

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

held at

The Council Chamber

Symington Building, Adam & Eve Street, Market Harborough, LE16 7AG

on

29th September 2021

Commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Rickman, Chairman

Councillors: Bannister, Frenchman, Graves, Mahal, Mrs Page (ex officio),

Mrs Robinson and Mrs Simpson.

Officers: C. Bland, R. Ellis, S. Green, G. Keeping, C. Mason, E. O'Neill, J. Smith and S. Taylor.

Guests (SLM): D. Hicks and M. Hopkin

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATIONS OF SUBSTITUTION

Apologies were received from Councillors Knowles and Councillor Mrs Wood. Councillor Mrs Robinson substituted for Councillor Mrs Wood and Councillor Mrs Simpson substituted for Councillor Knowles.

MINUTES

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel held on the 17th June 2021 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

Page 5 KA.06.04 – Armed Forces Covenant: It was AGREED that a link would be provided to Members. *[Post-meeting note: the link to Armed Forces Covenant material on the Council's website is: <https://www.harborough.gov.uk/armedforces>]*

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

PERFORMANCE QUARTER ONE – 2021-22

The purpose of the report was to inform the Panel about the performance of the Council against the Corporate Delivery Plan at the end of the first quarter of the 2021/22 year.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present and the following was recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
<u>Appendix B CCS 05 – Percentage Avoidable Contact:</u> the title of this KPI seems very negative. Could a better title be found?	It was AGREED that this would be looked into.
<u>KA.03.02 – Provision of effective housing advice and prevention of homelessness:</u> it is understood from the Leader's report at Council that the Council has been very successful in delivering affordable homes. Is there any way that this can be reflected in the KA?	It was AGREED that information would be sought from the relevant service area and a response circulated.
<u>KA.02.02 – Develop partnerships with Schools, Universities and Centres of Excellence:</u> in relation to the CLEAR project at Magna Park, it was understood that this would be opened up for local parishes and communities to visit. Could this be arranged?	It was AGREED that information would be sought from the relevant service area and a response circulated.
<u>KA.05.03 – Domestic Energy Efficiency Advice:</u> could information be provided to Ward Councillors be informed when Harborough Warm Homes, or other companies endorsed by the Council, are in their area? Some people view knocking on the door as a scam and better local forewarning might avoid this.	It was AGREED that information would be sought from the relevant service area and a response circulated.
<u>KA.09.01 / KA.08.01 - Change Programme / Budget Challenge 25:</u> could a briefing for Members be arranged?	There will be a briefing on Budget Challenge 2025 in due course.
<u>KA.09.05 – Develop an Engagement Strategy:</u> could an update be given on this item?	Work on the Strategy has started and will be completed by the middle of Quarter 4.
<u>ED 08.1 Market Harborough Footfall:</u> was information on this available?	The Chairman said that he had received detailed information on this from the Service Manager for Economic Development. It was AGREED that this would be circulated to Panel members.
<u>KA.08.03 – Develop a commercial property investment strategy:</u> it was noted that this had been removed from the Corporate Delivery Plan during Quarter 1 of the 2021/22 year. Could more clarity be given on the concerns that led to this change?	Concern had been raised at some of the acquisitions being made by local authorities in purchasing commercial properties for the generation of income. The Government has given a strong indication to the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accounts (CIPFA) that the prudential code should be reviewed to stop local authorities buying property assets for revenue yield. The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) has introduced new requirements that any purchase of property for yield can no longer be funded by loans from the PWLB. Local authorities can still borrow from

	the marketplace, but the margins are significantly reduced. Commercial gain can no longer be the primary reason for local authorities to acquire assets.
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The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING – QUARTER 1 2021-22

The Panel received a report (considered by the Cabinet on 6th September 2021), which set out the Council’s Financial Performance during the first quarter of the 2021/22 financial year. The Council’s financial performance for the period 1st April 2021 to 30th June 2021, together with commitments for the remainder of the financial year, indicated that the Net Expenditure / Budget requirement was forecast to be overspent by £182K. As at the 30 June 2020, the Capital Programme was forecast to be underspent by £176K.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
<u>Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) funding gap</u> : what is the forecast gap at the end of the period of the MTFS?	Paragraph 4.10 of the report indicates that at the end of the current MTFS period, the projected budget gap by 2024/25 is £1.3m.
<u>2021/22 Overspend</u> : Paragraph 4.6 of the report gives a figure of £182k for the 2021/22 overspend, but this figure does not appear elsewhere in the report. Is the correct number, the £182k or £172k (as given elsewhere)?	It was AGREED that this would be looked into and reported back to Panel members. <i>[Post-meeting note: there was a mistake and the correct number in section 1.2 part i) should have read £172k. This follows through and agrees with table 3 and appendix 4, which both show the correct figure of £172k]</i>
<u>Budget Challenge 2025 (BC25)</u> : in table 2 of the report, what is the distinction between “Firm” and “More Work Needed” savings identified in Tranches 2 and 3?	It was AGREED that this would be covered in the forthcoming briefing on BC25.
<u>Lutterworth Masterplan</u> : how is the Masterplan progressing and is the purchase of the Town Hall car park going forward?	It was AGREED that further information on this would be provided to Councillor Mrs Robinson.

The Panel RESOLVED to note the budget monitoring report for the first quarter of the 2021/22 year.

THE COUNCIL’S WORKING ARRANGEMENTS WITH SLM (EVERYONE ACTIVE)

The Panel considered a report on the performance of the Council’s Leisure Centre operations in respect of its operator SLM; the Chairman welcomed Dan Hicks and Matt Hopkin from SLM to the meeting. On 1 April 2019, the Council entered into a 3-year contract with SLM for the delivery of leisure services at both Harborough Leisure Centre and Lutterworth Sports Centre. Harborough Leisure Centre and Lutterworth Sports Centre were both leased to SLM for the term of the contract. Whilst historically the contract included an annual payment to the Council, an open book accounting system is currently being operated and the Council has subsidised this by waiving the payment to SLM and providing financial support through the entirety of the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present and the following were recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
<u>Schools' involvement</u> : will swimming numbers decline as children go back to school or are a number of schools coming in as groups? How many schools are there in Harborough and Lutterworth that are involved?	Different timetables are in place during school holidays. Schools are starting to return to the Leisure Centres: 9 schools at Lutterworth and 8 at Market Harborough are currently involved in school swimming. But overall participation levels are still lower than prior to Covid.
<u>Decline in physical activity</u> : there was a drop-in physical activity (presumably the gym facilities). Is this an effect of Covid?	Use of gym facilities usually reduces during the summer holidays; there is also a decline in group activities / classes during this time. In addition, more people are using the on-line packages and exercising at home.
<u>Scope and content of the Performance Monitoring Review report (Appendix 1 to the report)</u> : the review as it stands does not include the right type and level of information to allow proper scrutiny. Information should be included on performance against agreed targets and comparisons with earlier years. It is possible that this type of information is available elsewhere and could be included easily.	The report that forms Appendix 1 is just a monthly summary and limited in its content; more detail is provided in the annual report. Previous annual reports can be shared, and new items can be added if the Panel wishes. Figures from last year are not particularly meaningful due to the Covid closure, but can be included if desired. It was AGREED that the format of the report would be revised before it is next presented to the Panel.
<u>Maintenance & Environmental – Appendix 1, paragraph 5.3</u> : could the distinction between Market Harborough and Lutterworth be made clearer?	This was noted.
<u>Cleaning Matrix – Appendix 1, paragraph 5.4</u> : no information on the matrix is provided. Again, this should form part of a strengthened report.	This can be added as an appendix to the report.
<u>Referral Figures</u> : could these be included in the report?	Yes, this information is available from Active Harborough data, which is why it is not included in this part of the report.
<u>RIDDOR</u> : what is this?	The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 2013.
<u>Swimming booking system</u> : the booking system seems too complicated and acts as a deterrent. Is it necessary?	The system was needed during the pandemic and some people still prefer to use this system. People can still come to reception to book or book over the phone.
<u>Armed Forces Personnel</u> : there was a campaign aimed at Armed Forces personnel during the summer. Are figures relating to this available?	It was AGREED that the figures would be circulated. It is hoped to run the campaign again in the future.
<u>Open Book Accounting</u> : could a report on the open book accounting system be brought to a future meeting of the Panel?	It was AGREED that the Scrutiny Commission be asked to include such a report in the Scrutiny Workplan.
<u>Everyone Active</u> : could the Panel consider a report on this in the future?	It was AGREED that the Scrutiny Commission be asked to include such a report in the Scrutiny Workplan.

<p><u>Cancer Rehabilitation Programme</u>: this was taken on just before the pandemic and was the only example in Leicestershire. This continued through the pandemic and is still ongoing. The Council has been approached to support other districts in the area.</p>	
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The Panel RESOLVED to note the report and thanked Dan Hicks and Matt Hopkin for their attendance.

MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY

None were reported.

The Meeting ended at 8.43 p.m.