

Minutes of the Audit Committee

3 August 2022

-: Present :-

Councillor Loxton (Chairman)

Councillors Brooks, Johns, Kennedy (Vice-Chair) and O'Dwyer

12. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Douglas-Dunbar and Hill.

13. Target Setting Report 2022-23

Members considered a report that set out the proposed projects and performance indicators that were going to be used to track the delivery of the priorities within the Community and Corporate Plan for 2022/23. Additionally, members were asked to consider the targets being proposed for each performance indicator for the years 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. The Senior Performance and Risk Officer informed Members that the projects, performance indicators and targets had been developed by the Senior Leadership Team in consultation with Cabinet Members.

Out of the 136 performance indicators being suggested, members of Audit Committee agreed with all apart from 4 whereby recommendations were made for the Cabinets consideration.

Resolved:

1) That the Audit Committee recommends that Cabinet:

a) reset the targets for:

- 'Net additional homes provided' and
- 'Number of affordable homes delivered'

for 2022-2023 to be in line with the current local plan and reviewed for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025;

b) that the target for the 'Number of families in B&B accommodation longer than 6 weeks per quarter' be set at 0.

- c) that Torre Abbey Admissions Footfall be reviewed as the Audit Committee considers it to be disproportionately high.

14. Q1 Performance Report

Members considered the Quarter 1 Community and Corporate Plan Performance Report. This report contains the summaries of progress, update on projects and performance of key indicators used to deliver and track the priorities within the Community and Corporate Plan.

At the meeting Members were joined by the Divisional Director for Community and Customer Services and the Director of Children's Services and held a debate which focused on the indicators within their service areas.

The Divisional Director for Community and Customer Services provided details of a new project included in the performance report titled 'Housing Options Improvement Plan' and provided further information about the activities and challenges currently faced by the Council's Housing Service.

Members raised questions in relation to:

- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities action plan, what resulted in the Council being subject to an action plan and progress in implementing the action plan.
- How the Council is ensuring value for money in respect of the two contracts awarded by Cabinet on 10 May 2022 for a 'development and management partner to support us in the acquisition and redevelopment of the required properties' and 'property management partner to oversee the maintenance and running of our temporary accommodation once secured and operational'.
- The actions being taken to create long terms fixes such as reviewing underoccupancy of social rented stock and encouraging empty homes to be brought back into use.
- The delays in recruiting an Empty Homes Officer.
- The insourcing of the homeless hostel provision.
- And asked for some reassurance that the numbers being reported for those accessing the Domestic Abuse Services during 2021/22 were accurate as they noted a significant drop.

The Director of Children's Services was congratulated on the positive improvements that she had made to the Children's Services in Torbay following an Ofsted inspection which took place between 21 March to 1 April 2022. Ofsted had judged the Council as 'Good' in all four areas of their inspection.

The Director of Children's Services explained her reasoning around the inclusion of the new performance indicators from her area being used to track the Community and Corporate Plan and the plans she has to take the service forward over the next 12 months. The Director of Children's Services also explained in more detail the projects relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability.

Members raised questions in relation to:

- Whether the number of Children in receipt of an Education, Care and Health Plan is reflective of the make up of our area.
- Support for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators.
- The number of agency staff within the whole of Children's Services and the split relating to social care officers and other posts.
- Unaccompanied Assylum Seeking Children.

In their consideration of the overall Quarter 1 Performance Report, Members requested that as part of their meeting scheduled for 7th November 2022, that some specific points be included within the Quarter 2 Performance Report.

Resolved that:

- a) As part of Project 1 "Deliver and update our Housing Strategy, including working with developers to encourage sites to be brought forward, to ensure a five-year housing land supply, thereby protecting our green spaces" – Within the narrative there is reference to details on the Land Release Fund sites, the funding that has been unlocked and monies not spent.
- b) That the summary for Thriving People: We will turn the tide on poverty includes an update on what the council has achieved in relation to work completed on; empty homes and properties brought back into occupation and under occupation.
- c) That the summary also includes reference to the numbers of households being placed in Torbay by other local authorities and the number of households Torbay are placing out of area.
- d) That the Children's performance indicators that are reported as per rate of 10,000 Cared for Children and rate of requests for Education, Care and Health Plans should also include the exact numbers underneath.
- e) That as part of the Agency Staff Cost performance indicator, a breakdown is included detailing the split by service.

Under Council Fit For The Future, Project 80 "Deliver improvements within the Planning service ensuring improved responsiveness and accessibility together with a proactive approach" – the Audit Committee requested if the Chief Executive could be asked to bring forward a separate report on the progress being made on the Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency – Service of the Future Project.

Additionally, members would like to see the performance data being collected to track the project's progress and request for the below performance indicators be included within the list of KPIs in the PID used to track the improvement progress:

- Total number of planning applications received

- Total £s of income received for planning applications
- Total £s paid back to the customer for returned planning fees
- Total number of planning appeals per year
- Total number of planning appeals lost
- Total number of planning appeals won
- Total amount of £s spent on planning appeals
- Total amount of £s recuperated from overturned planning appeals

It was noted that members would also like to see some planning benchmarking information as part of the report.

15. Q1 Risk Report

Members noted the Quarter 1 Risk Report and requested the Director of Children's Services email further details of the mitigation regarding 'SRCFF02 School High Needs block spending pressure'.

Chairman/woman