

# Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 9 November 2023 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.00 pm  
Concluded 7.50 pm

**Present – Councillors**

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	GREEN
Azam Alipoor Robinson D Green	Loy F Ahmed	Stubbs	Love

Observers: Councillors Hinchcliffe and Ross-Shaw

**Councillor Azam in the Chair**

**35. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

No disclosures of interest in matters under discussion were made.

**36. MINUTES**

**Resolved –**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2023 be signed as a correct record.**

**37. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

**38. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were no referrals made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**39. MEASURES TO COMBAT DANGEROUS DRIVING AND ANTI SOCIAL**

## **BEHAVIOUR IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT**

The report of the Strategic Director, Place, (**Document “Q”**) provided an update on current casualty levels and trends in the Bradford District and the Capital Programmes, Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity initiatives aimed at addressing dangerous driving and anti-social driving behaviour. The report also set out the Council’s commitment to Vision Zero.

The Principle Engineer with responsibility for road safety was present at the meeting together with representatives from West Yorkshire Police. He stressed that partnership working was key to reducing injuries and deaths on our roads, he highlighted that there had been a number of fatalities on our roads as of late and therefore we were at a critical juncture.

To this end Vision Zero was looking at a whole systems targeted approach to reducing casualties, ensuring that services across the Council and further afield bought into the concept. He added that road casualty rates in the district were high and therefore this presented us with a real challenge. To this end the Police had been very supportive, deploying resources to areas of high risk on the road network.

Our safer roads programme also concentrated on areas where pedestrian injuries were high, and with the level of detail now available, it enabled partners to target those areas more effectively than ever before as well as working with the community, via the street safe initiative by creating safe play areas for children.

A number of representatives from West Yorkshire Police were present to give a policing perspective to roads policing, during which information was provided on the actions taken to reduce anti-social / dangerous driving speed enforcement; education initiatives; number of vehicle seizures; support of the safer streets work and the commitment to reducing road injuries and fatalities through Vision Zero.

During the discussion Members asked a number of questions, the questions together with the responses are detailed below:

In response to a question regarding dashcam footage it was explained that that any footage that is received is fully investigated, and that any action taken is referred back to the submitter.

In relation to the primary causes of accidents, it was explained that all accidents are fully investigated, and solutions applied, and appropriate action taken to the primary cause. It was agreed that information around this could be provided to Members.

A Member stated that parking around schools during drop off and pick up was a particular area of concern and ward councillors were inundated on this issue from concerned residents, and he ascertained what measures were being taken to further address this. In response it was stated that work was ongoing with schools to address concerns , with pupils also being involved in educating parents on the dangers of poor parking around school and its impact on safety.

A Member queried what work was being done in conjunction with new drivers and ensuring that they remained safe drivers after passing their test. In response it was stressed that work in secondary schools was targeting this cohort early on and that the Police had for a number of years rolled out a programme of driver education training for new drivers, with over 10000 students having gone through the programme, which had yielded great results in improving driver behaviour.

In relation to speed camera enforcement, it was explained that as well as the sites where there were high accident/casualties reported, the Partnership was now expanding coverage and enforcement based on new evidence, and therefore the message was that if you speed you are likely to get caught.

In response to a question regarding poor take up amongst some schools on the programmes offered by the road safety team, it was explained that in cases where schools did not take up an offer despite repeated attempts, a letter was normally sent to the Governors to encourage take up, particularly in areas of the district where casualty figures were high. It was agreed that information on take up / or lack thereof would be provided to Members.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the Committee thanked officers for their attendance and for their commitment towards tackling dangerous driving in the Bradford district.**
- (2) That the Committee requests, a progress report be presented to this Committee, in 12 months time.**

***To be actioned by: Strategic Director of Place.***

**40. QUARTER 2 FINANCE POSITION STATEMENT FOR 2023-24**

The Director of Finance presented (**Document “R”**) which provided Members with the forecast year-end financial position of the Council for 2023-24 and set out the unprecedented scale of its financial challenges.

The report outlined the revenue and capital budgets and the year-end forecast financial position based on information at the end of September 2023. It stated the Council’s current reserves and school balances.

Document R also summarised the ongoing action being undertaken to address the current challenges and further urgent action that will be required to secure a sustainable financial position.

It was explained that a growing number of Councils across the country were reporting severe financial pressures. Bradford also faces financial challenges on an unprecedented scale and the Council, including the Bradford Childrens’ and Families Trust (BCFT), was forecast to overspend its £453m net revenue budget for 2023-24 by £68m at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024 based on forecasts calculated at the end of September 2023.

This forecast position results from a combination of c£23m of forecast overspends in services delivered directly or commissioned by the Council, and c£45m in BCFT.

The key issues affecting Council delivered and commissioned services included demand and cost pressures in adult social care; home to school transport; on-going elevated levels of inflation; increases in costs such as the national pay award, and underdelivered savings.

Key pressures on the Trust's finances include high levels of agency staff, and ongoing increases in expensive residential care placements which run counter to budgeted reductions as detailed in section 10 of the report.

During the discussion Members asked a number of questions, the questions together with the responses are detailed below:

In response to a question regarding the high levels of agency staff, and why this was not apparent and a pertinent factor during contract negotiations for setting up of the Trust. The Strategic Director Corporate Resources stressed that the contract in setting up the Children's Trust took over a year to negotiate, given this was a demand led service, we did take advice from previously set up Trust around the contract. Given the nature of the service and the constant state of flux we did our best to negotiate a robust contract.

The Strategic Director Children's Services added that the given that the service is demand led, we did our best on the data we had, with an acknowledgement that the use of agency staff was commonplace, and that we as a district had larger families and this can lead to a larger number of children being taken into care as a consequence. It was also stressed that costs can go up and down and therefore these variations are inevitable.

The Leader of Council was also present at the meeting and stated that notwithstanding the need to move to establish a Children's Trust, the cost of placements was phenomenal and we were bound by market prices, and it was therefore difficult to see how we can mitigate this in the absence of reform of the market and additional funding from central government.

The Chief Executive of the Trust was also present and stated that a long term business plan was in place as well as a plan to reduce reliance on agency staff, however this had to be seen in the context of a national shortage of social workers. To this end, the Trust was actively recruiting more social workers and how to retain them through better training and support. She also stressed that clearly the overspend was not a sustainable one and every effort was being made to address this.

In relation to the overall budget deficit the Strategic Director Corporate Services stressed that every effort was being made to see how savings can be made across the Council as well as future proofing services, and this was very much the area of focus for the corporate management team.

In response to a specific question on the retention of social workers, it was explained that there was a national shortage of social workers and therefore

enticing social workers to stay by offering better working conditions was a key component in our approach.

In relation to a question on the cost of placements, it was very much a case that the current market meant that the cost of placements was rising, and work was ongoing to try and reduce costs, by providing more inhouse/alternative provision and/or working with other providers, where possible, however the cost of specialist placements remained stubbornly high.

The Leader of Council stressed that we are the only Local Authority that has had to set up a Trust during difficult financial times and that the placement market, in terms of its costs was working against us. In the end what was really required was for Government to fairly fund Local Government.

**Resolved –**

**That the Committee thanked officers for their attendance and looked forward to receiving the Third Quarter Financial Position Statement.**

***To be actioned by – Director of Finance***

#### **41. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

The Chair of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “S”**) which included the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2023/24, which was attached as appendix 1 to Document “S”.

Also attached was appendix 2, a list of unscheduled topics for 2023-24.

The Overview and Scrutiny Lead explained that one more session was planned on the Anti-Social Behaviour Call for Action and that Members will receive an invite on the session in due course.

**Resolved –**

**That the Committee discussed and amended the work programme.**

***To be actioned by: 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.**