

# Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 10 July 2019 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.30 pm  
Concluded 7.25 pm

## Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Azam D Green Kamran Hussain Tait	Goodall Riaz	Griffiths

Observer: Councillor Hinchcliffe

Apologies: Councillor Shafiq

## Councillor Azam in the Chair

### 1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In relation to the financial matters on the agenda (Minutes 6 and 7) Councillor Riaz declared in the interest of transparency, that he was a director of a care home in the Bradford district.

***ACTION: City Solicitor***

### 2. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meetings held on 14 and 21 March 2019 be signed as a correct record.

***ACTION: City Solicitor***

### 3. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

#### 4. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the Committee.

#### 5. FULL-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “A”**) which provided a summary of the council’s performance against its key performance indicators. The report also proposed a set of measures and targets for the 2019/2020 municipal year.

The report had also been considered by the Executive at its meeting on 9 July 2019.

The Head of Policy and Performance stated that despite the challenging circumstances facing the Council, there had been a number of achievements in respect of growing the local economy and enabling people to lead independent lives. Earnings had improved to a level above the target alongside a reduction in the local gender pay gap. In addition there had been a sharp increase in the numbers of those with learning disabilities being enabled to live independently from a care home setting. However a number of challenges remained and these were set out in the report.

During the discussion Members asked a number of questions. The questions together with the responses are detailed below. All Strategic Directors and a number of other senior officers were present at the meeting to respond to service specific questions around performance.

A Member questioned why the Markets Service was designated with Museums and Libraries cultural attractions, when it should be an economic indicator. In response the Head of Policy and Performance acknowledged that this could be amended in readiness for the mid year performance reporting.

In response to a question regarding skills, it was mentioned that the offer to young people should be enhanced to encourage better take up of vocational courses such as NVQ Level 3. The Member stated that schools continued to focus on ‘A’ Levels and that this was the advice given to young people at 16 as a route into University, and it was therefore important that careers advice was more varied to ensure that all options to post 16 education and training were considered. The Strategic Director Children’s Services acknowledged that this was a key area of challenge and there was a concerted effort to engage with schools on a ‘broad offer’ and not just to promote the academic studies route.

A Member stated that excess weight in children at primary age was still an issue and the direction of travel in this area had changed little over the years. In response the Manager for commissioning stated that a new contract had been commissioned to start in August, which would incorporate more grassroots work to be undertaken in conjunction with the Council’s Partners, with a view to making people in the district more active and having a more family centred approach to tackling levels of obesity.

A Member commented that the Better Health, Better Lives, Active Adults indicator did not allude to activities outside of organised sports activities and there needed to be a broader outlook, inclusivity and encouragement of other activities, if the Council was to make real inroads.

In response it was acknowledged that other more casual activities such as walking and gardening were being encouraged as a part of a wider strategy to get people to become more active, and to this end the Council was also working with businesses, including its own staff to encourage the take up of physical activity.

In relation to a question on the relatively low number of staff who had received a performance review, it was stressed that although the levels were poor, this last year had been very much a transition year, and there had not been an opportunity to have a full performance cycle to benchmark. A task group had been set up to ascertain why performance reviews were still not being undertaken with a view to overturning this trend.

A Member stated that his understanding was that performance reviews should have been 'sorted out' when the HR Plus contract came into being some years ago and ensured that each employee had a annual performance review. In response it was explained that the HR Plus contract was coming up for renewal soon and a review into the effectiveness of the contract would be undertaken in due course, and that this could be shared with the Scrutiny Committee.

In response to a question on departmental savings and why a number of these were not being achieved, it was stated that a robust process was now in place to challenge individual departments on spend and ensure that the necessary savings were being made. It was mentioned that for example in Adults Services a new process had been agreed where individual services would make the necessary savings and these were being regularly reviewed to ensure they were being met, hence a much more stringent process was now in place.

In relation to a question regarding Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, it was stressed that the aspirations around SEND provision had not changed, albeit the numbers going down the SEND route were small and sometimes difficult to capture as an indicator.

In response to a question on Safer and Active Communities and the lack of detail in the report around crime rates, it was explained that there was a detailed plan behind the information contained in the report, and this could be shared with Members to provide a better picture.

#### **Resolved –**

- (1) That this Committee requests the Executive to separate Libraries and Museums from Markets in relation to the total number of visits to cultural attractions, in readiness for the mid year performance reporting.**

- (2) That this Committee requests that a report be presented to this Committee which relates to the Evaluation of the HR Plus Contract.

**ACTION:**     *Head of Policy and Performance (Resolution 1)*  
                  *Director of Human Resources (Resolution 2)*

## 6. FINANCE POSITION STATEMENT FOR 2018-19

The Director of Finance submitted a report (**Document “B”**) which provided Members with an overview of the financial position of the Council for 2018-19.

It showed the revenue and capital financial position of the Council at the 31st March 2019. The report also provided an update on;

- The year end position of the Council's revenue budget.
- The delivery of 2018-19 approved budget savings plans.
- A statement on the Council's reserves including movements since the 4th quarter report.
- An update on the Capital Investment Plan.
- An update on Council Tax and Business Rates collection

The report had also been considered by the Executive at its meeting on 9 July 2019.

It was stated that the Council underspent the £358.1m net budget by £1.7m in 2018/2019, however there were a number of significant variances with overspends posted in the Departments of Health and Wellbeing, Children's and Place, which were detailed in the report.

During the discussion Members asked a number of questions which are detailed below:

A Member ascertained the position with regards to the use of agency staff and associated costs, in particular the use of agency social workers in Children's Services. In response it was pointed out that the use of agency social workers was as a result of the number of vacancies the Council was currently carrying and that efforts were on going to bring the number of social workers back up to full compliment, but that this was proving to be a challenging proposition and one which mirrored the national picture. In addition in the light of the Ofsted judgement the Council had earmarked extra resources to address the issues that had been identified.

A Member questioned if the Service was getting the best out of its social workers in the context of a number of issues facing the Service. In response it was stated that the preferred position would be not to use agency staff and rely on a permanent workforce. To this end social worker pay was being evaluated together with training and developmental opportunities in order that retention levels improved. In addition it was mentioned Bradford did attract a lot of newly qualified social workers, and that they considered Bradford to be a good place to work.

In relation to a question on the £0.4m spend on the Great Exhibition of the North, it was stated that a decision had been taken to make this spend following other funding received from the Arts Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and that it was considered that this was the right thing to do given the

profile of the event.

In response to a number of questions on the failure to make the identified savings in the area of school travel assistance, it was stressed that although this had been an ambition over a number of years, the savings had failed to materialise given the complexities involved in undertaking the assessments. In the light of this the savings amount had now been reassessed with a view that a £2.5m savings target was now being proposed over and above the £1.2m saving that had already been achieved. A number of Members expressed a word of caution that the new projected savings would be achieved in the context of the problems that had been experienced in previous years.

In relation to a question on the sports facilities and libraries non controllable costs it was stated that these referred to technical accounting adjustments, for which an explanation could be given outside of this meeting.

A Member questioned whether the increase in the number of new borrowers also included all the community managed libraries in the district. In response it was stated that unless the community managed library sent regular audits to the Council, an accurate figure could not be given, however further information could be provided to Members.

#### **Resolved –**

**That officers be thanked for attending the meeting, submitting a detailed report and for providing detailed responses to Members' questions.**

#### ***NO ACTION***

### **7. QTR. 1 FINANCE POSITION STATEMENT FOR 2019-20**

The Director of Finance submitted a report (**Document “C”**) which provided Members with an overview of the forecast financial position of the Council for 2019-20.

It examined the latest spend against revenue and capital budgets and forecasted the financial position at the year end. It stated the Council's current balances and reserves and forecasted school balances for the year.

The report had also been considered by the Executive at its meeting on 9 July 2019.

It was reported that based on a projection at 31 May 2019, the Council was forecasted to overspend the £359.9m net revenue budget by £1.9m. The principal overspends were in the areas of Children's and Adults Social care, particularly as a result of the projected increase in the numbers of Looked After Children.

During the discussion a Member questioned that given the steady increase in the numbers of Looked After Children, why was it such a big surprise that this increase had not already anticipated. In response it was explained that the increase mirrored the national picture and that the numbers had also gone up

exponentially since the Ofsted judgement. In addition the projection was that the LAC figure would be in region of 1400 by 2020, before levelling off.

Members acknowledged that it was difficult to budget for the increase in the numbers of Looked After Children and that it was important that the most vulnerable children received the appropriate level of care. The importance of developing the Early Help offer was also crucial in stemming the numbers of LAC going forward and the Service was proactively developing this.

In relation to the overspend in waste management, it was stressed that measures were now in place to deal with the overspend and that spend in this area should be on target going forward.

**Resolved –**

**That officers be thanked for attending the meeting, submitting a detailed report and for providing detailed responses to Members' questions.**

***NO ACTION***

**8. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document "D"**) which set out the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee draft work programme for 2019/20. The Committee was asked to consider which items it wished to include in the work programme.

**Resolved –**

**That the work plan be approved and that Members communicate any suggestions on the work plan to the Overview and Scrutiny Lead.**

***ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead***

Chair

**Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER