

Summary of Quarter 3 2020/21 Overview and Scrutiny performance discussions

1. Framework

- 1.1 Quarter 3 2020/21 performance was discussed at the following Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) meetings;

Children and Young People O&S Committee: 4 March 2021

Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee: 11 March 2021

Regeneration, Culture and Environment O&S Committee: 23 March 2021

2. Items referred to Business Support O&S

No items were referred to Business Support O&S by the chairs of the other O&S Committees.

3. O&S Performance Discussions

- 3.1 This section provides a summary of the discussions at the O&S Committees

3.1.1 Children and Young People O&S Committee discussion summary.

Discussion:

The Committee considered the report which summarised how the Council had performed in quarter 3 of 2020/21 on the delivery of priorities relevant to the Committee.

Members then raised a number of comments and questions, which included:

- **ILACS7 (audit measure)** – in response to a question about why data had not been provided for this measure, officers explained it was an important issue but there had not been an adequate baseline to provide a target for 2020/21 but there would be one provided for the 2021/22 measure, which would provide a meaningful data measure for scrutiny.
- **Persistent absence** – in response to queries regarding persistent absence, which had been a red target for some time, officers confirmed attendance generally was good in Medway but this measure related to persistent absence, which usually related to vulnerable children and their families and was a focus for the Council going forward. Attendance data was shared by schools with the local authority, who could challenge attendance issues if concerns were raised. Additionally, a query was raised about the accuracy of the figures provided for this measure. In response officers confirmed these were unaudited figures but would investigate the data outside of the meeting and report back, in order for Members to consider adding a report on this issue to the work programme for a future meeting.

- **Monitoring recovery from the pandemic** – comment was made about the need to monitor the recovery efforts relating to the covid-19 pandemic. Officers suggested the Committee receive a specific report on pandemic recovery at a future meeting.
- **Section 47 visits** – in response to a concern raised about the number of initial child and family Section 47 assessments, where the child was visited within 1 working day, which was below target, the Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care confirmed this related to staffing absence issues caused by Covid (i.e. isolations, ill health or bereavement).
- **Adoption** – reference was made to the target relating to adoption and the number of days a child spends in care before moving in with an adoptive family. Comment was made that delays from other agencies sometimes caused issues, such as medical report delays or court timescales. Officers were confident this would improve in the near future and emphasised that the absolute priority was making the right decision for the child.
- **Lack of national benchmarking** – comment was made that the report was lacking in national benchmarking and detail. Officers undertook to take that back to the Corporate Performance Team. They also encouraged Members to ensure they used these reports alongside the dashboard data they received on a monthly basis.
- **Key Stage 2** – in response to a question about why this indicator was green when it was still an area requiring improvement, officers confirmed it was green due to the improvement Medway had made when compared nationally. However, significant improvement was still required as Medway remained in the bottom third quartile and therefore Key Stage 2 progress and attainment would continue be a focus for improvement.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

In accordance with Council rule 12.6, Councillors Howcroft-Scott, Johnson and Osborne requested that their votes in favour be recorded.

3.1.2 Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee discussion summary.

Discussion:

Members considered a report regarding performance in Quarter 3 20/20/21 on the delivery of the priority in the Council Plan relevant for the Committee: Supporting Medway’s people to realise their potential. This report also presented the Quarter 3 2020/21 review of strategic risks.

The following issues were discussed:

- **Measures significantly below target (Red)** – reference was made to the fact that some measures had been significantly below target for some time. The impact some of these could have on the Council's finances was raised as a concern. The ability of the Directorate to absorb the budget challenges it was facing was also queried. Members were advised that performance in respect of Measure ASCOF (percentage of clients receiving a direct payment for their social care service direct payments) had improved since January. With regard to ASCOF 1G (proportion of adults with a primary support reason of learning disability support who live in their own home or with their family), the pandemic had affected the number of reviews that could be carried out to determine whether someone was living independently. There were also some errors to be corrected and once that had happened the rating would change to Amber.

The Director added that funding for adult social care would be acute and resources constrained. Mental health needs across the population were expected to be significant in the post Covid period. The Council was looking at how to use its budgets more effectively while making savings without affecting client care. A comment was made that Members would have to monitor these post Covid challenges carefully.

- **Morale and Recruitment** – the Assistant Director – Adult Social Care commented that the Council had struggled to recruit in recent months across adult social care due to the pandemic. However, staff were not leaving and the reasons for this were being looked at. In response to a comment, an assurance was given that the Council was using its links with the Universities and colleges to promote care as a meaningful career.
- **Care homes** – reference was made to the ability of the NHS to pay more than the Council to care homes to take Covid positive patients. The Assistant Director – Adult Social Care advised she was in discussions with the CCG about funding solutions so hospital patients could be discharged to a safe environment as quickly as possible.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the Quarter 2020/21 performance against the measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities, and to also note the amended Strategic Risk Register as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

In accordance with Council Rule 12.6, Councillors McDonald, Murray and Price asked that their votes in favour be recorded.

3.1.3 Regeneration, Culture and Environment O&S Committee discussion summary

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out performance for Quarter 3 against the Council's two priorities Place and Growth insofar as they fell within the remit of this Committee.

The report also set out the Quarter 3 2020/21 review of the Council's Strategic Risk.

The Committee was advised that as agreed at the Quarter 2 risk review, a new risk had been added to the strategic risk register in Quarter 3 – SR49: Income reduction due to Covid-19.

The Committee was further advised that in line with discussions at the Strategic Risk Management Group (SRMG), although the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) was included in the risk register under SR17 – Delivering Regeneration, it was considered that the HIF project warranted inclusion as a separate risk in its own right and therefore this would be added under Quarter 4 risk monitoring.

The following issues were discussed:

LRCC4a – Number of jobs created and safeguarded – In acknowledging the challenges for the Country as a whole as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, concern was expressed that the report failed to provide information as to how Medway planned to address the creation and safeguarding of jobs in Medway and it was suggested that further work was required to support existing jobs in Medway and to secure new investment.

In response, the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence informed the Committee that from Quarter 4, more detailed information would be included on this individual performance indicator and she advised that both Cabinet and the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee were receiving reports on the Council's response and recovery after Covid-19 on 30 March 2021.

The Assistant Director Regeneration also informed the Committee that from April 2021, the Economic Development and Skills and Employment Teams would be transferred to his division and he confirmed that this was a priority area and further information would be available in Quarter 4.

NI 154 – Net additional homes provided – Referring to the section of the report titled 'Encourage the delivery of homes to meet our targets – Strood Waterfront' it was suggested that consideration be given to alternative uses of sites that cannot be developed at the current time e.g. provision of box parks so as to provide an income.

In response, the Assistant Director Regeneration advised that the Innovation Studios Strood, essentially shipping containers similar to the box park principle had been successfully delivered at Strood Riverside and whilst income could be derived from this type of facility, it could not be provided without some initial grant funding. He referred to the former Civic Centre site (Strood Waterfront) and provided an update as to potential development of this site. He advised that if development was not feasible at the current time, then temporary alternative uses could be considered.

Members suggested that alternative temporary uses of undeveloped land could include income generating initiatives such as markets, pop-up shops or boot fairs which would boost economic development, add to the creation of jobs and generate an income

Commercial use of the River – Referring to the importance of the river it was suggested that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the possible opportunities for increased commercial use of the river.

NI 167 – Average journey time along 5 routes across Medway - Referring to the ongoing management and delivery of the LGF project for journey time and accessibility improvements on Medway City Estate, clarification was sought as to the likely start date of the project. The Assistant Director Front Line Services agreed to provide this information to the Member direct.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted that increased information would be included in the Performance Monitoring Report at Quarter 4 on LRCC4a – Number of jobs created and safeguarded but in the meantime, information was being reported to both Cabinet and the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Council's recovery plan after the Covid-19 pandemic response and recovery plan to the Covid-19 pandemic on 30 March 2021.
- b) a report be included on the Committee's work programme on the possible opportunities for increased commercial use of the river.
- c) noted that the Assistant Director Front Line Services will provide information as to the likely start date of the LGF project for journey time and accessibility improvements on Medway City Estate to the Member direct.

In accordance with Council rule 12.6, Councillors Browne, Mahil and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour be recorded.