

**Lancashire County Council**

**Scrutiny Management Board**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 16th January, 2024 at 2.00 pm in  
Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

**Present:**

County Councillor David Westley (Chair)

**County Councillors**

S Hind	J Fillis
A Ali OBE	G Mirfin
R Bailey	S Rigby
L Beavers	J Shedwick
A Cheetham	M Tomlinson
S Cunliffe	

County Councillor Anne Cheetham replaced County Councillor Carole Haythornthwaite on a permanent basis.

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None were disclosed.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 31 October 2023**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record.

**4. Money Matters 2023/24 Position - Quarter 2**

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Alan Vincent, Deputy Leader, Neil Kissock, Director of Finance and Kate Lee, Head of Service Financial Management to the meeting.

Members were presented with key highlights from the Money Matters 2023/24 Position – Quarter 2 report provided to Cabinet at its meeting held on 7 December 2023.



It was highlighted that the reported £5.9m overspend was £1.7m lower than previously forecast in Quarter 1, with work underway on further mitigations to support a more balanced budget. In addition, members attention was drawn to the service areas (home to school transport and children's social care) with an overspend primarily as a response to increased service demand.

Members were invited to ask questions and a summary of discussion outlined below:

Concerns were raised around the overspend challenges with home to school transport provision. It was reported that this was due to the changes in statutory guidance around distance and length of travel time for children with special educational needs. This was a national issue, not limited to Lancashire. It was established that a working group had been set up to look at how budget pressures could be reduced. It was clarified that the decision on eligibility for transport would come from Children's Services, however Environment Directorate would commission the transport.

Members were advised that special education needs and disabilities (SEND) school places had been increased, however this would not mitigate the current pressures. It was acknowledged that SEND places need to be in the right areas with the right demand and this was an ongoing piece of work.

With regards to the capital programme and changes to the planned delivery, it was highlighted that this was a reprofiling exercise of the capital programme with no changes to delivery for the current financial year.

**Resolved:** That the report be considered.

## **5. Medium Term Financial Strategy Update 2024/25 - 2026/27**

Alongside County Councillor Alan Vincent, Neil Kissock and Kate Lee, the Chair welcomed County Councillor Graham Gooch, Cabinet Member for Adult Services, County Councillor Rupert Swarbrick, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Oliver Starkey, Head of Service Public and Integrated Transport, Elaina Quesada, Deputy Executive Director for Adult Services and Kashif Ahmed, Director of Strategic and Integrated Commissioning to the meeting.

Members were presented with a copy of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Update 2024/25 - 2026/27 report to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 18 January 2024 which contained an updated position compared to that presented to Cabinet and Full Council in February 2023.

Pressures that had led to an increase in the county council's forecast costs included:

- Changes in inflation primarily around the national living wage announcement which was higher than expected which had impacted specifically on social care fee levels.
- The guidance changes and demand on home to school transport.
- Adult Social Care mental health cost pressures particularly around domiciliary care.



The areas which had reduced the gap included:

- Whilst the provisional local government financial settlement didn't provide any additional funding and a small reduction in the services grant, there were some technical changes particularly with the top up grants the county council received and Section 31 compensatory grants and how they were calculated. It was reported that previously they had been frozen but had since been uplifted by inflation which had led to a significant increase in the amount of funding the county council would receive next year.
- New Homes Bonus funding extension for another two years.
- A 4.99% council tax increase, subject to the agreement of Full Council in February 2024.

With regards to risk, the following points were outlined:

- Awaiting final tax base information from district councils to be received by 31 January 2024. Early indications highlighted that the county council might see further pressures from this.
- Reduced pay award assumptions from 5% to 3%
- Continued capital receipt flexibilities.
- Around £23m of management action savings.
- £14.9m additional savings programmes identified for consideration by Cabinet on 18 January 2024 which were set out in the report at Appendix 'A'.

Members were invited to ask questions and a summary outlined below.

With regards to the outlined potential savings, the following areas were discussed:

ECS002 – Children and Young People's Joint Funding. A question was raised as to whether a protocol was in place with the local NHS Integrated Care Board with regards to the joint funding for those with complex health needs. It was reported that a protocol was in place. However, advice would need to be taken from the service as to what would happen should there be a dispute between the county council and the Integrated Care Board.

GET015 – Service Review of Transport Group plus Additional Planning Application Fee Income. Concerns were raised around the disestablishment of potential vacant posts within the planning and transport services given that there was a national shortage of planning officers. It was confirmed from the service that this proposal would not have a negative impact on service delivery. A concern was raised that certain schemes had been delayed due to a lack of capacity to carry out the design work. It was agreed that a further discussion would take place with the Cabinet Member to determine which schemes had been delayed.

GET007 – introduction of on street pay and display. Concerns were raised as this was an area previously proposed by Cabinet and not implemented. Furthermore, there was not enough detail on the proposed saving in terms of which areas this would impact and the affect it would have on town centres that were already struggling. It was reported that the schemes were under consideration, but there was no firm detail on the proposal. Concerns were also highlighted that government was



putting levelling up funds into towns around the county that were struggling and that this proposal would undermine those efforts. Members were reassured that this proposal would not counter the benefit of all the other economic development activity currently underway. It was acknowledged that this was a contentious issue and that there would be a need to ensure that the schemes that would be put forward were appropriate for their location.

GET009 – proposal to remove the £1 concessionary 1 travel fare option for bus travel before 9.30am. It was queried how many journeys/travellers this would affect and whether consideration had been given to those disabled and travelling to work. It was reported that around 100k single journeys using those passes were made before 9.30am. There was uncertainty around what these passes were used for, as this couldn't be broken down so it couldn't be determined if this was related to travelling to work. However, from a review of how many individual passes were used on a frequent basis, it could be potentially estimated how many were used for travelling to work and last year there was one pass used between 400-500 times; ten passes used up to 399 times and a further 38 passes used up to 300 times. From this it could be deduced that the vast majority of those passes were used for occasional journeys rather than regular people coming to work. It was acknowledged that a consultation would be needed to determine if people would be profoundly impacted in going to work.

It was clarified that an Equality Impact Assessment would be undertaken before any changes were proposed.

ASC006 – Offer a chargeable brokerage service for full cost payers. It was reported that a care arrangement fee was not currently in place for those who could pay for their care and the introduction of this fee would support sustainability.

It was highlighted that those needing care have the option not to arrange care through the local authority. Members were assured that a consultation exercise would be undertaken.

ASC010 – Full application of charging policy. It was reported that there were currently 713 beds available across the county council's 16 care homes or older people of which 119 were block booked for intermediate care in partnership with the local NHS. Occupancy was reported to be around 78-83%. It was highlighted that the occupancy rate was related to shortage of care staff across care homes. Members were informed that the savings option would reduce the workload and increase capacity within frontline operational teams.

ASC004 – Enablement – Enhanced. With regards to further staff investment in the Enablement Service, it was reported that the numbers of staffing were identified through a review of existing capacity and reflected the numbers currently coming through the service.

**Resolved:** That;

- (i) The information as presented be noted.
- (ii) The above comments from the Scrutiny Management Board in relation to savings proposals GET007 and GET009 be passed on to Cabinet.



## **6. Budgeted Savings Tracker**

Members were provided an update on the tracking and delivery of savings agreed by Full Council in the current and previous financial years as part of the agenda pack. In addition, as requested at the last meeting, further explanation and how the plans were proceeding to implement those savings where the Board felt there were challenges in realising delivery was provided.

Members were informed that the Finance Monitoring Boards for each Directorate at county council continued to review those savings that had not yet been achieved. Members were also assured that where there were savings identified that could not be achieved in full, mitigations would be found to offset. It was acknowledged as outlined in the report that some of the agreed savings might not be fully delivered.

It was suggested that given an assessment was due to be undertaken on the budgeted savings through the Finance Monitoring Boards, a revised report be brought to the next scheduled meeting of the Board.

**Resolved:** That;

- (i) The information as presented in the report be noted.
- (ii) A revised report be presented to the next scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board on 16 April 2024.

## **7. Work Programmes 2023/24**

Members were presented with the 2023/24 work programmes for all the scrutiny committees and the Scrutiny Management Board with an update included on the activity of the Political Governance Working Group.

**Resolved:** That the;

- (i) Work programmes and progress on recommendations be noted.
- (ii) Update on the activity of the Political Governance Working Group be noted.

## **8. Scrutiny In-Year Requests**

Members were presented with two in-year request forms received for the Boards consideration. In addition, the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee had made two requests for additional items to appear on its work programme for 2023/24.

Members discussed the request form submitted on gluten free prescriptions. As part of this discussion, a response from the ICB which was received on the day of the meeting was circulated to members at the meeting (a copy is set out in the minutes). The response provided further detail on the decision taken in 2018 by the then Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), which was reviewed by the NHS Lancashire



and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) in 2023 to withdraw the option for gluten free products on prescription. It was highlighted that the cost of living crisis placed further burden on residents living with coeliac disease, however it was felt that given the response from the ICB and the ongoing budgetary challenges, scrutiny would have limited impact on the decision. On being put to the vote, it was resolved not to bring this item to scrutiny at this time.

Members then discussed the second scrutiny in year item request on employment type day provision for people with autism and or learning disabilities. The Board felt scrutiny could add value on this matter through further exploration and agreed for this to be included on the 2024/25 work programme for the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee.

The two item requests from the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee on the Transport Asset Management Plan and Enabling Net Zero Infrastructure - National Grid were agreed to be included on the committees work programme for 2023/24 for the meetings to be held in March and April 2024 respectively.

**Resolved:** That the;

- (i) In year request for the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee to review gluten free prescriptions be not agreed.
- (ii) In year request for the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee to review the employment type day provision for people with autism and or learning disabilities be agreed and for this to be included on the 2024/25 work programme.
- (iii) Two requests from the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee be agreed.

## **9. Report on the activity of the Councillor Support Steering Group**

The Board was provided with an overview of matters presented and considered by the Councillor Support Steering Group at its meeting held on 25 October 2023.

**Resolved:** That the report of the Councillor Support Steering Group be received.

## **10. Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

## **11. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board will be held on Tuesday 16 April 2024 at 2pm in Committee Room B – The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston.



H MacAndrew  
Director of Law and Governance

County Hall  
Preston

