



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Wednesday, 11 November 2020

-: Present :-

Councillor Howgate (Chairman)

Councillors Atiya-Alla, Barrand, Brown, Bye, Mandy Darling, Foster, Kennedy (Vice-Chair) and Loxton

(Also in attendance: Councillors Barnby, Brooks, Cowell, Hill, Law, Barbara Lewis, Chris Lewis, Long, Mills, Morey, O'Dwyer, David Thomas and Jacqueline Thomas)

15 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from the Leader of the Council - Councillor Steve Darling (who was represented by the Deputy Leader of the Council - Councillor Cowell) and the Director of Public Health.

16 Children's Services Improvement Plan Quarterly Update

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services provided an overview of a letter from the Children's Services Commissioner in respect of the assessment of Torbay Council's leadership capacity and intervention for Children's Services, which showed that positive steps had been taken to improve performance within the Service and acknowledged the cross party support to make the improvements, whilst recognising that there was still a lot of work to do before Torbay was in the position it would wish to be in.

The Cabinet Member and Director for Children's Services presented the submitted performance report which showed that good progress had been made in some areas, with an overall performance rating of amber, although many of the areas were still showing as red and in need of further improvement. The Board challenged the Improvement Plan Quarterly report and the Cabinet Member and Director for Children's Services responded to questions in relation to:

- an increase in referrals and the impact of Covid-19 and what action was being taken to ensure that all children received direct face to face contact;
- how we ensured the Council was picking up children who were not known to Children's Services to ensure that they receive support;
- if the ambition to be judged 'good' by April 2021 was realistic and what difference this was making for children;
- details and reasons for the number of children living more than 20 miles away from Torbay and benchmarking comparisons compared to other local authorities in addition to national averages which may not give a fair comparison to Torbay due to it being a coastal authority;

- issues in respect of child criminal and sexual exploitation and the actions being taken to address this in partnership with the Police and other agencies;
- agency staff and the new social worker learning academy;
- missing children and child trafficking; and
- child homelessness assessments which had been raised as an issue in the 2015 and 2018 Ofsted Inspections.

Members also noted that there had been a recent Ofsted inspection of the Youth Offending Team.

Resolved:

- (i) that the Board thanked the staff and partners for the progress made to date in respect of Children's Services and noted that there was still further work to be carried out to ensure that Children's Services was where it wishes to be to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people;
- (ii) that detailed comparison of data, including coastal communities and similar authorities, be provided to Members of the Board;
- (iii) that the Youth Offending Team Ofsted report be presented to a future meeting of the Board; and
- (iv) that the Police be invited to a future meeting of the Board to provide an update on the changes to working practices in respect of county lines and child exploitation (unanimous).

17 Resource and Waste Management Strategy

The Board considered the draft Resource and Waste Management Strategy and supported the overall aims to reduce waste and increase recycling to help tackle climate change. Members discussed and asked questions in relation to the following areas:

- what other options for saving money and increasing recycling had been considered;
- what happened to the green waste;
- issues in connection with the proposed trial of three weekly collections and increasing recycling in town centre and Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs);
- the difference in the budget shown in the Resource and Waste Management Strategy - £475k in two to three years and £600k in 2021/2022 in the draft budget proposals;
- trends for percentages for recycling targets and some of the reasons for the decline;
- impact on climate change of positive action being taken to reduce the amount of waste going to the energy from waste plant and the increase in recycling;

- waste fleet and staffing resources, including the appointment of new recycling officers;
- the role of education and role of planning to ensure that adequate bin storage provision is included within developments;
- role of large supermarkets and local organisations in helping to reduce waste, especially plastic and making more use of easily recycled materials.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet be recommended:

- (i) that when the Christmas bin collection notices go out to households this includes information on recycling and the financial and environmental benefit of increasing recycling;
- (ii) that consideration be given to other areas to improve recycling in addition to improving kerbside recycling;
- (iii) that the Resource and Waste Strategy should include a glossary of abbreviations and an appendix with the planning advice to developers;
- (vi) that a detailed written response be provided to the Board on the breakdown of the £500k savings for 2021/2022 from SWISCo identified within the budget consultation proposals; and
- (vii) to request officers to liaise with the five major waste producers in Torbay to see if they can work together to help reduce waste and increase recycling (unanimous).

18 Budget Monitoring 2020/2021 Period 4

The Board considered and noted the budget monitoring report which provided a high level budget summary of the Council's forecasted revenue and capital income and expenditure for the financial year 2020/2021. It was based on the figures as at the end of the Quarter 2. Members noted that the report had been prepared prior to the announcement of the second lockdown, which would have further impact on the revenue budget.

The Deputy Head of Finance provided a verbal update on additional Government funding announced since the report had been produced which included £1.6m un-ringfenced funding, £8 per head for enforcing local restrictions to be spent by the Public Health Team to help stop people spreading the virus, £500k towards food and bills over the winter period linked to the free school meals highlighted nationally and Business Grants Funding.

It was noted that the budget remained under significant financial pressure, after the application of Government funding, the anticipated underspend in Children's Services of £3.3m and use of specific reserves with a forecasted overspend of £2.2 million. The main pressures related to reduction in car park income, costs for the

two leisure centres and the reduction of income received from the Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates, known as 'the Collection Fund' as a direct result of Covid-19. The Government had agreed for Council's to roll forward the deficit from the Collection Fund over the next three year's budget which would have significant pressures on services over this period to cover the current £5.2m deficit.

Members welcomed the additional funding provided by the Government to date to help support the Council as a consequence of Covid-19 and requested a breakdown of this funding to be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

The Board also noted that the report highlighted that the Council's clear view was that the financial impact of Covid-19 should be funded by the Government and not be a cost to the local tax payer or result in a detrimental impact on service provision for residents.

The Board asked a number of questions, in particular around Covid-19 pressures, including those relating to the two leisure centres (Riviera International Conference Centre (RICC) and Torbay Leisure Centre) and issues in connection with the future operation of the RICC; capital projects such as the purchase of new properties to support people who were homeless and the investment fund.

19 Duration of Meeting

At this juncture, the Democratic Services Team Leader reported that the meeting had exceeded four hours in duration and had indicated that the remainder of the business left on the agenda must be transacted at the meeting. In accordance with Standing Order A11, the Board voted to continue the meeting.

20 Revenue and Capital Budget 2021/2022

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the report of the Priorities and Resources Review Panel on their review of the draft Revenue and Capital Budget for 2021/2022.

Resolved:

That, subject to the rewording of paragraph 3.2. from 'increase in domestic abuse cases' to read 'increase in referrals via the front door through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)', the Overview and Scrutiny report on the review of the Revenue and Capital Budget 2021/2022 be approved and submitted to the Cabinet for consideration as part of the budget consultation process.