

Summary of Quarter 4 2020/21 Overview and Scrutiny performance discussions

1. Framework

- 1.1 Quarter 4 2020/21 performance was discussed at the following Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) meetings.

Children and Young People O&S Committee: 9 June 2021

Regeneration, Culture and Environment O&S Committee: 10 June 2021

Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee: 17 August 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 Director of People – Children and Adult Services introduced the report which summarised the performance in Quarter 4 in relation to the priorities relevant to the committee's remit.

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

- **Underweight children** – officers undertook to provide a response regarding the level of underweight children in Medway.
- **Care Leaver accommodation** – in response to a question about care leavers who were placed in unregulated placements, officers confirmed that there were currently four young people in unregulated placements and this was generally due to the young person having particular needs making them difficult to place. These unregulated placements were regularly reviewed by the Director and Assistant Director and it was added that placements that were unregulated by Ofsted did not necessarily mean poor quality.
- **Access to technology** – in response to a question about the number of young people who did not have access to technology, officers confirmed that at the beginning of the first lockdown they tried to establish the percentage of young people without access to ICT, which was estimated to be about 35%. With Government support, all young people assigned to a social worker had been provided with equipment.
- **Budget overspend forecast** – in response to a concern raised about the directorate's budget overspend, officers confirmed that, as was the case for all top tier local

authorities, placements caused a significant pressure to the directorate's budget and the commissioning team was working hard to stimulate the market to increase good quality, value for money placements. In addition, the workforce was another additional high cost and work was ongoing to reduce the reliance on more expensive agency staff. Reference was also made to the High Needs Block of the Designated Schools Grant, which was significantly overspent. However, there was an action plan which would see the overspend addressed entirely by 2029.

- **Number of children who are looked after (CLA)** – officers confirmed that as of 8 June 2021, there were 434 Medway CLA which was a broadly stable figure.
- **Persistent absence** – members requested a report regarding persistent absence from schools which had been a consistently red target for some time.
- **Smoking at the time of delivery** – officers undertook to investigate this measure and whether the target needed lowering and making more ambitious.
- **Percentage of good and better schools** – officers undertook to investigate the possibility of adding a table within the information for this measure to provide details of the number of schools converting to academies.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

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

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out performance for Quarter 4 against the Council's two priorities Place and Growth insofar as they fell within the remit of this Committee, along with a review of the Council's Risk Register.

The Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence introduced the report and drew attention to a new risk SR50 relating to the Housing Investment Fund Project.

- **Future High Street Fund** - The Committee noted that in December 2020, Medway had been awarded £9.5 million from the Government's Future High Street Fund for investment in Chatham Town Centre. The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive agreed to circulate a briefing note detailing the projects/works to benefit from this funding.
- **Placing objects on the highway** - In response to a question, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the current permit scheme for placing objects on the highway in Chatham High Street was still operational.
- **LRCC4a – Number of jobs created and safeguarded** - The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive advised that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not unexpected that this particular performance measure LRCC4a (number of jobs created and safeguarded) was currently below target.

- **Size and content and presentation of report** – Following concern as to the length, content and format of the Performance Monitoring Report and Risk Register, it was suggested that consideration be given to presenting this information in an easier-to-read format. The Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence advised that where text had been included but struck through, whilst this may appear confusing, this had been included so as to ensure transparency and to appraise the Committee of amendments. She advised that she planned to undertake a review of performance reporting and invited Members to pass on any comments and suggestions that they may feel useful.
- **City of Culture bid** – During discussion on the City of Culture bid, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive referred to the Council's bid for City of Culture and in particular, the level of community engagement. He informed the Committee that the City of Culture bid video had received 15,000 views and extensive social media interest. Favourable support had also been received from a number of external sources.
- **Medway, a Smart City** - In response to questions concerning Medway's Smart City Strategy, the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence advised that as part of the Smart City agenda, she had undertaken a presentation on the Council's data plans to the cross-party Member User Group on 5 May 2021, and she offered to talk through the data project with the Member concerned, accompanied by the Smart City Project Officer.
- **Cultural events** – In response to questions concerning cultural events, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive advised that Medway's cultural offer was widely available, including non-traditional locations. He also confirmed that Open Space events were a method of engagement.
- **EV charging** - In response to a question as to the methodology of selecting the location of electric vehicle charging points in Medway, the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence informed the Committee that the specific location of electric vehicle points had been determined following a full consultation process.
- **NI195a Improved street and environmental cleanliness: Litter – alleyways and left bin bags** – The Committee discussed issues concerning litter in alleyways in Strood North. In addition, concern was expressed that in Strood North Ward, after undertaking street cleansing, Medway Norse were leaving black bin bags in the street for collection but on occasion, these had been mistaken by residents as general refuse that had not yet been collected resulting in general household refuse being added. The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive agreed to refer this matter to the Assistant Director Front Line Services for discussion with the Member concerning the specific locations where this was occurring.
- **Medway Local Plan** – In response to a question, the Assistant Director Culture and Community confirmed that the Medway Local Plan was due to be reported to Cabinet in September 2021.

- **Redevelopment of the former Civic Centre site and Strood Riverside** – It was noted that since the Chief Legal Officer had left Medway Council, the Assistant Director Regeneration had taken on responsibility for overseeing these regeneration projects.
- **NI167 – Average journey time along 5 routes across Medway** – Following questions concerning performance measure NI167, the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence asked the Democratic Services Officer to re-circulate the Briefing Note previously supplied in 2018.
- **Cycle routes and deterring motorised/off road motorcycles** – Arising from discussion as to the new cycle paths in Darland and Capstone, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive agreed to ask officers to build into future cycle routes preventative measures to deter use by motorised/off road bikes.
- **Locate in Kent** – It was noted that Locate in Kent would be undertaking a presentation to Members on 29 June 2021.
- **Chatham Docks** – The Committee discussed the potential development of Chatham Docks in relation to the impact this could have upon businesses currently located at this site.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the Quarter 4 2020/21 performance against the measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities and the amended risk register set out at appendix 3 to the report.
- b) agreed that a briefing note be circulated setting out the projects/works to benefit from the £9.5 million award from the Future High Street Fund.
- c) requested that the Assistant Director Front Line Services discuss with the Member concerned the issue of litter clearance in alleyways in Strood North Ward and the issues that he has raised concerning Medway Norse's street cleansing sacks.
- d) noted that the Democratic Services Officer will recirculate the 2018 briefing note outlining the routes used for performance indicator NI167 – average journey times along 5 routes in Medway
- e) noted that the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive will request that officers build into cycle route provision preventative measures to deter use by motorised bikes/off road bikes
- f) noted that the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence has offered to discuss with the Member concerned the Council's Smart City data plans accompanied by the Smart City Project Officer.

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

Discussion:

Members considered a report which summarised performance in Quarter 4 on the delivery of the Council Plan priority relevant for this committee: Supporting Medway's people to

realise their potential. This report also presented the Quarter 4 2020/21 review of strategic risks.

The following issues were discussed:

- **Permanent admissions to care home** – how more places could be provided and how this risk was being managed were questioned. The Assistant Director – Adult Social Care advised that the pandemic had led to an increase in placements and there were also pressures regarding recruiting and retaining care staff, which was a national issue. The Council was working with partners to try and help with the latter.
- **Financial sustainability of providers** – in response to concerns regarding the financial sustainability of providers leading to closures, the Assistant Director – Adult Social Care advised this had not been a particular problem in Medway and that on occasions CQC inspections could lead to closures. However, the Council was learning lessons from other councils where providers had experienced financial problems.
- **Direct payments** – a comment was made that Direct Payments were beneficial but not well understood and how well they were supported was queried. The Assistant Director – Adult Social Care advised that the Council worked closely with families to make them aware of how direct payments worked and their options. There had been a decrease in take up of direct payments during the pandemic but this was now changing. The Assistant Director felt that there was a need to ensure that staff consistently considered direct payments as an option when assessing care needs.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the Quarter 4 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.