

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**Report by Councillor Patrick J Vaughan, Chair of Performance Scrutiny Committee**

Mr Mayor – Members of the Council:

I appreciate that this is only the second Performance Scrutiny Meeting report that Councillor Loraine Woolley, Vice Chair, and I have been involved with, however I am able to provide you with details of what the committee has covered over the last 14 months.

I think it is much better that we can now meet in the committee rooms once again. Long may that continue.

Personally I would like to thank Councillor Gary Hewson for all his hard work as Chair of this committee for the past years. It is vital to receive regular updates from the members of the Executive across their portfolio ownership, an area which Gary promoted well, and we will continue as we move forward.

In the next few sections I will give you a flavour of the business that has passed through the Performance Scrutiny Committee since the last report which was actually presented over a year ago in November 2020.

As you would expect, the 14 months covered in this report have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with two meetings (March 2021 and December 2021) cancelled, although all workload was picked up at subsequent meetings. However as you would expect, the focus has largely been on the core business of the committee, namely financial and operational performance, receiving portfolio holder reports, plus other regular reports as indicated below

Committee Activity

Performance Scrutiny Committee has held ten meetings since the last report which has included reports in the following areas, some of which are expanded later on in my report:

- Portfolio Holder Reports, including those aligned to Vision 2025
- 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
- Performance update reports to ensure regular monitoring of the Council's operational performance as a key component of the Local Performance Management Framework
- A quarterly review of the Strategic Risk Register - identifying improvements or new issues
- 6- monthly reports 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. (June and November 2021)
- An annual report detailing progress made by the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee. (July 2021)

- Income and Arrears Monitoring report, providing updates to members on the position with regard to amounts of monies owed to the City Council as of 1st April 2021 (August 2021).
- A report on the financial and performance position of the Housing Repairs Service (January 2021)
- Fire Safety Updates (January 2021 and January 2022)
- Section 106 and CIL Contributions Update (June 2021)
- A pre-Christmas Market verbal report was delivered in advance of the 2021 Market
- Updated Targets report (September 2021)
- Council Investment in Properties report (September 2021)
- CCTV update report on rota changes (September 2021)
- One Council – Creating Value Processes report (January 2022)

The Committee received minutes from one sub-committee and one sub-group:

- Budget Review Group Minutes (February 2021)
- Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Minutes (January 2021 and June 2021)

Portfolio Holder Reports

As members will be aware our strategic plan, Vision 2025 was formally agreed at Executive in February 2020 and approved at Council in March 2020 and is significantly linked to the Portfolio's.

The pandemic did lead to a number of Portfolio Holder reports being slightly delayed, but by the end of the 2021/22 financial year we will have received all reports due and be back on track to manage them as planned.

Performance Scrutiny Committee has received the following reports from portfolio holders and the Climate Change Manager in respect of progress towards our strategic priorities:

- Let's drive inclusive economic growth – with Cllr Murray's reports in March 2021 (delayed) and September 2021
- Let's reduce inequality – With Cllr R Kirk's report in February 2021 (delayed) and Cllr S Burke's report in November 2021
- Let's deliver quality housing – With Cllr Nannestad's report in January 2021
- Let's enhance our remarkable place – With Cllr Bushell's report in July 2021
- Let's address the challenge of climate change – a report from Kate Bell the Climate Change Manager was received in September 2021
- Portfolio Holder, Customer Experience and Review – With Cllr C Burke's report in July 2021
- Portfolio Holder, Our People and Resources – With Cllr Metcalfe's report in August 2021

Financial and Performance Reports

The committee was able to scrutinise all financial reports, including quarterly financial monitoring, Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators and Income and Arrears monitoring reports as normal.

However, due to the lockdown and subsequent pressures on service areas resulting in many services having to change the way their services were being delivered; quarterly performance monitoring was reported differently at Q3 2021.

Instead of the usual target driven Q3 report, the committee received a narrative report, providing a flavour of what services had done over Q3 as well as providing an indication of their plans for the future when restrictions are eased and eventually lifted. Members commented on the quality of the report and that it proved how important Local Government was in people's lives. Performance Scrutiny Committee Members also asked for the document to be circulated to all members. The subsequent Q4 report then covered both Q3 and Q4 in terms of achievements against targets

Target Setting for 2021/22 and Onwards

The original Performance Targets report was delayed after the March meeting was cancelled due to covid effects and eventually taken in June 2021, later than planned. The report contained a total of 19 targets that had been changed – some temporarily removed, some decreased and two increased.

Performance Scrutiny Committee noted that they did not accept the targets that had been set. The Committee stated that the targets should remain as they were (in 2020/21) and should have an explanation next to them as to why these targets had been changed.

The Committee expressed concern over the process of target setting for 2021/22, as it was felt that Portfolio Holders had made decisions for their portfolios without any scrutiny involvement. It was proposed that in future, Portfolio Holders attended the Performance Scrutiny Committee to present proposed changes and rationale for targets. The report was subsequently called in, but over-ruled and the targets were accepted for the year.

Performance Scrutiny Members asked for the targets report to be brought back to their committee with further explanations attached to each target as to why there had been a change. Executive accepted that future changes needed to be supported with clear rationale for the change.

In August 2021 an updated report was brought to committee answering all the outstanding queries and was accepted by Performance Scrutiny as providing sufficient rationale for the initial decisions. Future reports will contain that level of detail.

Budget Review

The role of Performance Scrutiny Committee was to scrutinise in detail the robustness of the proposed budget options and Council Tax for the 2021/22 as well as the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2021-2026. This was undertaken in a committee format by Budget Review Group which is a cross party sub-group of Performance Scrutiny Committee, made up of nine non-executive members. It reported in February 2021 and will be doing so again shortly for the 2022/27 proposals.

Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee looks in more detail at matters relating to housing and our housing stock.

Since January 2021, the sub-committee has considered matters relating to

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- The Scheduled Repairs pilot
- Report by Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing
- HRA Financial and performance monitoring - quarterly
- The allocations Policy
- Performance targets for 2021/22
- An update on Housing Department Operations post Covid-19
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 - statutory duties
- Countywide Covid-19 homelessness response
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Lincoln Tenants Panel matters

I would like to thank the Councillors and Tenants Panel members, the Portfolio Holder who provides useful information for members at meetings, and also to Officers for the contribution of further information for members of this sub committee

Looking Ahead

The Vice Chair and I would like, with the support of the Committee, to ensure that the length of future meetings is no longer than two hours. Agenda's need to be scheduled so that they are achievable and focussed on any reports that have urgency; but should the agenda not be finished in time, either an extra meeting will be scheduled or the remaining items to be added to the next agenda if feasible. This will ensure that all items get fair scrutiny, and nothing is rushed through after an overlong meeting, because of tiredness and lack of concentration due to the duration of that meeting.

It would also be very helpful if Portfolio Holders, when delivering their report to committee, could clearly show if there has been an improvement or not in the services/projects they cover and illustrate the reasons why this is so using facts and figures. This may also help to shorten meetings.

Finally, Loraine and I thank all members for their commitment and dedication at each scrutiny meeting and also the Officers for providing the reports to enable us to, hopefully, make informed recommendations.

We thank Pat Jukes for all her hard work and support, we wish her all the best in her retirement. A warm welcome to Robert Marshall, I have to say you have a hard act to follow!

Councillor Patrick J Vaughan
Chair of Performance Scrutiny Committee