

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Report by Councillor Gary Hewson, Chair of Performance Scrutiny Committee

Mr Mayor – Members of the Council:

It gives me great pleasure to present to you this evening a flavour of the business that has passed through the above Committee having been given the opportunity for scrutiny. This will follow in the Performance Scrutiny workload section on the next page.

They say actions speak louder than words and regarding the time and work put in by all members on this Committee to do justice to overseeing the Performance of Council, this saying is one that certainly applies. This wouldn't be possible though without our brilliant team of Council Officers providing us with the appropriate information. So thanks from myself and my Vice Chair Councillor Helena Mair for everyone's time given to this committee.

A quote from Dolly Parton might be relevant here "The way I see it, if you want the rainbow you gotta put up with the rain."

As Councillors we all want the best for our City (the Rainbow), with the work by members and officers, (the rain) to achieve it.

I will just pull out a couple of items from Performance Scrutiny Committee. The Western Growth Corridor Project has caused many questions, quite rightly. With regards its progress and the monies that have been spent thus far, hopefully with the updates members have received recently, we can all feel more confident that the future is now looking more secure.

The Portfolio Sessions held at the Committee now include the elements of their work aligned with the Councils Vision 2020. Hopefully in next year's report which will include the year 2019/20, we can note what progress has been made on our Vision.

Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee

As Chair of this Committee you will note that the report items that have passed through the work programme, are for both members and also the representatives of the Tenants Panel to judge. I would like to give special thanks to those tenants who give their free time to attend Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee, along with those others who give their time for free on the other panels that meet to overview the monies spent from the HRA account.

I would also like to thank Cllr Nannestad, Portfolio for Quality Housing, who attends these meetings to listen and give an input where appropriate.

The introduction of Universal Credit through provision of rent arrears gave an expected rise in loss monies to the HRA account. This year the trend is likely to continue.

For the future - the Committee intends to look at the Tenancy Agreement and the level of day to day repairs at forthcoming meetings.

Performance Scrutiny Workload

As part of the Performance Scrutiny Committee's (PSC's) remit, we held six 'portfolio under scrutiny' sessions, where Portfolio Holders were invited to report on service achievements under their portfolio. Members were then able to ask questions about the performance of these service areas. The Committee tries to focus on the performance of a portfolio with minimum diversions into detailed analysis of policy issues. As Chair of PSC I remain proactive during meetings, reminding members to focus on matters of performance.

A regular report was provided in the form of a portfolio overview presented by the Corporate Policy Unit to the relevant PSC meeting, with the purpose of bringing out key contextual benchmarking indicators about issues and improvements in the city overall, related to the portfolio under scrutiny. This process helped to promote effective scrutiny of the portfolio holder's report.

As in the last few years, PSC worked from a defined subset of the full IMPS data set, which was formally agreed by members and the Corporate Management Team and represents the key operational activities to be monitored by PSC.

In addition to the regular scrutinising of portfolio holders, PSC received reports in the following areas:

- Quarterly financial monitoring to provide members with a summary of actual income and expenditure compared to the revised budget and appropriate allocation of any surpluses to reserves
- Quarterly performance update reports to ensure regular monitoring of the Council's operational performance as a key component of the Local Performance Management Framework
- A preview of the annual performance targets for the 2018/19 period
- Quarterly progress reports on strategic projects against their milestones as well as a summary of the projects delivered during the year in order to monitor that value for money was achieved *
- A quarterly review of the Strategic Risk Register which documents any changes from the previous version, and what has caused the changes
- A report on Treasury Management and Actual Prudential Indicators as a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures under regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003
- An annual report detailing progress made by the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee
- An update report on Section 106 contributions
- Income and arrears monitoring reports providing updates to members on the position with regard to amounts of monies owed to the City Council as at 1st April 2018
- Revenues and Benefits performance updates providing members with an update on performance in the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service
- The City of Lincoln Annual Report 2017 which highlighted the authority's key activities and outcomes over the past year, covering our four strategic priorities as well as an important strand of work focusing on delivering high performing services. This included preparations undertaken for new projects, and actions taken by the Council to put it on a 'strong footing' in future years
- A report on the financial and performance position of the Housing Repairs Service (HRS) at the end of the 2016/17 financial year, highlighted that there

continued to be a strong commitment to improving the quality and efficiency of the service.

* Changes to the Strategic Plan Implementation Team reporting

A change in the way that officers now monitor projects, has meant that we received the last “SPIT” report in Q4 2017/18. This report used to cover updates on issues for all strategic and capital projects – but has been replaced by the series of Vision 2020 reports (more detail below) and an additional section in the quarterly Financial Report.

As you will see, the Vision 2020 reporting process is comprehensive and now covers a wider range of projects as there are some ‘non-strategic’ projects that we will see updates on.

Vision 2020 Reporting

Members this year were introduced for the first time to the reporting arrangements for Vision 2020 projects. Vision 2020, approved by Council on 10th January 2017, contains four strategic priorities as well as a strand focusing on high performing services. Our key priorities under this vision are:

- Let’s drive economic growth
- Let’s reduce inequality
- Let’s deliver quality housing
- Let’s enhance our remarkable place

Under each priority is a programme of projects and activities that will be delivered between 2017 and 2020 to work towards delivering Lincoln’s ambitious future.

Proposed reporting arrangements were presented to PSC in June 2017 and agreed for the first year, although PSC requested that some changes were made to align Portfolios with the Priorities, which has been achieved through 2018/19 meetings.

These programmes were reported to Performance Scrutiny Committee at a rate of one strategic priority per quarter, to enable a specific detailed focus on one topic area at a time, whilst ensuring all four strategic priorities were reported within a one year period. The High Performing Services Report was also delivered in March, reflecting the same period that the Committee had previously received the Towards Financial Sustainability update – which is now incorporated within the High Performing Services report.

This process took the place of themed reviews in the main, although members of PSC were (and are) entitled to request scrutiny of any specific area of the council’s responsibilities if they so wished at any time.

In addition to this change, our Executive went through a change of responsibilities after the May 2018 elections which meant that their Portfolios were aligned much more closely to the Vision 2020 priorities – and has allowed this Committee to focus on project performance in a more structured way.

Budget Review

Members took part in the Budget Review Process for the scrutiny of the proposed budget and Council Tax for the 2018/19 financial year and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-2023. This was undertaken in two separate stages - firstly all members were invited to a briefing session to afford them the opportunity to gain

a greater understanding and awareness of the Council's financial position, thus aiding further scrutiny of the budget and in the case of the opposition party if desired the preparation of an alternative budget. This was followed by a more traditional scrutiny process undertaken to review in greater detail the MTFs and the robustness of the proposed budget options and Council Tax for the 2018/19 financial year. This was undertaken in a committee format as the Budget Review Group with the appropriate governance arrangements in place.

The Committee has also held reviews during the 2017/18 year in respect of:

Christmas Market Outturn Report 2016

Performance Scrutiny Committee has played a large part in monitoring the operational/performance costs of the Christmas Market for several years. Members were provided with a detailed report for the 2016 market and its meeting held on 13 July 2017.

Members were extremely satisfied and recorded their thanks and praise be given to the team for a job well done. It was the first time that the Christmas Market had managed to pay for itself and all in all it was an excellent event.

Human Resources Corporate Performance Statistics

Members received a presentation on HR Corporate Performance Statistics at its meeting held on 13 July 2017, covering sickness levels, Full Time Equivalent (FTE) equivalent vacancies, appraisals, and staff turnover

Lincoln Transport Hub

Members received an update report in October 2017 on the operating parameters and operating budgets for both the Lincoln Central Bus Station and the Lincoln Central Market Multi Storey Car Park

Housing Benefits Overpayment

Members were updated on the recovery of Housing Benefit Overpayments at its meeting held on 23 November 2017, outlining the value of overpayments raised so far in 2017/18 and how it equated, in percentage, to the total value of Housing Benefit paid. Details of an action plan for 2017/18 and 2018/19 were outlined to Performance Scrutiny Committee. It was highlighted that during 2016/17 the Housing Benefit Section actioned 23,927 change in circumstances for City of Lincoln customers.

Christmas Market 2017

Members received a Christmas Market Stalls/Budget Brief Pre Event Report at its meeting held on 23 October 2017.

At this stage the 2017 market was forecast to make an operational surplus of £89,090 which was a projected £26,840 under achievement against the budgeted surplus of £115,930, mainly due to the significant increase in police and security costs

On 25 January 2018 an Interim Christmas Market 2017 Outturn report was also received by members, giving updated details on operational and budget matters.

On 12 July 2018 the Christmas Market 2017 Outturn Report was presented to members, providing the Performance Scrutiny Committee with key financial performance in relation to the 2017 Lincoln Christmas Market.

Homelessness

In July 2018, the Service Manager for this area brought a report to look at the provision of homelessness services following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 on 3 April 2018.

The Homelessness Reduction Act places new duties on English Councils so that everyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness will have access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status or local connection to the authority they approach.

Several new duties are introduced including:

- Duty to assess all eligible applicants cases and agree a Personal Plan
- The Prevention Duty: in cases of threatened homelessness
- The Relief Duty: in cases where the applicant is homeless

As expected, we have seen an increase in the number of applicants considering themselves homeless as a result of these changes. The Committee continues to monitor this situation as it moves forward.

Central Market Review

A report was given by Kate Ellis, Strategic Director, Major Developments on the current position with regards to the review of the Central Market.

Substantial construction work had taken place in the Sincil Street area for the Transport Hub and redevelopment by the Lincolnshire Co-operative Society in the Cornhill Quarter.

A reduced income target for 2017/18, was expected to be met following additional stall lettings in City Square with the potential of a small surplus to offset the increased expenditure incurred as a result of a range of activity to support market traders and businesses in the area during the construction works on the Hub.

She explained that 2018/19 would be the year in which the retail assessment, the outcome from the BIG review and the options for the market within that would be explored and funding options investigated

Key Changes Looking Forward

The Committee will continue to challenge issues and acknowledge successes as it always has done. Officers have informed members that the current system of monitoring performance measures (IMPS) is having to be replaced and that they are already working on developing a new system. It is hoped that this should be in place by Q1 2019/20. The Committee will of course be kept informed of any changes as they occur.

A final few words to give my thanks to members on the Committee for their commitment. Sometimes there has been passion shown about certain items which

were discussed which is no bad thing and brought a difference of opinion, but life would be dull if that was not the case.

It is pleasing to see that outside of our role of Scrutiny and to act as a critical friend, our Council has been recognised for its achievements with our Revenues and Benefits team winning a National award this year for: Excellence in Partnership Working.

Other awards have been achieved regionally and City of Lincoln Council has also been shortlisted for three Local Government Chronicle Awards.

It is nice to see that when scrutinised regionally and nationally our Council makes us: Proud to be Lincoln.

Thanks to all concerned.

Cllr Gary Hewson
Chair of Performance Scrutiny Committee