

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 14th March 2024

SUBJECT: Performance and Finance Sub-Group Update Report

REPORT FROM: Councillor D Vernon, Chair,
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

CONTACT OFFICER: Chloe Ashworth, Senior Scrutiny Officer

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Performance and Finance Sub-Group over the last Municipal year.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Previously, Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that a Performance and Finance Sub-Group be established to provide oversight of the Council's Corporate Performance and Financial situation. The subgroup was established in 2021, with representatives from the Committee and chaired by Councillor Vernon.

The subgroup was supported in its work by the Cabinet Members with responsibility for performance and finance, as well as senior Officers across the Council.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

During this municipal year the Group has met on the following occasions:-

27.09.2023

11.01.2023

01.02.2023

The focus for this municipal year was as follows:

Corporate Performance – The Committee received regular updates from the Performance team as well as specific areas for greater focus/deep dives.

Council tax collection and arrears update – Members received an update on the Council's Council tax collection process, the management and collection of arrears and improvements the Council have instigated to support vulnerable residents.

Medium Term Financial Strategy- Updates were received on the Medium Term Financial Strategy refresh.

Corporate Core Data Analysis – The Committee received in depth analysis on Corporate Core performance data.

Members have continued to hold the Corporate Core and other Council Services to account by providing continued, effective, and constructive scrutiny of performance and finance within the Council.

4.0 WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE GROUP

4.1 Corporate Performance

Members considered this item and representatives provided Members of the group with an update in respect of a deep dive into the Corporate key performance indicators in relation to staff turnover, sickness absence, complaints and Freedom of Information requests.

4.2 Deep dive into Council tax collection and arrears update

Members expressed particular interest and concerns in relation to historic debt and collection rates. Members receive assurance that to enable the Council to meet the challenges a new Supportive Collection Pathway is currently being created to address this and other issues. The aim is to align the Welfare and Collection/Recovery teams within Revenues and Benefits to provide a joined-up approach to collection and welfare.

4.3 Medium Term Financial Strategy

Member discussed changes to the Bury Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Members were reminded that the Council agreed at budget setting (2022) the 2.99% council tax uplift and the 2% Adult Social Care precept. In addition the Council considered any grant income coming through and what the Council Tax and Business Rates looked like to work out what the initial gap would be going forward. Members were also advised regarding the pay award. Members discussed that implementation of a focus on a zero based budgeting approach and considering service delivery differently.

4.4 Corporate Core Data Analysis

Members reviewed in depth the Corporate key performance indicators in relation to staff turnover, sickness absence, complaints and Freedom of Information requests. Members discussed Member Casework, Ombudsman matters, Freedom of Information requests and Subject Access requests. Discussions took place regarding the Council's pulse survey, sickness policy and departmental catch ups.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Members of the group supported by Strategic Leads within the Department have meet on three occasions, interviewed 12 different Council Officers and two Cabinet Members.

Looking forward, it is proposed that the subgroup completes and information and monitoring of the performance and finance is incorporated into the Overview and Scrutiny forward planner for the new municipal year.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS 2024/2025

1. That, the sub-group concludes.
 2. That regular updates be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the performance and finance of the Council.
 3. That a sub-group is established in the new municipal year to look at Council housing governance and performance.
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List of Background Papers:-

Scrutiny Annual Report

Contact Details:-

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