

SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2021
1.00 pm in the Shrewsbury Room**

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak
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Present

Councillor Claire Wild (Chairman)
Councillors Joyce Barrow (Vice Chairman), Julia Buckley, Simon Jones, Alan Mosley and Peggy Mullock

4 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roger Evans, Heather Kidd, Robert Macey and Les Winwood. Councillor David Vasmer substituted for Councillor Kidd.

5 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

6 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

7 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

8 Member Question Time

There were no member questions.

9 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 4 2020/2021

Steve Taylor, Performance, Intelligence and Policy Team Leader, introduced the performance monitoring report, highlighting the significant impact of covid on many areas. He also provided an update on plans for future performance reporting.

A particular area of concern was in children's safeguarding services where there had been a much higher demand than normal. This was due to multiple factors, more complex cases and a changing profile, including the need to protect more unborn children who could potentially be at risk during pregnancy and once born.

The Committee were informed that work was underway on a revamp of the presentation of corporate performance to provide a more modern and interactive style of reporting alongside the new Shropshire Plan. It was also intended that the Performance

Management Scrutiny Committee would receive additional contextual information to that presented to Cabinet, to allow a more in depth picture and analysis.

Members welcomed these proposals, and went on to make the following observations about the report

Climate Change - there were currently no indicators related to mitigation of climate change – either in relation to action taken by the Council or for Shropshire as a whole. This was requested for future reports.

Wellbeing - A request was made for scrutiny of the strategies in place to address the increase in: use of foodbanks; pupils eligible for free school meals; use of alcohol; and obesity.

Affordable housing – although the number delivered had increased this year, a member felt actual numbers were small and significant further progress was needed.

Looked after Children – the number of looked after children was experiencing faster growth in Shropshire than in similar authorities and a number of members felt the reasons for this should be urgently reviewed.

The Chair reported that she had met the Interim Assistant Director – Business Intelligence, Alden Whittaker-Brown, and had requested more measures including those covering climate change and looked after children. These would be included in the new format of reporting.

In response to comments about cuts in public health funding, the Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee said that the Committee would be considering the increase in use of foodbanks, alcohol and mental health. The Committee already received an annual update on public health spending. Issues around food poverty and access to food banks would be considered by the Communities Overview Committee.

The Chair of the People Overview Committee confirmed that the Committee was aware of and looking into all issues around looked after children.

In welcoming the intention for a new format of reporting, a Member said detail and substance behind statements would be needed in order to understand the reasons for performance. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded members that the report was not intended to provide a huge amount of detail for Performance Scrutiny Committee, but provide a summary so that members could identify areas where they would want further context to help identify items requiring scrutiny in depth.

Members felt that graphs and charts rather than statements, would help identify changes over time quickly.

The Chief Executive reiterated the intention to make live performance data available by means of infographics and charts, supplemented by information such as comparison with national benchmarks, and in as real time as possible, so that members could easily identify areas in need of particular focus.

A member asked further questions about use of overspend, issues surrounding looked after children, early intervention, and commissioning of the Tuition Medical Behaviour Support Service and risks to the Council.

In response the Executive Director of Resources explained how current and future spending on children's social care was profiled on demand, not finance available. Profiling would never be perfect but the budget was based on an assessment of what was believed to be a reasonable cost based on service provision.

Another member highlighted areas of potential scrutiny interest as: increasing numbers of hip fractures in the elderly; recycling and composting rates and how it was intended to meet recycling targets by the end of 2025.

The relevant scrutiny chairs noted these areas as potential work programme areas.

The Committee noted the report.

10 Financial Outturn 2020 - 2021

Toyin Bamidele, Interim Director of Strategic Finance, presented the Financial Outturn 2020 – 2021 report to the Committee.

Members asked a series of questions including those covering:

- The commercial investment programme, progress and whether a review was needed;
- Why savings were carried forward and not used in areas of pressure such as children's social care;
- Minimum Revenue Provision;
- The actual cost of the North West relief road as two varying figures had been referred to at a recent Cabinet meeting;
- Amount set aside for eventual repayment of borrowing of grants, these being used to offset overspend across the council;
- Digital transformation and unachieved savings.

Officers explained that more detailed answers would be provided outside of the meeting but that

- All authorities were going through same challenges,
- Lessons learnt in relation to covid in 2021 would help understand future pressures
- It was not possible to predict when grants would come to an end and work was ongoing with services in relation to this
- The medium term financial strategy process would consider the budget over the next five years; any savings it was not possible to deliver would be removed and alternative savings found to help balance the budget.

The Chair also referred to the work of the Financial Strategy Task and Finish Group.

The Committee noted the report.

11 Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer drew attention to the Forward plan and encouraged Committee Members to use it as a source to identify any items that might require Overview and Scrutiny attention.

During discussion, the view was expressed that the terms of reference of all of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees required review and it was agreed to add this to the work programme.

12 Performance Management Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer said a work programme was being developed. Items would include risk register, financial reporting and performance reporting but it was down to the Committee to identify other future items.

A member asked that performance of the authority in relation to Climate Change be considered going forward. The Chair reported that relevant performance indicators were being formulated.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer said he would bring a proposed work programme to the next meeting for discussion.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: