

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

7 February 2024

-: Present :-

Councillor Steve Darling (Chairman)

Councillors Brook, Cowell, Law, Long, Maddison, Strang and Tolchard

(Also in attendance: Councillors Billings, Bye, Chris Lewis, David Thomas, Jacqueline Thomas, Tranter and Tyerman)

39. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Twelves. It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Maddison in place of Councillor Joyce.

40. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. Performance Monitoring 2023/2024 Quarter 3

The Board considered the submitted report which set out the Council's Performance Monitoring for Quarter 3 of 2023/2024. It was noted that the format was based around Directorates rather than the Community and Corporate Plan as the new Plan had not yet been approved by Council. Cabinet Members and Directors responded to the following questions:

- what was the reason for the red status for the proportion of adults in contact with secondary mental health services who live independently, with or without support year to month;
- how much would the issues with the Devon Partnership Trust data impact on the adult social care inspection and would the Inspectors accept the reasons behind this;
- did 110 for the average numbers in temporary accommodation on any one night this quarter relate to households or individuals and could this be specified in future reports;
- the Council was trying to find ways to reduce numbers and costs of temporary accommodation it would be useful if the Board could know where the families were being accommodated (a written response would be provided to the Board);

- there had been good progress made to reduce the numbers of people in temporary accommodation, was this a result of the preventative work and what type of work was being done;
- moving forward would the Council be able to spend less than the allocated budget on temporary accommodation;
- was there a plan to reduce the target of 120 for temporary accommodation due to the successful prevention work (a written response would be provided to the Board);
- how does Torbay compare to our neighbours on numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and what action was being taken to lobby Government to ensure that the Council receives fair costs for supporting UASC;
- what was the reason for the drop in suitable accommodation for care experienced young people;
- there had been a big drop in the percentage of cared for children in the period with three or more placements in the last 12 months but the status was showing much worse than target, what was the reason for that;
- the annualised rate per 10,000 children of children becoming cared for in the period was showing as green, this was a positive improvement, what action had been taken to improve this target;
- the targets relating to overweight, drugs and alcohol were all showing as red, what were the reasons for this;
- the target for percentage of births that receive a face to face new birth visit within 14 days by 0-19 service was showing as red, what was the reason for this and what action was being taken to address this;
- did the Public Health Team connect with families in other ways and how did the Team see what the impact on the babies was e.g. breastfeeding, mortality etc.;
- what action was being taken to address the red status for provision of Intrauterine Device Long Acting Reversible Contraception (IUD LARC) fittings and were contraceptive implants also offered to men;
- what was the timeframe for improving access to IUD LARC;
- what was the reason for the red status for number of secondary schools engaged with business (voluntary enterprise advisors) and what action was being taken to address this;
- recycling rates were low what was the reason for this and what was being done to increase rates;
- what action was being taken to address the red status for percentage of major planning applications determined (statutory timeframe 13 weeks), percentage of minor planning applications determined (statutory timeframe 8 weeks) and poor performance for planning application validations;
- why did the report not include monitoring of planning enforcement as this was a known area for poor performance;
- what was the Multiply Programme;
- the title of the new indicators for births of new enterprises and deaths of enterprises were not nice phrases, could this be changed;
- how do the two indicators relating to out of work benefit claimants and workless households relate;
- what was the reason for corporate complaints red status and what plans were there and timescale for improvement;

- was the registration of deaths in 5 days a legal requirement and what was the implication of not meeting this target;
- was the format for reporting sickness the best way or would it be better to include a percentage against the number of staff employed (a written response on the percentage against the number of staff employed to be provided to the Board);
- did the Council know what percentage of people die in hospital rather than at home and was there anything that could be done to help families obtain death certificates quicker (a written response to be provided to the Board on the percentage of people who die in hospital rather than at home);
- SWISCo complaints showed 0.1 which was the lowest it had been, how were complaints quantified i.e. did this include a missed bin collection;
- there had been a huge improvement in the number of SARS (Subject Access Requests) dealt with within statutory timescales but it was showing as worse than target, what was the reason for this. The Board acknowledged the success in improving this target and requested their appreciation to be shared with the staff responsible.

Members requested future performance relating to Planning include the numbers of applications rather than percentages to make it easier for them to understand the numbers involved.

The Board requested the work on homelessness and the revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to come back to the Board for review when it was ready.

Resolved (unanimously):

That Cabinet be recommended:

1. to review the stretch target for temporary accommodation to see if this can be lowered in light of the proactive work being undertaken;
2. to include an indicator around planning enforcement and show all planning targets as numbers rather than percentages; and
3. to consider reviewing the staff absence statistics to include the percentage against the number of employees.

(Note: prior to the consideration of this item Councillor Tranter declared a pecuniary interest in respect of Direct Payments as she was a PA and would be paid by clients receiving Direct Payments. She did not leave the meeting as Direct Payments was not discussed.)

42. Budget Monitoring 2023/24 – Quarter 3 Revenue and Capital Outturn Forecast

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Finance and Corporate Services, Councillor Tyerman, outlined the submitted budget monitoring report which provided a high level summary of the Council's forecasted revenue and capital expenditure for the 2023/2024 financial year. The report was based on figures as at the end of Quarter 3 which predicated a £0.8m overspend, a £500k reduction on the forecast made at

Quarter 2. Work would continue throughout the year to manage a break even position by the end of the financial year.

The Board raised the following points:

- how did Torbay Council's predicted overspend compare to Devon and Plymouth;
- the projected outturn for home to school transport was a £312,000 overspend, was this likely to reduce by the end of the financial year;
- what efforts were being made to ensure that the Council receives a fairer settlement from Government for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC);
- which budget did the legal challenge for UASC come out of;
- what were the current Collection Fund percentages (a written response would be provided to the Board);
- the Capital allocation from the Department for Transport (DFT) seemed low compared to the huge backlog in highways repairs and maintenance, what was the plan for spending the additional money from DFT (a written response would be provided to the Board);
- the cost of living was still impacting on many people, had the levels of collection from those in receipt of Council Tax Support improved and was the Council considering the impact of debt collection on vulnerable households;
- how many high cost children's placements did the Council have and how many were being reviewed to see if they could be moved to suitable cheaper placements;
- over a year, how much did the highest cost placements for children cost;
- there was a reduction in staffing and retention and recruitment how were budgets being driven to make those savings and what was the impact;
- how did Torbay's vacancy rate compare to the national average;
- what was the reason that agency costs were being compared to 2021/2022 and not 2022/2023;
- what was the reason that there had been no draw down on the Community Lead – Affordable Housing Loans and what process would be adopted to consider future need; and
- Disabled Facilities Grants were meant to increase their threshold over £30,000 but have not gone up, how much of a challenge does this give for people needing to make adaptations to their homes.

The Board acknowledged the success of the Investment Portfolio contributing £4.1m to the Revenue Budget despite the current economic climate.

Members requested that future Budget Monitoring Reports include previous quarters in the Budget Summary Position table to enable them to compare variances over the financial year.

The Board requested that in addition to the Capital Programme Monitoring report, the Quarterly Capital Investment Plan report also includes the original estimated cost of the scheme and date it was approved.

The Board noted the forecasted revenue outturn position and mitigating action identified in the submitted report and the current capital schemes.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Cabinet be recommended to promote and encourage communities to apply for Community Lead – Affordable Housing Loans.

43. Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/2025 - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Board considered the draft report which had been prepared following the meetings of the Priorities and Resources Review Panel 2024/2025 held during January 2024. The Review Panel had considered the Cabinet's Revenue and Capital Plan Budget proposals for 2024/2025 and the report set out the Panel's views, conclusions and recommendations.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the report to the Cabinet on the Revenue and Capital Plan Budget 2024/2025 be approved.

44. Events, Culture and Tourism Review - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Board considered the draft report which had been prepared following the meetings of the Review of Events, Culture and Tourism Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group had considered issues in connection with the management of our cultural assets and events and how they helped to deliver the Torbay Council English Riviera (Outdoor) Events Strategy 2021 – 2027 and English Riviera Destination Management Plan 2022 – 2030 and the report set out the Panel's views, conclusions and recommendations.

It was noted that recommendations 3 and 12 were included in the consultation response to the Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2024/2025.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the report to the Cabinet on the Review of Events, Culture and Tourism be approved.

(Note: Prior to consideration of this item Councillor Jackie Thomas declared a non-pecuniary interest as she sat on two out of three of the Task and Finish Group meetings as a Panel Member and was now the Cabinet Member for this area and Councillor Brook declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of the English Riviera Business Improvement District Company Board and Torbay Business Forum.)

Chairman