

Chichester District Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 November 2020

Report from the Corporate Plan Task & Finish Group

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

The Committee is requested to note this report from the Corporate Plan Task and Finish Group and to confirm that it is satisfied that the Council is achieving satisfactory levels of performance against the targets and activities in the 2020/21 Corporate Plan mid-year progress report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group met on 28 October 2020 to consider the Corporate Plan mid-year progress report from April to September 2020. The aim was to review the council's performance, identifying individual areas where performance was below that expected, and to reduce risks to an acceptable level.
- 3.2 Members were Mrs C Apel (Chairman), Mr A Moss, Mrs T Bangert, and Mr D Palmer.
- 3.3 Members used the council's Pentana performance management system report to review progress on key projects and performance indicators that support the Corporate Plan 2018-2021. Only those projects that had a status of 'amber' or 'red', and were therefore in a state of 'exception', were considered by the Task and Finish Group.

4. Monitoring and Review

- 4.1 The Group discussed in detail the eight projects or performance indicators that had a status of 'red', whereby they are either off target or overdue. The appropriate Divisional Managers were asked to attend to provide a full explanation and to answer questions from the Group.
- 4.2 The Group first discussed three objectives within Planning Policy that had a Red status, namely;
 - a) We will maintain a 5 year supply of housing land
 - b) We will maintain a 5 year Gypsy and traveller pitches
 - c) Work with communities, West Sussex County Council and Highways England to identify an improvement scheme for the A27 to be put forward for the post-2020 Road Investment Strategy

- 4.3 Toby Ayling, Divisional manager for Planning Policy, attended the meeting and provided an update on each of these areas. In relation to 4.2 a) the most recent published position demonstrated a supply of 4.3 years and Mr Ayling's view was that position was remaining stable rather than any declining or increasing trend. In response the Council has implemented an Interim Policy Statement for Housing Development.
- 4.4 Inspectors have concluded that the Council does not have a five year supply of traveller and gypsy sites. In response the Council has commissioned a Delivery Study and is expediting a Gypsy and Traveller Development plan Document to set out how the identified needs can be met.
- 4.5 Members felt that the Red status of 4.2 c) was entirely out of the Council's control and therefore suggested no further action required on this point.
- 4.6 Ivan Western, Housing Delivery Manager, attended the meeting to take Member's questions in relation to the number of affordable homes enabled by the Council. This performance indicator has a Red status because 127 affordable homes were enabled by the Council in 2019/20 against a target of 140.
- 4.7 Mr Western explained that the target related to an average to be delivered across the life of the Housing Strategy, and in fact this target has now been increased to an average of 167 per year in the new Housing Strategy 2020-2025. Inevitably there would be peaks and troughs from year to year, and 2019/20 was a low delivery year, but Mr Western explained that the Council expect to deliver 185 affordable homes through the programme in 2020/21 and the Group were satisfied that the key longer term objectives were on target.
- 4.8 Kerry Standing, Divisional Manager for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services, updated the Group on the Council's time taken to process new claims for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) and Housing Benefit (HB). During September the average time, in calendar days, was 18 against a target of 15. This compares to a year to date average of 16 days.
- 4.9 The Group felt that this performance indicator was crucial in how we support some of our most vulnerable residents, and Ms Standing explained to the Group some of the process changes being made to bring about the required improvements. It was also noted that the majority of new claims are being dealt with within the targeted number of days, but that there are some excessive delays, especially in relation to CTR, that when resolved will bring about significant improvements in average performance levels.
- 4.10 The Group discussed attendance levels across the Leisure Centres and were updated by Sarah Peyman, Divisional Manager for Culture and Sport. The latest annual statistics flagged attendance in the 0-15 age group as being approximately 105,000 against a target of 111,000. These numbers will have been impacted at the end of March by the enforced closure of leisure centres, but this remains an issue since reopening where numbers are significantly down compared to the same period of last year.
- 4.11 Most junior activities were not immediately able to restart following the closure period. However, gymnastics and family swims were able to restart in September

and the service is currently reviewing how to restart the under 5's programme. It was noted that many junior clubs have restarted but that these are not included in the figures, they include Chichester Cormorants Swimming Club, Westgate Junior Triathlon Club, Westgate Gymnastic Club, Southbourne Gymnastics Club, Midhurst Dance School and several junior martial arts clubs.

- 4.12 The authority's performance in reducing the amount of waste that is sent to landfill, incineration or energy recovery showed a current value of 128kg against a target of 100kg. Officers explained that the Council has not had any direct recycling engagement or project resource for the last 6 months. Whilst it would be wrong to attribute the performance solely to this, it is a key influencing factor.
- 4.13 COVID would have also impacted as waste volumes increased during lockdown, and homeworking trends will also continue to impact. In addition, and important for quarter 1, was the closure of the household waste recycling site for a period of time, meaning waste typically taken there would have been going in household waste bins.
- 4.14 Looking at the most up to date data, waste tonnages have decreased over the last few months which is positive (although not returning to 2019/20 levels) and recycling levels maintained. The Group noted that trends were similar to other Districts and Boroughs in West Sussex, and were encouraged that approval had been granted to recruit for the Recycling Project Officer in order to restart the proactive approach to communications and leading on new initiatives with the West Sussex Waste Partnership.
- 4.15 The final Performance Indicator reviewed in detail by the Group related to the number of new clients engaging on a monthly basis with the Choose Work service. Current performance showed 20 clients had engaged against a target of 30. Pam Bushby, Divisional Manager for Communities and Wellbeing, explained the service had been working with clients throughout lockdown, many of whom were vulnerable, and that the team had successfully developed online engagement to tackle the problems caused by Covid.
- 4.16 Members raised questions on whether the service was experiencing increased demand and also on the likely impact following the cessation of the furlough scheme. At this stage it cannot be quantified, but increases are very likely, and the service will undoubtedly be challenged by a combination of increased demand and a difficult employment market.
- 4.17 Having reviewed all of the 'red' projects the Group also considered all of the projects with a status of 'amber'. Having looked at them the Group found no significant causes for concern, and did not feel that any warranted bringing to the attention of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 4.18 Overall the Group considered that there were satisfactory explanations for areas of the Corporate Plan where targets had not been met; many were unsurprisingly impacted by Covid, some were outside the council's control, and others simply needed more time or resource in order to rectify.

5. **Consultation**

5.1 There was no requirement for consultation as officers were able to answer all concerns satisfactorily.

6. **Community impact and corporate risks**

6.1 The corrective actions being put in place by Officers seeks to minimise any negative impact on the community.

7. **Other Implications**

	Yes	No
Crime & Disorder:		X
Climate Change and Biodiversity:		X
Human Rights and Equality Impact:		X
Safeguarding and Early Help:		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X
Health and Wellbeing:		X
Other (please specify):		X

The boxes above have been marked as 'No' because this report does not specifically propose any new areas of work or revisions to existing work. However, it should be noted that the range of projects and performance indicators reviewed by the Group do address many of the different headings included within the table.

8. **Appendices**

None

9. **Background Papers**

Minutes - Corporate Plan Mid-year Task and Finish Group