

# SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 17 March 2021  
2.00 - 3.34 pm

**Responsible Officer:** Amanda Holyoak  
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### **Present**

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)  
Councillors Joyce Barrow, Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock and Leslie Winwood

### **128 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

The Chair requested the Committee to observe one minute silence as a mark of respect to Julie Fildes, Committee Officer, who had provided support to this Committee for some time and who had recently, and very sadly, passed away.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H Fraser (substitute: Councillor D Vasmer), A Mosley and D Tremellen.

### **129 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No pecuniary interests were declared.

### **130 Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 16 September 2020, 15 December 2020 and 20 January 2021 were received and considered.

Given that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020 had been made available very close to the meeting, it was agreed that a 10 minute adjournment be held to afford all Members the opportunity to read the content.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee held on 16 September 2020, 15 December 2020 and 20 January 2021 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

### **131 Public Question Time**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### **132 Member Question Time**

No questions had been received from Members.

### 133 Quarter 3 Finance Monitoring Report

The interim Executive Director of Resources presented the Quarter 3 Finance Monitoring report setting out the projected revenue expenditure for the whole of 2020/21 as at Quarter 3, and the capital expenditure up to the end of Quarter 3. Budget increases and decreases for capital and any re-profiling of budgets between 2020/21 and future years also featured in the report.

He drew attention to the revenue overspend of £838k and explained that significant work had been undertaken through the year to manage and balance the pressures. Referring to graph 1 on page 4 of the report, illustrating the progress of projections throughout the year, Members could be comfortable that the areas within the green banding could be managed.

Referring to the table in paragraph 4.2 illustrating the under and overspends in each area of the Council, he drew attention to overspends in Children's Services that were a result of significant cost pressures in the last year relating to items including LAC, agency workers and social workers.

Other areas showing high figures were the Place Directorate and Finance, Governance and Assurance that could be attributed partly to Covid 19 issues coupled with loss of income. He added that the significant grant figure in Corporate budgets helped to balance out overspends in other areas.

Other points highlighted by the interim Executive Director of Resources included:

- The receipt of £207M grant for a number of initiatives during lockdown, for example, grants to small businesses, hospitality and leisure
- The delivery of £10M savings over the period of the pandemic with, as at period 9 in Q3, £5M savings assumed by the end of the year
- The level of General Fund Balance to manage variation and risk
- Details of variances within the Capital programme that had been considered and approved by Cabinet

In answer to Members' questions and comments, the Interim Executive Director of Resources provided the following information:

- Other authorities had similar budget pressures relating to LAC or ASC and there was indeed a correlation. Some of the costs could absolutely be directed to the lockdown and were additional to the turnover in a normal financial year. Some of the costs had been ringfenced to the Covid grant from Government but the pressures within Children's Services remained.
- Funding for the LED street lighting scheme had been removed from the Capital Programme in order to allow a review of the business case to be undertaken. The project going forward would now include LED street lighting together with replacement columns as well as the lanterns. The business case had been

subsequently refreshed with a revised three-year timescale for the delivery of the project in 2021/22 to 2024 to be funded through an interest free grant from SALIX.

- Referring to the Council's £50M investment in the Shrewsbury shopping centres, it was noted that the commercial site, the Darwin Centre had continued to operate as a shopping centre although the flooding ahead of the lockdown together with the lockdown had resulted in a reduced footfall that was reflected country-wide. The Council invested in 3 areas namely the Darwin Centre, and the two development centres of Pride Hill and Riverside and it was therefore inappropriate to consider the financial return on the Darwin Centre only against the full £50M investment. It was noted that the net income of £1.7M would not have come in to the Council if the shopping centres had not been purchased.
- Directors received a monthly budget monitoring update, the last review being in Period 10, when the projected variance was slightly lower in Q3. Based on current information on the non-delivery of Amber savings in 2020/21 (Table 3 of the report), the figure was keeping close to the balance.
- A risk assessment on the level of the Council's General Fund Balance was undertaken annually and was considered by Council; this represents a statutory requirement. The Council's current General Fund Balance stood at £12.67M although the figure should be higher, £19.2M. In future financial years that figure would increase.
- The Council's projected revenue outturn of £838k compared to previous years; the aim was for an approximate £1M under or overspend each year. Actual figures were reported to Cabinet in February 2021. Last year's figure of a £1.7M overspend was an anomaly.
- The analysis of the overspend on Children's Services included the post of Commissioning Contracts Manager and the external residential placements budget. Detail of the savings generated by the new post were not available at the meeting but would be circulated to the Committee.
- The cost centre holding the unachieved contract management savings for the Place Directorate totalling £0.156m, was being reviewed by the Senior Management team. The target of £168k across the whole of the Place Directorate had been set for contract management savings. It was noted that this was year 2 of a three-year programme and the Committee may choose to assess contracts management at a later date as part of its Work Programme.

## **RESOLVED:**

That the Quarter 3 Finance Monitoring report, be noted.

## **134 Quarter 3 Performance Report**

The Portfolio Holder for Organisational Transformation and Digital Infrastructure presented the report detailing the Council's Performance against its key Outcomes for Quarter 3 2020/21.

He highlighted areas of the performance management framework within the seven key outcome areas, drawing particular attention to the following:

#### A Healthy Environment

In state schools, from Reception to Year 6 22% of children were overweight or obese at Reception, rising to 29% in Year 6. Although these figures were lower than elsewhere in the country, they nevertheless gave some cause for concern.

Lockdown had resulted in the closure of many cultural offerings and visitor numbers had been severely reduced during periods when opening had been possible. There had been a great reluctance to visit premises particularly on the part of older residents and the subsequent on-line and digital offerings had been greatly appreciated. It was confirmed that libraries were planning to factor in this additional support to residents in future.

#### A Good Place to do Business

Although low against comparator authorities, claimant count figures to December 2020 had showed a significant increase during the pandemic. As the economy began to open the Council would be providing as much support as possible.

#### Sustainable Places and Communities

Shropshire was rated in the top two across 23 measures and, for over 82% of them was also above England and the West Midlands for 15 out of the 23 domains; this illustrated the fantastic support in Shropshire for older people and those with care and support needs.

He drew attention to the excellent work undertaken by the team liaising directly with clients to overhaul the Council's policy for direct payments to clients. It was noted that the new Policy that had been compiled would be effective from 1 April 2021.

Finally, he advised that the Q3 rate of permanent admissions of adults for those aged 65+ into residential or nursing homes was lower (better) than the profile. The service remained committed to enabling people to remain in their homes and maintain a decent quality of life for as long as possible.

#### More People with a Suitable Home

The 'Right Home, Right Place' survey had given local communities the opportunity to highlight the housing needs of their area. The survey results provided information on 'need' that would assist in the delivery of appropriate accommodation in local communities.

#### Embrace our Rurality

The Portfolio Holder reported that 94% of Shropshire households now had access to Superfast Broadband and, for the majority, there was a massive improvement.

#### Care for those in Need at any Age

Referring to this domain, the Portfolio Holder explained that there had been a significant increase in demand for Children’s Services during the pandemic. The 7% increase in referral rates had posed a challenge to meet the need. Q3 had seen a 19% increase in Looked After Children (LAC) from the previous year. He assured the Committee that the right steps were taken to ensure that, even in the most complex of cases, the right care was given to the right children.

Your Council

The Committee noted the level of complaints was generally in line with expectations although the number of corporate complaints had reduced. Compliments for Q3 were higher compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

Responding to Members’ questions and comments, the Portfolio Holder made the following additional points:

- It was recognised that gigabyte coverage was significantly higher in Herefordshire, however Shropshire was working hard providing a gigabyte voucher scheme for businesses. There was a need for organisations to ‘need’ the level of gigabyte coverage. He suggested that government lobbying would be better targeted at 100% Superfast Broadband connection before pressing hard for gigabyte coverage.
- Information on the percentage of complaints that related specifically to highways would be provided to the Committee.
- The future Place Scrutiny Committee would be considering items for its future Work Programme (after the local elections); consideration of the Local Transport Plan 4 would feature on the list of items for consideration by the Committee onto its Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Quarter 3 Performance report be noted.

The Chair thanked all members of the committee and staff for their hard work and commitment.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....