

Minutes of the Performance Overview & Scrutiny Panel



Location: Harborough Innovation Centre

Date: 25th July 2024 commencing at 6.30pm

Present:

Councillors: Dann, Elliott, Forman, James, King and Rickman.

Officers: C. Mason – Director of Resources (& s.151)

S. Manek – Democratic Services Officer

1. Election of Chairman 2024-25

The Clerk opened the meeting. She noted that the first item on the agenda was to Elect a Chairman of the Corporate and Performance Overview & Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2024/25. She invited nominations, Councillor James was nominated by Councillor Elliott. This was seconded by Councillor King and there being no other nominations, Councillor James was duly elected.

2. Election of Vice Chairman 2024-25

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chair. Councillor Whitmore was nominated by Councillor Elliott. This was seconded by Councillor Forman and there being no other nominations, Councillor Whitmore was duly elected.

Councillor James assumed the Chair and welcomed all to the meeting. Introductions were made around the table.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Finan who was substituted by Councillor Elliott. Apologies were also received from Councillor Beadle.

4. Declarations of Members' Interests

No declarations of interest were received.

5. Minutes of the Performance Overview & Scrutiny Panel 11.04.2024

The minutes were proposed by Councillor Elliott and seconded by Councillor Rickman.

It was RESOLVED that the Panel agree the minutes of the meeting on 11th April 2024 as an accurate record.

6. Portfolio Holder Update

The Report was presented by the Portfolio Holder for Finance. Points made included:

- The Plowmans Yard refurbishment of the three flats for temporary accommodation has begun. This was approved at Cabinet in April.
- The internal accounts for 2023-24 had closed on 24 June 2024. The 2022-23 accounts had been signed off.
- The Harborough Innovation Centre had an occupancy rate of 98% and the Harborough Enterprise Centre having an occupancy rate of 88%, both ahead of where expected.
- The Market Hall footfall in June was slightly above the same month in the previous year. The June events calendar was busy with the 1940s weekends.

Members raised the following points:

- It would be really very helpful if the update was submitted to the committee as a written report.

ACTION: Portfolio Holder updates need to be presented as a written report to Committees.

- Surprised that there was no information on car park income. The annual car parking accounts had not been published anywhere.

ACTION: Share information on performance of car parks including statistics and revenue.

Resolved: The Panel noted the update from the Portfolio Holder.

7. Q4 2023-24 – Finance & Corporate Performance Report

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report. The report covered the financial and corporate performance quarter 4 (outturn) for 2023/24 which was reported to Cabinet on the 15 July 2024; with the report attached as Annex A and associated appendices attached as Annex B to D. In respect of the key outturns, for:

Finance, highlighted in Annex B,

- i. Revenue underspend of £1.1m; a positive variance to the approved budget of 8.5%.
- ii. Capital overspend of £200k; a negative variance to the approved budget of 7%.

Performance, a refresh of the corporate plan Key Activities was undertaken prior to 1 April 2023, resulting in 31 Key activities for the 2023/24 period.

- iii. Annex C contains a report of progress against all 31 Key activities in the Corporate Plan. At the end of Quarter 4 there was one at red status.
- iv. iv. Annex D contains a report of twenty key performance indicators (KPI's). At the end of Quarter 4, 3 KPI's had a red status.

The Quarter 4 report (Annex A) also considers the overall years performance against targets, where 1 Key Activity remained at Red and 3 KPI's did not reach target set. These are summarised in Annex A and in details in Annex C and D.

The Chair then invited questions and comments from the Panel:

- Was there an underspend of one million pounds? The Council has a lot of money in the bank and invested and that had produced additional investment return. It was concerning as the Chief Internal Auditor has stated in the Audit reports that savings need to be made, yet there is no reference to any savings in this report.

- SP01 – Number of affordable housing completions was red. In the financial year, the total number of house completions were 144, just 35 short of the 179-house targets. This was over 20% down. What was going to be done about this?
- Was there going to be any statement made about the Council's position on net zero?
- What were the required standards of the minimum performance standards? And what had been done to increase pre application advice to generate income? What were staff working on if no big applications were being submitted?

The Portfolio Holder and Section 151 Officer responded to all the points raised.

Resolved: The Panel noted the report and the recommendations to Cabinet.

8. Scrutiny Workplan Report

The Democratic Services Officer presented the report to the Panel. The draft Work-plan had been populated using a combination of items previously referred to Scrutiny from various sources, officer or member-led items, and statutory items. The suggested criteria at the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on 9 May 2024 (Appendix C) to assess topics being put forward for consideration by the respective Overview and Scrutiny Panel were: Public interest – not an individual's issue, Performance issues, Relevance to HDC and its objectives, Timely – able to act in time, not covered in the last year, Ability to make a difference/impact/influence, Not covered by another committee or function of the council and have the Resources to deliver – is there enough capacity in the council to deliver the outcomes/review. These would now be discussed at the respective Panels and then agreed by the respective Chairs.

The Panel made the following comments:

- Which Panel was the Car Parking Strategy being presented at? It was scheduled for the 26 September, but the report had not been circulated to Members yet.

ACTION: Circulate response to Panel

- The external contractors for big projects were scrutinised through the budget process and the procurement process was managed by procurement. Members could request for items to be placed on the workplan.

ACTION: Add Budget Principles Report to December Agenda for discussion

- After a detailed discussion, the Panel agreed that they wanted a detailed meeting concentrating solely on Platform Housing and others that provided affordable housing as soon as possible. It would be beneficial to invite providers and scrutinise them.

ACTION: Check feasibility of the additional meeting

- Additional meeting may need to be added depending on the workload.

Resolved: The Panel agreed the Draft Scrutiny Work-plan attached at Appendix A, agreed the proposed criteria, and agreed that a joint Task and Finish Group be set up for both scrutiny panels to discuss the development of the scrutiny function, to report back to Council in December 2024.

9. Any Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 20:04.