

Lancashire County Council

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 2nd March, 2021 at 2.00 pm in Virtual Meeting

Present:

County Councillor Geoff Driver CBE (Chair)

County Councillors

K Iddon	S Turner
M Green	P Williamson
A Atkinson	L Beavers
P Buckley	B Dawson MBE
G Gooch	

1. Apologies for Absence

County Councillor Lorraine Beavers replaced County Councillor Carl Crompton at this meeting.

County Councillor Bernard Dawson replaced County Councillor Miles Parkinson 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 10th September 2020

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Corporate Strategy Monitoring report - Quarters 2 and 3 2020/21 Performance Update

A report was presented by Donna Talbot – Head of Business Intelligence, on performance update for Quarters 2 and 3 2020/21.

Appendix 'A' provided the latest performance updates available against the agreed Corporate Strategy indicators.

Appendix 'B' provided further information relating to Adult and Children's services, more specifically relating to work and performance levels during the pandemic. A summary list of reports that had been presented to other Committees was also

provided, giving a taste of the impact of Covid-19 on the work being undertaken across the authority and in relation to particular services and activity.

Appendix 'C' provided an overview of the Customer Access Service's role in supporting Lancashire County Council's response to the pandemic.

The Cabinet Committee noted the highlights of good performance, and those indicators performing below the desired level as detailed in the report.

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

- Tony Pounder – Director of Adult Services
- Dave Carr - Head of Service, Policy, Information and Commissioning (Start Well)
- John Davies – Head of Service, Highways
- Andy Walker – Head of Service, Business Growth
- Terry White – Customer Service Manager

Specific areas were discussed as follows:

Adult Services – Tony Pounder – Director of Adult Services

Percentage of adults and older people whose desired safeguarding outcomes are fully met – at times, many care homes had been operating in isolation over the past 12 months which had been very challenging, with no visits from family members, county council staff or the Care Quality Commission. It was appreciated that, over the past year, people's experiences in this area had probably not been as good due to the Covid pandemic although it was hoped that things would return to a more focussed approach and that, going forward, improved performance would be seen reaching the target of 70%.

Percentage of adults with learning disabilities in employment - contributing factors to not meeting this target included the internal deployment of staff and identifying elements of the council workforce with capacity during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, a high number of adults with learning disabilities worked in the hospitality sector which had been greatly affected by the pandemic.

Reablement – performance in this area had been maintained which was very positive, despite challenges in relation to complexities of need.

Permanent admissions to residential and nursing care homes – these figures showed significant improvement for both the 18-64 and the 65+ age groups. Reasons included people's reluctance to place themselves or their relatives in residential care settings during the Covid pandemic and more investments into other community care services including Crisis Support and Roving Nights services. In addition, for the 65+ age group, performance had benefitted from 'Passport to Independence' practice improvements and focussed

service challenge initiatives which were expected to continue to further improve performance. Figures in relation to these areas would be closely monitored.

Proportion of adults with learning disabilities who live in their own home – although the target was being met, there was a current downward trend in this figure. Looking at the operational arrangements over the past year, it was not clear what would account for this although it may be partly due to differential rates of deaths in different settings. More work would be done on this in order to understand the position.

Extra Care Schemes opening – two schemes based in Fleetwood and Preston would provide people with better alternatives to residential care and enable them to be supported within the community.

Additional information more specifically relating to work and performance levels during the pandemic

Hospital discharges – the beginning of the pandemic had been very challenging due to the new National Hospital Discharge Operating Policy being introduced which placed a firm emphasis on people only remaining in hospital if they had a defined clinical need. This involved more collaborative working with the NHS to combat the impact of Covid. Initially, the discharge window had been 2 - 4 hours but, due to challenges in preparing people for and facilitating discharge, the desired discharge timescale had been changed from the 1st September 2020 to within the same day. These changes had proved positive and Lancashire had performed well, achieving much better working arrangements during the second wave of the pandemic. The Home First referral pathways had contributed to a much lower level of residential care admissions.

The county council had been very successful in getting services online, particularly with community providers, domiciliary, reablement and crisis providers. The additional hours in Crisis at Home and Home First Services from the Lancashire temporary staffing agency had made a big difference and it was noted that the agency remained in place. Staff within the Critical Workforce Scheme had been deployed into emergency work and this scheme had been cited nationally as an example of good practice.

The Care Capacity Tracker had been nominated and shortlisted for both the Health Services Journal Awards and the Local Government Chronicle Awards and the results were currently awaited on this fantastic piece of work. Enormous support had been received from staff across the county council to get this in place and tribute was made to BT Lancashire Services, Core Systems and all staff deployed into working on this Scheme.

Following a request from the Department for Health and Social Care, five 'Designated settings' centres had been established in Lancashire for people being discharged from hospital who needed 24/7 support and who were COVID positive. These centres had released pressure on the NHS and care sector and had worked well although peak demand had now passed, due to the success of

the vaccination and testing programme. Discussions were ongoing as to whether these would need to be continued beyond the end of March/early April 2021, although current service users would remain at the centres until permanent residential or nursing care home placements could be found. Excellent support had been received from the 5 providers in very tough circumstances.

Highways

Safety carriageway defects – increases in the number of emergency defects had continued to increase since Quarter 2. However, these were relatively small numbers but impacted significantly on percentages. The colder and wetter weather and shorter daylight hours made it more challenging to complete repairs within the timescale targets, in addition to some staff absences due to Covid. On investigating the performance figures, it had also been identified that a number of defect reportings had not been filtering through the system properly, although this had now been resolved.

Street lighting fault repairs - more faults had been reported in this period due to colder and wetter weather and the shorter daylight hours. In addition, it had been more challenging to complete repairs due to resources being directed to dealing with severe weather and gritting duties, and also some staff absences due to Covid.

Number of Non-Traffic Management lamp-out faults repaired within 5 working days – good performance was noted for this indicator, with 90% of faults repaired within 5 working days.

County Councillor Iddon wished to thank the Highways Teams for all their hard work and a special thanks was conveyed to the Maintenance staff over the difficult winter period.

Waste Management

Recycling - Doorstep collected recycling had increased by between five and fifteen percent across Lancashire districts, which was matched by similar increases in nonrecyclable waste. Less business waste was being collected and, with many residents working from home, this explained some of the increase in doorstep collected waste. The Thornton and Leyland Waste Treatment Facilities had been operating at full capacity since the Summer; inert waste was not yet being accepted, although it was hoped that it would be able to be accepted within the next couple of weeks.

County Councillor Atkinson wished to thank the staff at the Household Waste Recycling Centres and the county council's Waste Management Team for working extremely hard throughout the pandemic.

Children and Young People's Service

Percentage of children and young people who received targeted early help support from Children and Families Wellbeing service which successfully met their identified needs – in the first half of the year, there had been an increase in families becoming dis-engaged from support due to the Covid pandemic. However, in Quarter 3, the combination of virtual and covid-safe physical support had improved engagement and requests for support for service, including families de-escalated from children's social care and the multi-agency safeguarding hub, were back to pre-national lockdown levels in October and November 2020. Programmes of work around audit and case reviews were ongoing, looking at how early help cases were being closed, to ensure that needs were being met either by the county council or outside agencies.

Percentage of children looked after who are actually living in Lancashire – this figure remained above target. Although the residential accommodation service supply in Lancashire was very good, the challenge remained in finding good quality, appropriate placements for those children and young people with the most complex needs. This was also the case across the country and, going forward, the development of suitable children's home provision need to be encouraged.

County Councillor Williamson stated that the overall indicators for performance in the above areas were very good and that this was as a result of high quality staff engagement and morale and management focus over the past 12 months. County Councillor Williamson emphasised that improvements needed to be made in finding placements for vulnerable children near to their families, communities and schools.

Educational attainment – only some of the usual data was available due to the 2020 summer exams being cancelled and pupils being awarded either a centre assessment grade or calculated grade using the Ofqual model. However, throughout the pandemic, the Children and Young People's Service had been working hard to support schools to keep them as fully open as possible, with particular emphasis on vulnerable pupils. Work was ongoing in supporting remote education including the provision of laptops and technology to pupils. Continued working together with schools was important, particularly with all pupils due to go back on 8th March.

Percentage of young people in employment, education or training (EET)/Percentage of young people in education or training (EET) SEND pupils – these were areas of positive activity and performance. In December 2020, 93.2% of total 16/17 year olds were in employment, education or training, compared with 91.9% in December 2019. For SEND pupils, in December 2020, 89.6% were in employment, education or training, compared with 87.9% in December 2019. Relationships with schools and colleges had had an impact on these figures and the Corporate Parenting Board had also been involved with this. Further work was being carried out to track young people for whom no contact details were available.

Libraries – by October 2020, all but 2 static libraries and 4 mobile units had reopened with a minor reduction in opening hours. The Library Service had done an exceptional amount of work in order to deliver a service within the Covid restrictions including:

- Pre-order click and collect loans;
- PNET sessions had been kept running wherever possible;
- a range of online events and competitions had been organised;
- the eBook service had created eMagazines, eNewspapers and eComics and had seen a significant increase in registered members and usage. This work had originally been planned for the Summer but had been brought forward due to the pandemic;
- Volunteers – 64 on Home Library Service deliveries; 19 on the Home Library Service to housebound clients; telephone befriending roles; 22 volunteers working from home on Red Rose Digitalisation roles; 13 Culture Hack volunteers.

County Councillor Buckley commended the Service on how hard staff had worked throughout the pandemic, with a special mention for the Befriending Service which had proved invaluable to the more mature library users. CC Buckley informed the Committee about the 'Six of the Best' scheme where staff chose 6 books for people to collect – this had been extremely well received and was available to both younger and adult readers.

County Councillor Driver gave a special thanks to all the volunteers within the Library Service who had provided an invaluable service to the residents of Lancashire.

Business Growth

Number of Rosebud loans provided to new or existing businesses - investment levels have dropped markedly since Quarter 1. Approximately £690k of loans had been provided on a £1.6m target, due to the Covid pandemic and the availability of government Covid business continuation loans and bounceback loans. We needed to understand how the level of economic debt would affect the availability of businesses to access growth finance. There was a shifting emphasis towards equity finance and we needed to ensure a network of equity investors could pick this up. Some parts of Lancashire were well served by Angel Investors Networks who typically invested in businesses within their own locality although there was a void in East Lancashire. There were substantial tax incentives to invest in the Angels Network and we needed to use other services we buy in to make sure there was comprehensive coverage across the whole of Lancashire.

Boost – numbers of jobs created was down markedly, due to furloughing existing staff and reluctance to take on additional staff, with some exceptions in the Health and Digital market. There had been a slight recovery in Quarter 3 in the

number of new businesses established. The number of enquiries from Lancashire businesses had doubled and the criteria which would previously have prevented businesses accessing services had been removed. £1m in ERDF Covid grants had been paid to local businesses for kit and provision to help them to continue trading through the pandemic and an extensive network of Peer to Peer groups had been established, of which Lancashire had the second largest cohort in the country. Boost had also assisted retailers to retrain staff and retail from a digital platform in order that they could continue trading throughout the pandemic.

County Councillor Michael Green stated that Rosebud was highly regarded both within and outside Lancashire but that it had been difficult to compete against government grants. CC Green thanked Andy Walker, his team and our partners in helping Lancashire businesses to succeed. Equity investment – Angel Network is patchy across Lancashire and there is a void in East Lancashire. Tax incentives are being worked on to invest in Angel Network.

Number of working days per full time equivalent lost to sickness absence – there had been an improvement in sickness absence with a continual decline for 7 months in a row, although the figure was still below target. The most notable decline was in short term absence; mental health related absence remained the highest cause of absence.

Children's Social Care - despite the ongoing pandemic pressures, the performance of the majority of Children's social care indicators remained stable and above target. Social Workers had found different ways of working and keeping in touch with children and young people and their families. The numbers of children with a child protection plan or repeat child protection plan had reduced significantly and, as at January 2021, the percentage of up to date child protection visits was above target at 94%.

The Children Looked after rate had remained stable throughout the pandemic. Numbers were now starting to fall and work around the Family Safeguarding Model was ongoing to further reduce this rate. However, it was emphasised that some children would still need to be looked after if that was the best thing for them. Children and young people were receiving health assessments where these were needed although the proportion of children looked after with up to date dental assessments had dropped significantly through the second half of 2020, to 51% at the end of December 2020. This trend was mirrored in other Local Authorities and was mainly due to the impact of the pandemic on the availability of dental clinics and the work of dentists.

County Councillor Williamson pointed out that these improvements in performance had been achieved whilst implementing the Family Safeguarding model and was an incredible achievement. The Chair congratulated all staff within the Children and Young People Directorate for all their efforts.

Customer Access Service

A report was provided on the following various projects and initiatives that the Customer Access Service had contributed towards since April 2020, and how those contributions have helped Lancashire's response to the pandemic. Details were provided in Appendix C and discussed as follows:

Having a Chat – this is where advisors take the time to talk to each caller outside of the remit of their request to understand how they were coping during lockdown and to establish needs and signpost people to communities, charities or businesses that could help.

Community Hubs – facilitated weekly meetings to share best practice and acting as a forum for advice to ensure customers, including those who were extremely clinically vulnerable people and shielding, received appropriate support.

Excess Deaths – mapped out a process for reporting Covid community deaths and sourcing support to transport deceased. Developed a 24 hour first point of contact for GPs in Lancashire.

Blue Badge Scheme – amendments made to the application process allowing customers to receive a badge without having to post proof of identity or residency and issuing temporary badges until the easing of restrictions, due to the cessation of face to face assessments in order to keep customers safe.

Waste – contributed towards specifications and testing of the appointment system for Lancashire residents to visit the Household Waste Recycling Centres and provision of feedback on the system and online content for customers.

Libraries – managing customer queries on the provision of free digital devices and internet connection to the vulnerable and the elderly to ensure they had access to accurate health information online, were able to stay socially connected and interact with both medical support and essential services. Testing and implementing a system to order books through the Browse and Borrow and 6 of the Best initiatives.

Registrars – assistance with the backlog of birth registrations and the design of a new two part registration process supporting social distancing measures.

Covid testing – first point of contact for Testing Hub – over 35,000 test notifications sent out and ownership of the Warn and Inform notifications following Covid outbreaks.

Covid Grants Scheme – assisting the Economic Development Team on BoostYourRecovery campaign aimed at helping Lancashire's small and medium enterprises reset and plan their return from lockdown. Processing of 325 business grant applications and 270 state aid letters through the capital grants programme.

Care Capacity Tracker – daily calls made 7 days a week to over 700 care and support providers on PPE stock, suspected and confirmed staff and service user Covid cases and confidence to continue operation of the service in the immediate future.

Vaccination programme – booking Covid vaccinations for front line Health and Social Care staff. Around 4,000 bookings have been made and over 5,000 vaccination enquiry calls answered.

Customer Access Service Staff working from home had had a positive impact in relation to retention of staff, and sickness absence levels had halved. The average length of service in Customer Access was approximately 3 years and some staff left to take up other positions in the county council that had a greater level of flexibility. If the CAS was more flexible, this would increase retention further and would benefit customers as the Service would have retained more experienced staff.

County Councillor Buckley wished to thank Terry and the Team for their hard work over the last 12 months and asked how working from home was seen, moving forward. Quarterly surveys had been sent out to staff whilst working from home to get their views on this new way of working and to determine whether anyone had concerns about feeling isolated and how this would affect their mental health. The vast majority had indicated that they would like to have at least some aspect of working from home going forward in order to have a better home/work life balance. The Customer Access Service would work with Facilities Management and Asset Management to understand the outcome of the Accommodation Review then would liaise with staff in order to build a long term working arrangement and to support those wanting to work from home.

A webchat service was being worked on which would need to be offered to the public whilst they were having to self serve. Self serve was generally used in the evenings. As part of the survey, some staff had said this would work well for them as they could start work later in the day and work through to the evening to enable the service to be offered outside usual office hours.

The Chair, on behalf of the Cabinet Committee, wished to place on record his thanks and appreciation to all staff throughout the county council for their hard work during the Covid pandemic.

5. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement would be held at 2.00pm on Tuesday 20th April 2021.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston