

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2023

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2023 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Jake Kearsley, Gemma Cobby, Steve Cox, Leanne Hempshall, Richard A Jones, Majid Khan and Martin Greenhalgh (substitute for Councillor Glynis Smith)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Joe Blackham, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Enforcement

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources

Dan Swaine, Director of Place

Phil Holmes, Adults, Wellbeing and Culture

Riana Nelson, Director of Children, Young People and Families

Lee Tillman, Assistant Director Chief Executive

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Glynis Smith, Antoinette Drinkhill and Bernadette Nesbit

		<u>ACTION</u>
8	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	There were no items.	
9	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations made.	
10	<u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 29TH JUNE AND 7TH SEPTEMBER 2023</u>	
	RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 29 th June and	

	7 th September 2023, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
11	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no members of the public in attendance and no statements made.	
12	<u>2023-24 QUARTER 1 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT</u>	
	<p>The Committee gave consideration to a report outlining Q1 finance and performance for 2023/24. The Chair highlighted that it was recognised the Council continued to operate in really challenging circumstances, but it continued to deliver on and had seen improvement in many of the service standard measures. It was highlighted that this delivery was a credit to the hard working and committed workforce.</p> <p>It was explained that the financial position at Quarter 1 highlighted £4.2m overspend with two key pressures in Adults and Childrens services, and were being closely monitored with the objective that a balanced budget would be achieved.</p> <p>The Committee addressed the following issues in detail:</p> <p>Regenerative Council</p> <p><u>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)</u> – In response to a question it was explained that Central Government provided resources through the Education DSG and was maintained by the Council to support Special Educational Needs costs. It was noted that costs associated with this were increasing significantly. It was advised that the Government had relaxed the DSG to assist with overspend but there was an increased worrying position that if the current flexible arrangements were to change then the local authority would be in a position where it could not continue to fund the increasing demand. It was noted this was a national challenge, not something just impacting on the City of Doncaster.</p> <p><u>Staff Sickness</u> – It was confirmed that staff sickness had seen a decline but it was still above target with Covid being the third largest reason for absence. However, with regard to the number of days lost due to sickness, Covid was eighth with the largest being infections, viruses and stress. It was confirmed that when recording sickness it was not categorised as home, office or remote working.</p> <p><u>Choose kindness movement</u> – In response to the Committee supporting this and wishing to see it as an habitual use with the logo captured on buildings across the city, it was confirmed that it had recently been projected onto Cusworth Hall. It was noted that the Communications Team was currently working on promoting the movement as part of the anti-bullying campaign and was looking at</p>	

every opportunity to promote it. The Panel was advised that the Choose Kindness Movement was being addressed to ensure it was embedded and complementary to equality and diversity.

Pay Offer – It was confirmed that provisions had been built into the 2023/24 budget but it was estimated, on current negotiations, there would be a £2.1m shortfall. Therefore, it would have diverse impacts across Directorates. For example, delivering with less staff and in the long run having to be more tolerant about the time it takes to complete tasks. Close monitoring of service standards would be undertaken.

Creating Safer, Stronger, Greener and Cleaner Communities where everyone belongs

Recycling domestic waste – A Member outlined that people could place items in the wrong bins, for example, pizza boxes and wondered how the Local Authority could incentivise people to be more environmentally conscious. It was explained that with regard to cardboard such as pizza boxes being placed in recycling bins, the bins become contaminated with food. Therefore instructions were provided with the annual bin collection calendar but community leaders were also asked to help educate communities they represented. When items were placed in the wrong bin, tags were attached to bins to explain what should and should not be placed in recycling.

Councillor Joe Blackham Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Enforcement

Street scene – A Member acknowledged to Councillor Blackham, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Enforcement, the challenges faced with the service but recognised the improvement made, particularly in relation to bin collections and fly tipping.

Councillor Blackham highlighted that there had been successful fly-tipping enforcement and prosecutions. He continued to explain that having good photographic material, particularly number plates from offending vehicles was essential. However, he provided the example of recently a white van's plates had been cloned and actually belonged to a fiat. This highlighted the difficulties with enforcement to which the Committee acknowledged and noted that evidence was key to seeking prosecutions.

With regard to the use of additional CCTV to assist with enforcement the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the budget for the Directorate was well managed but very tight and could not promise any additional funding for this purpose.

Back office administration to support enforcement action was highlighted as very resource intensive to ensure solid cases were produced. The nature of how anti-social behaviour had changed,

particularly how organised crime had an impact on many aspects was recognised and also noted the close and good working relationship the local authority had with South Yorkshire Police.

Future street scene Challenges were acknowledged but improvement to service delivery was continually being addressed..A staff engagement programme had recently been undertaken as part of ongoing work to improve the Street Scene service. It was noted that there was an ever-increasing portfolio of infrastructure related maintenance demands, including capital funded projects that would not attract revenue funding for maintenance. Additionally there were increasing demands on the service in each locality area with similar themes as high priority.

With regard to street scene staff morale, it was acknowledged that the depots, although improvements had been made with more work was required, did not have the pleasant working conditions that were provided within the Civic Office.

In relation to possible satellite depots, for example to run MOT testing centres, a discussion was held with regard to the advantages and disadvantages but it was noted that the authority was currently undertaking an asset rationalisation programme and to provide such facilities would require the Local Authority to take on additional facilities. The difficulties, including budget provision and capacity to extend the service was highlighted and recognised.

Concern was expressed with regard to the cost -of -living crisis with the Local Authority continuing to promote information around financial and wellbeing issues. It was noted that basic household goods had kindly been donated by a foodbank to staff who had made a specific request for assistance.

With regard to vacancies up to 25 posts were vacant with some roles being hard to fill for example, Arborists.

Major Projects – in response to a question relating to the challenges in the market, it was explained that this primarily related to elevated costs, timescale and resources. With regard to costs it was recognised that when initial funding bids were submitted the sudden increase in material prices would not have been expected. It was noted that inflation had impacted on a number of projects with contractors having to build in a potential increase for both material and labour. It was acknowledged that many of the grants received required spending within a specified period, with challenging external factors on when the construction phase could commence.

An increase in the major project portfolio required more resources and could have an impact on timescales for delivery. It was also noted that the Local Authority had an aging workforce that held a lot of intelligence and knowledge. which if lost would be difficult to replace.

It was explained that a monthly Major Project Board had been established to address all schemes including the Waterfront, Towns and Levelling Up funds to address issues including possible slippages due to expenditure, timetables and approvals for works. It was accepted that more work was required but checks and balances were in place.

To conclude the Chair of Regeneration and Housing Scrutiny Panel confirmed that the Panel received regular updates on Major Project progress and stressed that any member was welcome to attend the meetings.

Developing the Skills to Thrive in Life and Work

Remake Learning Days – A Member highlighted that this festival was a great success and a tribute to all involved. The Panel questioned how momentum would be maintained in the coming months to ensure it was not a one-off event but a springboard for wider learning participation. In response it was explained that a number of actions would be undertaken to ensure the programme continued including:

- reestablishing a remake learning council with representation from across the education, skills and business landscape to bring businesses together;
- Investing in a Learning Manager post that would drive delivery of a City-wide learning programme;
- Continue the Remake Learning Days Festivals;
- Provide termly/regular ‘pop-up’ activity and smaller-scale activity to complement the wider festival; and
- Working with the Health Determinants Research Collaboration to develop new and different ways of evidencing impact and to improve the offer.

Pupil Attendance – In response to a Member highlighting that persistent absence had dropped slightly, it was outlined that this was attributed to co-working across services, working with the inclusion team to reduce suspensions coupled with a rapid response to young people who were out of school for any length of time. Amongst other initiatives fixed penalty notices had been used as a last response deterrent for parents who still removed their children during term time for holidays. This had made an impact with fewer referrals for holidays in term time being received compared to the same time last year.

Nurturing a Child and Family Friendly Borough where Everyone Belongs

Adoption of children in care – It was noted that there had been an improvement in the number of children approved for adoption and a positive level of matching with adopters over the past 12 months. In 2022 it was outlined that the number in Doncaster was very low but this was lined with Covid and the impact it had on proceedings including

the Court process. The ongoing cost of living crisis and issues linked to the pandemic had left fewer adults feeling in a position to start a family.

The figures since April 2023 showed that six children were adopted. In the same period 52 children returned to live with their parents or another relative and 20 children were being made subject to a Special Guardianship Order.

Early Help Audits – with regard to the quality of recording on the Mosaic system, it was explained that a 58% audit input was not acceptable. Improvements had been introduced and this should show in future quarterly performance reports. An ongoing workforce development plan had been produced and focused on supporting individual practitioners, dip-sampling and monitoring to assure the Local Authority that changes were making a difference.

Members commented that the recent meeting held by the Panel with Headteachers had been really useful and had again highlighted issues with the computer recording system. The Panel was assured that prior to the Mosaic system going live in April 2023 a lot of improvements, reconfiguration and close scrutiny of the system had been undertaken and staff were still becoming familiar with it. More confidence had been built with regards to completion of data quality recording.

Promoting the Borough and it's Cultural, Sporting and Heritage Opportunities

Increasing events across Doncaster City – A Member outlined that following the pandemic it was good to see more events taking place with cultural and heritage sites reopening and wished to ensure they were made thriving beacons of the Doncaster Community. It was questioned if there was missed opportunity for Council revenue.

Two Members' contribution to helping with events at Cusworth Hall were recognised and were right to acknowledge the potential of Doncaster's venues. It was explained that Cultural Services was developing a vibrant programme across many venues in Doncaster with possible hire charges being introduced for larger organisations wishing to use Cusworth Hall and its park for events or as a filming location. Future commercial opportunities were being explored including room hire at the Hall and the reintroduction of a wedding package offer.

Full community engagement by staff was highlighted and training required. It was outlined that a written response with regard to mandatory training rates would be provided following the meeting.

Building Opportunities for Healthier, Happier and Longer Lives for All

Adult Social Care increased pressures – It was explained that there were several reasons for increasing pressures including the ageing

population. Another was the cost-of-living crisis, for example people not having the resources to keep themselves safe and well. The currently position with regard to the pressure faced within the NHS service had been well documented from GP to hospital services with workforce gaps compromising the ability to respond. Within the Local Authority it was directly controlling how adult social care was organised to reduce bureaucracy.

In relation to working relationships with GPs it was explained that more links could be made with individual practices as there were a lot of untapped potential partnership work.

Peer Review – The Peer Review report had been published and this was the link:

<https://dmbcwebstolive01.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/AdultSocialCare/Documents/Doncaster%20Council%20Preparaing%20for%20Assurance%20Peer%20Challenge%20June%202023.%20final%20110823.docx>).

It was confirmed that there were several recommendations made but a separate action plan would not be developed, because, actions within the Local Account were already being undertaken and the Peer Review only added different angles to those actions.

With regard to the Care Quality Commission inspection time frames it was noted that the body was currently evaluating pilot inspections at a small number of Councils and it was understood that 20 council's would be approached in the first wave of inspections early in the New Year. If Doncaster was within that cohort it would be informed in December with about 9 or 10 weeks notice.

Creating Safer, Stronger Greener and Cleaner Communities Where Everyone Belongs

People sleeping rough – Concern was expressed with regard to the number of people sleeping rough across the City and it was explained that the cost of living crisis was the main reason, exacerbated by the pandemic. It was noted that the number of people presenting themselves to the housing options service had significantly increased, due many reasons. There had been a similar pattern over recently years with each year seeing an increase however, it was noted that if the Local Authority had not invested in the Complex Lives Team the position would be worse than was currently presented.

It was agreed that the number of people sleeping rough would be provided following the meeting.

Adult Health and Well-being safeguarding assessments – The Committee was informed that the Local Authority was following the same formula as that of reducing adult social care and occupational therapy assessment times. It was acknowledged that people with

urgent safeguarding needs were supported immediately but there was a lag in recording. The quarterly performance had improved and it was expected that this would continue.

Tackling Climate Change

Provision of recycling bins in parks – It was noted that whilst recycling bins in parks were attractive, it was acknowledged that they could be contaminated with dog and food waste therefore it was unable to be recycled. Unfortunately, the Street Scene service did not currently have the infrastructure of vehicles required to maintain public recycling bins. It as noted there were future plans for a national recycling ‘Deposit Return Scheme’ where small cash deposits would be placed on single-use drinks containers which could incentivise people to reduce litter.

Tree inspections – It was reported to the Committee that proactive tree plotting was being undertaken to assist with the maintenance schedule however this had recently been complicated by transferring details from the Tree Wise to Alloy recording system. This was currently being integrated with other Council systems to improve functionality and data collection. It was confirmed that tree inspections had never ceased. With regard to staffing it was noted that a recruitment drive was being undertaken to incentivise arborists to work for a local authority.

Making Doncaster the Best Place to Do Business and Create Good Jobs

Inward investment – A member stressed that Business Doncaster was undertaking excellent work and wished for assurance that support was in place to ensure they met investment targets. The Committee was informed that Business Doncaster was currently reviewing its delivery model in view of delivering the Economic Strategy to bring better quality jobs into Doncaster. It was noted that the team was financed by a mixture of core council funding and effective use of external funding programmes. Recruitment of a number of vacancies for sector growth officers in green technologies, retail and leisure and manufacturing and engineering was currently being undertaken which would help the Local Authority meet some of the difficult targets. It was recognised that the Team was ageing with work on succession planning being undertaken to ensure important knowledge was retained.

RESOLVED: That the discussion and information provided on the Local Authority’s Quarter 1 finance and performance report, be noted.

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ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LIMITED (SLHD)
PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY UPDATE QUARTER 1

The Committee received a report relating to Quarter 1 performance and delivery of St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD)

The following areas were addressed in detail:

Families with children in temporary accommodation – in response to a Member questioning the number of families this related to it was explained that with regard to SLHD managed properties 155 households were in temporary accommodation including 235 children, some of which were in hotels and 2 families with a total of 3 children had been placed outside the authority. It was noted that there were numerous reasons why families were placed outside the City including fleeing domestic abuse. It was explained that when a family was placed in a hotel the national standard should be for no longer than a 6 week period and noted that none of SLHD families had reached this length of time.

It was highlighted that on the whole relationships between hotels and St Leger Homes of Doncaster was generally very good however, occasionally some families would not be accepted by hotels due to their past behaviour and reputation. It was confirmed that some damage had occurred in the past to hotels used by St Leger Homes of Doncaster tenants.

Number of Full Duty Homelessness Acceptances – It was explained that this was a new target and following advice it was suggested a target of 60% should be set. However, this was an error and the target should be around 30% therefore approval from the City of Doncaster would be sort for it to be changed from next year. It was noted that a vast number of people were approaching St Leger Homes of Doncaster late in the day for assistance with homelessness circumstances being brought about by, for example, affordability of private rented properties.

Days lost through sickenss – in response to the Committee highlighting that it was worrying for stress, depression and anxiety being the highest reason for staff absence, it was explained that only 3.8% of this was work related. The remainder of reasons in this category tended to be related to outside work influences. It was noted that work related stress was taken very seriously and was subject to a risk assessment with support available through different mechanisms, for example, property services used “Andy’s Man Club” for people from a trades background.

WIFI access in SLHD community halls – It was confirmed that none of the premises had wifi. The benefits to the community if it were available were acknowledged, however, the current unaffordable financial and maintenance commitment for such a facility was noted.

RESOLVED: that the discussion, be noted.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Committee gave consideration to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan and the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

The Chair outlined that she would like the Committee to review and Fairness and Well-being recommendations when available.

RESOLVED: that the report, be noted.

Signed: Chair _____

Dated: _____