expected as customers still preferred to talk to someone on the phone and some customers were not digitally prepared.

Question: Some customers repairs had been logged and then cancelled without the works being carried out. This was causing the Council to get a bad reputation. Why was this.

Response: All repair jobs were cancelled at one point due to the pandemic and residents were asked to re-apply for a repair. Some historical repairs had been lost which had led to negative feedback.

The committee passed on their thanks to the Customer Services Team for all of their hard work and for the excellent service they provide to the public.

Question: Members asked if radio could be used as a form of communication with customers as not all of them use social media.

Response: Using the radio as a form of communication could be an option as this was used when the park and Ride was closed at the Christmas Market and was effective

Question: How did students that didn't pay Council tax effect income.

Response: The updated Lincoln City Profile included the latest census data which showed the spike in student population. There were around 18,000 students in Lincoln currently.

Question: Historically, performance data for Major Developments wasn't reported to Performance Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis, could this information be reported more regularly rather than just annually.

Response: Performance data from Major Developments got reported to Performance Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis via the portfolio holder, which was considered more effective due to the work in this area being project based.

RESOLVED that:

1. The little pool and gym and Yarborough Leisure centre would be promoted as they were still open to the public.
2. Officers agreed to check if there were any outstanding cases of customers who were waiting for Disabled Facility Grant works to be carried out before they could move out of hospital or a nursing home.
3. Information on whether there would be an apprentice intake this year and how much funding had been received back from the apprentice levy be fed back to the committee.
4. The report be noted.

21. Income and Arrears Monitoring Report

Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits;

- a) provided members with an update on the position regarding amounts of monies owed to the City Council as at 1st April 2022, (and Business Improvement District (BID) levy to the end of June 2022)
- b) highlighted that:
 - The net collectable debit for 2021/22 after Council Tax Support, discounts and exemptions had been granted was £47,790,772, amounting to an increase of £2,738,406 from 2020/21.
 - Total payments received in respect of 2021/22 were £44,923,761 amounting to an increase of £2,211,848 from 2010/21.
- c) explained that
 - The net Business Rates collectable debit for 2021/22 after empty voids, charity entitlements and other reliefs had been granted was £34,939,946. This was an increase of £16,419,697 from 2020/21.

- Total payments received in respect of 2021/22 were £35,816,640. This was an increase of £17,488,076 from 2020/21.
- d) advised that the City of Lincoln Council was responsible for the administration and collection of the BID Levy and the net collectable debit raised in respect of the levy was £417,094
 - e) explained that the net Housing Rent debit for 2021/22 (collectable rent) excluding Housing Benefits and other adjustments was £28,688,341 of which 100.18% was collected, amounting to an increase of 0.72% on 2020/21 collection of 99.46%
 - f) highlighted that a total of 10,844 new debtor accounts were raised in 2021/22 amounting to £15,213,812.93 in cash terms
 - g) explained that the balance of outstanding Housing Benefit Overpayments as at 1st April 2022 was £2,661,801 compared to £3,153,505 at 1st April 2020, a decrease of £491,704
 - h) invited members' questions and comments.

Question: If previous tenants that had former tenant arrears could they be taken to court to try and re-coup lost income.

Response: Yes there were a number of avenues that would be taken to try and re-coup monies owed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

22. Council Tax Rebate (Energy) - Update

Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits;

- a) presented Performance Scrutiny Committee with a report on progress made delivering the Council Tax Rebate scheme
- b) explained that in Lincoln, 44,617 properties were in Council Tax Bands A-D, which was equivalent to 95.7% of the total number of domestic properties within the City. However, not all would be eligible for the Council Tax Rebate as some would fall into an ineligible category under the scheme rules.
- c) highlighted that as of 19 August 2022 24,501 rebate payments had been made to households in council Tax Bands A-D paying by direct debit. Any that remained unpaid had either had a query regarding their bank account or were not eligible under the mandatory scheme.
- d) highlighted that as of 19 August 2022 7,861 payments had been made to household in Council Tax Bands A-D who did not pay by direct debit.
- e) invited member's comments and questions.

Question: Were there any lesson learnt when it came to the distribution of the £150 Council Tax Rebate payment and had there had not been any errors in payments.

Response: Assumptions were made on customers digital literacy matters which would need to be re-considered. The Council could be considered to have done a good job when compared to other authorities with the distribution of the money and no errors had been made in payments due to checks that had been put in place before payments were made. More engagement with communities regarding digital inclusion would be good progression now that COVID restrictions had lifted.

Comment: The committee passed on thanks to the Council Tax Team and wider project team for their agility and all of their hard work.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

23. Work Programme for 2022/23

Clare Stait, Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented the draft work programme for 2022/23 as detailed at Appendix A of her report
- b) advised that the work programme for the Performance Scrutiny Committee was put forward annually for approval by Council; the work programme was then regularly updated throughout the year in consultation with the Performance Scrutiny Committee and its Chair
- c) reported that items had been scheduled in accordance with the existing work programme and officers' guidance regarding the meetings at which the most up-to-date information could be reported to the committee; the work programme also included the list of portfolio holders under scrutiny
- d) requested any relevant comments or changes to the proposed work programme for 2022/23.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Portfolio Holder report for Customer Experience and Review be re-scheduled to a future meeting.
2. The work programme 2022/23 be noted.

24. Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Report

Simon Walters, Director for Communities and Environment;

- a) presented Performance Scrutiny Committee with a status report of the revised Strategic Risk Register as at the end of quarter 1 2022/23.
- b) reported that the strategic risk registers currently contained twelve risks as follows:
 - 1) Failure to engage & influence effectively the Council's strategic partners, council staff and all stakeholders to deliver against e.g., Council's Vision 2025

- 2) Failure to deliver a sustainable Medium-Term Financial Strategy (that supports delivery of Vision 2025).
- 3) Failure to deliver the Towards Financial Sustainability Programme whilst ensuring the resilience of the Council.
- 4) Failure to ensure compliance with statutory duties/functions and appropriate governance arrangements were in place.
- 5) Failure to protect the local authority's vision 2025 due to changing structures and relationships in local government and impact on size, scale and scope of the Council.
- 6) Unable to meet the emerging changes required in the Council's culture, behaviour and skills to support the delivery of the council's Vision 2020/2025 and the transformational journey to one Council approach.
- 7) Insufficient levels of resilience and capacity exist in order to deliver key strategic projects & services within the Council.
- 8) Decline in the economic prosperity within the City Centre.
- 9) Failure to deliver key strategic projects.
- 10) Failure of the Council's key contractors and partners to remain sustainable and continue to deliver value for money
- 11) Failure to protect the vulnerable in relation to the Council's PREVENT and safeguarding duties.
- 12) Failure to mitigate against the risk of a successful cyber-attack against the council.

RESOLVED that the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of quarter 1 2022/23 be noted.

25. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

26. Strategic Risk Register - Quarterly Review

Simon Walters, Director for Communities and Environment;

- a) provided members with the revised Strategic Risk Register as attached at Appendix A.
- b) invited members' questions and comments.

RESOLVED that the Strategic Risk Register as at the end of quarter 1 2022/23 be noted.