

**Lancashire County Council**

**Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 24th March, 2022 at 2.30 pm in  
Committee Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston**

**Present:**

County Councillor Philippa Williamson (Chair)

**County Councillors**

A Vincent	A Riggott
G Gooch	S Turner
P Buckley	M Goulthorp
C Edwards	

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Green, County Councillor Khan, Mike Kirby and Paul Bond.

**Temporary changes**

County Councillor Goulthorp replaced County Councillor Rear and County Councillor Towneley at this meeting.

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

No pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests were disclosed.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th November 2021**

**Resolved:** That the minutes held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**Matters Arising**

County Councillor Riggott asked whether comparative sickness levels in other local authorities were available, as requested by the Chair at the last meeting.

Deborah Barrow, Head of Service – Human Resources confirmed that this would be referred to during discussion of the sickness absence part of the Corporate Performance Update report.

#### 4. Corporate Strategy Monitoring Report – Quarter 3 2021/22 Performance Update

A report was presented by Donna Talbot, Head of Business Intelligence, on the performance update for Quarter 3 2021/22.

Appendix 'A' provided the latest performance updates available against the agreed Key Performance Indicators, along with an overview of some additional service development areas relating to each corporate priority.

The Cabinet Committee noted the highlights of good performance and those indicators performing below the desired level and/or due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as detailed in the report.

The following officers attended the meeting and provided details and updates on their respective service areas:

- Dave Carr - Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health
- John Morrissy – Director of Organisational Development and Change
- Martin Farran – Director of Adult Care and Provider Services
- John Davies – Head of Service – Highways
- Andy Walker – Head of Service - Business Growth
- Deborah Barrow – Head of Service – Human Resources
- Steve Scott – Head of Service – Waste Management

Specific areas were discussed as follows:

##### **Delivering better services**

**Safety carriageway defects** – although performance had improved for emergency and urgent repairs, it was still slightly below target. All categories had seen a high number of defects being reported. For repairs completed within both the 5 and 20 day timescales, performance was above target. A continuing high number of defects was expected going forward but plans were being put in place to reduce the reliance on sub-contractors.

**Street lighting fault repair** – performance was above target for both Non-Traffic Management and Traffic Management lamp-out faults.

County Councillor Edwards highlighted the excellent efforts of the Communications Team to improve the ability for members of the public and elected members to report faults. County Councillor Edwards stated that an increase in lamp-out faults was also anticipated and that a refreshed protocol to test street lighting columns had been put in place.

County Councillor Buckley wished to place on record his thanks for the inclusion of actual figures which helped to put the percentages into context.



**Sickness absence** – it was reported that the impact of Covid-19 was largely responsible for the changing patterns and levels of sickness absence, which had been experienced in other councils/organisations. Covid sickness absences resulted in an increase in an overall short term absence. Information provided showed that the number of Covid absence cases per month had increased by 87% from 418 in Quarter 2 to 782 in Quarter 3. Two thirds of sickness absence was long term. Absences of four weeks or longer were recorded as long term absence. The top three reasons for absence were mental health, musculoskeletal and Covid.

It was reported that Lancashire had recently joined the Local Government Association Benchmarking Club which would enable the council to compare sickness absence levels against other local authorities in future. In the meantime, it was reported that, through contacts and checking website information, the council's sickness absence challenges due to Covid-19 had also been experienced in other county councils, and past experience had shown the council absences levels compared with the average levels across other county councils.

County Councillor Vincent stated that the high number of working days lost per employee was of concern and that these figures may be poor compared to the private sector and action was needed to be taken to improve this.

County Councillor Goulthorp asked for the total number of days lost across the whole of the workforce and the costs associated with this.

County Councillor Turner asked for a breakdown of the hotspot areas across the entire organisation and what the reasons may be for this.

In response to the comments, the Cabinet Committee were informed that employment terms differed between the large public and private sector employers. However, whichever sector, models of best practice would be further explored.

The total days lost figure across the whole organisation would be provided to the Cabinet Committee. The costs of sickness absence was identified when a sickness absence was covered, whether that was day one cover or if the absence became long term. Further work was required to produce more detail to have an agreed set of metrics, but would be developed.

The service areas that had the higher level of absence could be included in future reporting.

### **Next steps**

Having set out the data and metrics, a number of actions and next steps intended to reduce sickness absence were summarised.

The council's Sickness Policy had been reviewed and redrafted as the Attendance Policy. The revised policy focussed on good conversations and communication with staff about sickness absence. In order to support positive outcomes, the focus was on the individual circumstances and enabling managers to make judgements and decisions based on them.



The policy was underpinned by supported guidance, webinars, briefings and workplace wellbeing. All of which had been well utilised and had received very positive feedback.

Sickness absence reduction targets had been suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic but would be re-instated so that performance against the targets could be monitored. It was acknowledged that reducing sickness absence levels and improving workplace wellbeing was an organisational responsibility.

County Councillor Riggott appreciated the commitment to reduce sickness absence and the intention to fully embed the policy provisions. He added that an approach to ensuring managers engaged with this was important.

The Chair was grateful the Head of Human Resources was able to attend and provide more information and it was agreed regular reporting and action plans would be provided to future meetings so progress could be kept under review.

**Additional service developments** – as part of the Improvement Journey, a review of the Human Resources and Skills, Learning and Development Services was underway, looking at what the Service needed to focus on in order to deliver the improvements requested. This was in the Phase 2 stage to agree the functional design and operating model and an implementation plan. The Phase 3 implementation stage was expected to be a 12-18 month programme of work.

Key elements included enhancing strategic HR support, getting good data and analysis of this to inform decision making, and improvements planned through the introduction of Oracle Fusion. Dashboards were being developed by Business Intelligence which would support that discussion containing two sets of indicators – organisational health indicators (absence rates, causes etc) and service indicators (how services were performing; a key part of this was the development of effective management dashboards). Digital Services were undertaking an options appraisal to establish an overarching performance management system and it was hoped that either Fusion or Microsoft business analytics could assist with this. This would allow the Strategy to be refreshed and aligned to the Corporate Strategy and Priorities. Although the county council had a good set of materials for performance engagement and discussions between managers and staff, there was no overarching system that recorded those discussions or the outcomes of them/assessment of performance against them.

### **Protecting our environment**

**Recycling** – although waste arisings had been affected by the pandemic, this had not affected performance. The outturn position for 2020/21 was 44.6%, the same as before COVID. It was reported that tonnages at the Household Waste Recycling Centres had shown signs of returning to pre-pandemic levels over the last nine months with 85% throughput. The long terms effects of the pandemic would not be seen for another 12 months although the cost of dealing with waste had increased due to COVID.



The waste operating company had maintained operations throughout the COVID pandemic and performance had been maintained. It was noted that the previous recycling target of 50% was the expired EU member state target. The new target of 65% by 2035 was in line with the government's suggestion in the Resources and Waste Strategy which would be extremely challenging. Committee noted that DEFRA were currently consulting on a targets paper stemming from the Environment Act which had been passed in November 2021.

County Councillor Turner stated that the Waste Management Team had run an excellent service throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Ways on how to deal with the challenging aspects of the Environment Act were being worked on and, going forward, big decisions would need to be made by the county council. Separate food waste collections were in the pipeline and the requirements of the Districts needed to be considered in preparation for this.

The government had undertaken three consultations last year on Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Schemes and Consistency in Waste Collections, although the outcomes of these had not yet been published. Extended Producer Responsibility was the biggest thing that would change behaviours in the UK since the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and would result in all producers funding waste services in the UK with the aim of reducing the amount of packaging they use and levied towards packaging that was harder to recycle. A Deposit Return Scheme was already in place in Scotland. Consistency in collections involved mandatory food waste collections and the potential collection of tetra packs and some electricals which would be phased in over the coming years. In relation to food waste collections, Lancaster City Council had recently run trials and data from these was currently being collected and analysed.

The Cabinet Committee noted that separate food waste collections were expected to generate 40k tonnes of waste per year. However, it was important to note that this would only increase our recycling rate by 5/6% which was a long way off the 65% target.

### **Supporting economic growth**

**Rosebud** – it was reported that the market still remained slow and that there had been no investment in Quarter 3, partially due to the heavy use of COVID bounceback loans. However, some uplift was expected in the next quarter which would get the county council closer to the target of £1m of investment during the year. Fund managers were consulted mid-year resulting in the management fee being halved. The next Lancashire County Developments Board would be reviewing how to move forward into the next year of the contract on fund management and how the fund could be re-positioned, particularly towards the equity end of the market, to find areas where businesses were still keen to borrow.

County Councillor Riggott added that discussions were ongoing on what the service should look like, what the service offer should be and where the county council's place in the market was.



County Councillor Vincent stated that the business model needed reviewing to look at taking equity rather than personal guarantees as a form of security.

**Boost** – performance had returned to significantly above target in Quarter 3 in both the number of jobs created and new businesses established. It was noted that the core services had been re-procured during this quarter.

**Number of visitors to Lancashire/the economic impact of visitors to Lancashire/full time equivalent jobs supported by the visitor economy** – during the next quarter, Marketing Lancashire and others would be contacted to get a more detailed view of the post-COVID visitor economy and the annual report would be presented to the July meeting.

### **Educational attainment**

**Key Stage 4** – as the summer 2021 exams had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, pupils had received teacher assessed grades whereas pupils had been awarded a centre assessment grade or calculated grade using the Ofqual model in 2020. Committee were reminded pupil attainment data from the past two years should therefore not be directly compared to previous years.

**Average Attainment 8 Score** - the Lancashire average of 50.4 remained higher than national and regional averages and well above the 47.7 target. Although the SEND pupils' Average Attainment 8 score was 35.5 and above the target figure of 32, this was lower than both national and regional averages. The Lancashire Education Strategy 2022-2025 agreed by Cabinet in December 2021, looked at how to take forward work to support vulnerable pupils, to address some of the inequalities and focussed on integration and making opportunities more accessible to these groups. Schools were working well together to drive improvement and learn from each other.

**16/17 year olds in employment, education or training** – Quarter 3 showed an improvement in performance for all young people in employment, education or training, compared to Quarter 3 in 2020/21. This was particularly notable as there had been approximately 1,000 more young people in the cohort than from Quarter 3 the previous year.

A range of actions continued to be undertaken to improve performance with a focus on how opportunities for vulnerable groups could be improved. The support from secondary schools and colleges continued to be good. Alternative solutions continued to be looked at in relation to tracking young people who had left school and for whom the county council had no contact details.

County Councillor Goulthorp expressed concern about the direction of travel towards academies and the effect it could have on the county council's ability to deliver overall and asked for separate attainment figures to be provided for academies. Committee noted the importance of maintaining positive relationships with all schools and academies and working together as a whole system in terms of school improvement. A breakdown of attainment data for maintained schools and academies would be looked into.





**Number of visits to libraries/number of PNET sessions/number of library events organised/number of e-downloads/number of volunteers in libraries** – this was a very positive picture across the board. Although Quarter 3 had seen some levelling off in relation to e-downloads, Cabinet Committee noted that this was a seasonal trend and that it appeared that those who had moved to electronic formats were remaining with these. County Councillor Buckley was particularly pleased to see the increase in the number of volunteers in libraries from 78 in Quarter 2 to 310 in Quarter 3, and highlighted the importance of this service in terms of social interaction and health and wellbeing.

### **Caring for the vulnerable**

**Children and Families Wellbeing Service** – although this indicator was above target, there had been a reduction in the number of cases closed with 'all needs met' during November and December. November had seen an increase in families disengaging from the service and December's reduction of 'all needs met' cases had been a seasonal anomaly, whilst other types of case closure remained consistent, thereby suppressing performance against this measure. It was expected that figures for the next quarter would be more stable. The Chair asked whether performance was being maintained in this area due to the increases in the number of children entering the system and children being 'stepped down' from a child in need. Committee were informed that this would be looked into.

**Looked after children actually living in Lancashire** – this indicator remained just above target. There was an ongoing challenge of finding appropriate placements and the county council was working closely with providers who were setting up homes in Lancashire, to make sure the right provision was available. It was noted, however, that it was not always appropriate for some children to live in Lancashire.

Committee noted that discussions were taking place within the Service on whether to review these targets due to them consistently being above target and also whether the indicators needed revisiting.

**Safeguarding outcomes** – despite all the challenges, the overall performance was positive. However, Quarter 3 performance had dropped from the previous quarter, which was partly due to reporting issues within the new safeguarding transformation system, n.b. there was a query as to whether broader desired outcomes not specifically in relation to safeguarding were being reported against and investigations were ongoing on this issue.

**Quality of care homes** – it was noted that the Care Quality Commission were still largely only carrying out "urgent" inspections where services had been reported as failing and the CQC had confirmed that they were not intending to look at the majority of services in Lancashire County Council, other than desk top reviews. It was expected that there could be a considerable period before the CQC returned to usual regulatory activity.

In relation to absence management, it should be noted that staff in most of the care provider services were still subject to daily COVID testing. In addition, provider



services were required to adhere to separate guidance around self-isolating which had caused a spike in sickness absence. Some of the highest levels of COVID were being seen at the moment with 6 care homes currently closed to admissions due to outbreaks.

**Adults with learning disabilities in employment** – work had now started to resume in this area to review how more adults could be supported into employment by both the role of the specialist support team and providers of care and support services. The county council was currently in the process of submitting an expression of interest to gain additional funding to support this work and potentially working with the voluntary and community sector and looking at alternative models. County Councillor Gooch reported that the private sector were much more successful in employing adults with learning disabilities, and that the public sector in general, not just adult social care, needed to make improvements with this.

**Percentage of older people (aged 65 and over) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services** – this indicator was above target at 87.4% and higher than the regional and national average (79.9% and 79.1% respectively). There had recently been an 8 hour wait for ambulances at Royal Preston Hospital and Adults Services staff had worked extremely hard in getting people through the system and out of hospital.

**Proportion of adults with learning disabilities who live in their own home** – this was above target. The performance reflected the county council's commitment to ensuring that people with a learning disability and/or autism are supported to live as independently as possible.

**Permanent admissions to residential and nursing care homes per 100,000 population** – numbers had risen in this area, particularly in relation to the aged 65+ population. Families were now more content to place their relatives in residential care due to COVID measures being relaxed, and staffing shortages to support people at home had resulted in more people being admitted to residential care. It was expected that permanent admissions would continue to rise in the coming months given the pressures in the acute system.

This was a key area of focus and a national issue and continued to be monitored, in order to understand the impact that the pandemic has had on this indicator.

County Councillor Gooch acknowledged that it had been a very difficult period for Adult Services and that, going forward, ways of working needed to be reviewed. For example, it was difficult for the county council to recruit Occupational Therapists due to NHS wages being higher so the possibility of seconding NHS staff to work in nursing homes was an option to consider, along with greater intervention with care services and a review of the county council's buildings.

County Councillor Turner reported that staff shortages and long waits for hospital discharge were being seen in North Lancashire along with issues around procurement.





**Health checks** – although a better uptake rate had been seen, improvements still needed to be made and work was underway on a more targeted offer to encourage people to come forward.

**Public Health Outcomes in Lancashire** – Committee's attention was drawn to the link provided to the Public Health Annual Report 2021-22.

**Targeted work on free early years places for 2 year olds** – it was brought to the attention of Committee that this targeted work had resulted in a significant increase in take-up, rising from 62% in the spring term to 81.6% in the autumn term.

**Resolved:** The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement noted the performance and additional information set out in Appendix 'A'.

## **5. Corporate Risk & Opportunity Register 2021/22 Quarter 4**

A report was presented by Donna Talbot, Head of Business Intelligence, providing an updated (Quarter 4) Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register and Summary Risk Profile for the Cabinet Committee to consider and comment upon.

The risks and opportunities had been updated using information provided through directorate risk registers and by individual directors. The main changes were the:

- Removal of the risk relating to SEND following the assessment of improvement in September 2021.
- Family safeguarding - the risk confidence RAG rating for this risk had changed from green to amber. An audit had identified that there was some inconsistency in the quality of workbooks completed by social workers. Steps had now been put in place to improve practice and additional performance monitoring had also been implemented.

The updated Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register was provided at Appendix 'A' and the amended Corporate Summary Risk Profile summary was provided at Appendix 'B'.

As this report was considered in detail by the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee, the Chair asked that a summary be produced for future CCPI meetings.

County Councillor Riggott asked for the Summary Risk Profile to be re-formatted for future meetings. In particular, where the 'direction of travel' was listed as positive for all areas, it was not clear what this meant looking at the current and target risk ratings.

County Councillor Buckley asked for sickness absence levels be added to Risk ID Corp 1 – Reshaping the County Council: Our Improvement Journey and that the risk of Hostile Cyber Threats be considered as a Part II item for future meetings.

Bearing in mind the recent outage, the Chair asked that the issue of business continuity be considered as an additional risk.



**Resolved:**

The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement noted:

- (i) The Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register.
- (ii) The Corporate Summary Risk Profile.

**6. Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement would be held at 2.00pm on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

L Sales  
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall  
Preston

