

At a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Main Hall, Wigton Market Hall, CA7 9AA on Friday 8 October 2021 at 1.30 pm

Members

Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes (Chair)	
Councillor Tony Annison	Councillor John Crouch
Councillor Allan Daniels	Councillor Patrick Gorrill
Councillor Malcolm Grainger	Councillor Iain Greaney
Councillor Hilary Harrington	Councillor Daniel Horsley
Councillor Ron Munby MBE	Councillor Paul Scott

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Markus Campbell-Savours and Councillor Michael Heaslip

Staff Present

A FitzGerald, N Hardy, I Hinde and L Jardine

211. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 02 September 2021 were signed as a correct record.

212. Declaration of Interests

None declared

213. Questions

The Chair read the following question, which was submitted by Debbie Devereux, Head Coach from Keswick Tri Club Juniors.

‘On behalf of the community of Keswick, I am requesting authorisation from Allerdale Borough Council to commission an independent survey of Keswick Pool. Just to be clear, Keswick Community wish to conduct their own independent survey of Keswick Pool, so are seeking authorisation from Allerdale to do this.

This is to verify or otherwise the findings, recommendations and estimated costs contained within the 2018 condition report produced on behalf of GLL’.

The Chair then provided following response,

‘The question that is being asked is not within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it will be a matter for the Executive to consider as they are the appropriate decision making body. This is because the question is in reference to one of the Councils assets and the Executive make the decisions on their operational function. The question will therefore be referred on to the Executive for their response’.

A written response was also provided to the questioner.

214. Public Participation

None received

215. Quarter 1 Performance Report 2021/22

The Strategic Advisor (Corporate) introduced the Quarter 1 performance report for 2021/22 and provided an overview of the report including key projects and activities, corporate KPIs which are based on Council Strategy Delivery Plan.

Members were advised that the majority KPIs and projects and programmes were on track with the exception being the 'Review of the Housing Grants Assistance Policy', of which members shared concerns. Officers advised that the review of the Housing Grants and Assistance policy has not started due to the Housing Manager being heavily involved in Track and Trace, leaving limited capacity within the team.

Members asked questions in relation to resourcing, customer complaints, waste collections, debt collection and invoices paid to local business.

Members requested that the Executive Member with the portfolio for Waste Services attends a future meeting.

Officers clarified that Council Tax collection rates were marginally lower than estimated but that this was affected by the pandemic, this should reach expected levels in Quarter 2.

Members noted the contents of the report.

216. Quarter 1 Finance Report 2021/22

The Chair went through the Report for Quarter 1, advising that this report was to accompany the Quarter 1 Performance Report 2021/22.

Members questioned the Otley Road Development, whether this was cost effective and the proposed rental income figures. An update will be provided to members.

Members noted the contents of the report.

217. Summary report of responses to questions from the previous meeting

The Policy Officer (Scrutiny and Partnerships) provided an overview on this report advising that responses to questions relating to Building Control were not available but will be presented for the next meeting.

Members asked further questions and debate ensued relating to the level of contribution from the Council to the operation of leisure centres broken down to individual facilities.

Officers explained to members that the income and expenditure per each leisure centre was available, but that a breakdown of the management fee paid per leisure facility was not available.

Members still had questions of the contractor in relation to leisure provision including finances and the management agreement. Members agreed to attend an informal session to discuss leisure provision, and if necessary a report will be brought to this committee.

Members noted the contents of the report.

Councillor Greaney joined the meeting

218. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Performance and Economic Development Strategy) provided an update to members.

The Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and Council Leaders have met with representatives of authorities who have went through recent Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), to understand best practice and lessons learnt. CEOs have also been looking at high level options analysis for each service.

The Data/Intelligence Hub is developing and the Chief Finance Officers have been meeting to discuss implementation costs. Detailed resource planning for the programme is also taking shape, which includes the finalising of the brief for the strategic partner.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHG) is now the new name for MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government). Monthly meetings are being held with DLUHG to demonstrate to the government that the programme is on track and that sufficient budget and resources are in place.

All representations for the Structural Changes Order (SCO) have been submitted and a draft order is expected in Autumn 2021. The final SCO has to be approved by 29 March 2022 to ensure that elections to the shadow authority can take place in May 2022.

Members were also advised that communications and engagement activity is increasing and that gradually more officers will be involved in various parts of the process going forward.

The Chair asked questions and shared concerns relating to stakeholder/contractual obligations. In response officers explained that there is a workstream looking at procurement and contracts, looking at contracts that are due to end and ongoing contracts that will still be in place in 2023, explaining that the new Council for example may have more than one waste contract.

Members then discussed community engagement and that it is important that the public are aware of what is going on and that they have the opportunity to shape the new councils.

Questions were then asked in relation to the Shadow Authority and the 2023 elections.

Members then debated communication strategies including press releases and the language used, some commenting that the language should be simplified to improve engagement.

Further questions were raised in relation to the ongoing Judicial Review, shared services, Shadow Arrangements and existing council strategies.

Members noted the contents of the update.

219. Forward Plan

The Chair went through the forward plan, asking for comments from members.

Officers confirmed that the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) - Formation of a Community Partnership item will move to the November 2021 Executive meeting.

Debate ensued in relation to the GDF and in particular geology and the search area.

Members agreed to invite Councillor Fitzgerald as Portfolio Holder for Nuclear to the next meeting of the Committee (19 November 2021) to discuss GDF prior to the Executive Meeting on 24 November 2021.

Members were also advised that the Programme Directors for both the Maryport and Workington Programmes will be providing updates at the December 2021 meeting of the Committee.

Members noted the contents of the forward plan.

220. Work Programme Update

The Specialist (Policy) provided an update on the Work Programme.

The Culture and Leisure Provision Task and Finish Group will meet to set the scene and to understand the current situation.

The two other Task and Finish Groups (Community Leadership and Engagement and Young People and Corporate Parenting) have not held any meetings.

Members also discussed the creation of an informal work group to look at the Work Programme for 2022/23 and the link between the current and new Council and Local Government Reorganisation.

Members noted the contents of the Work Programme Update.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm