

Lancashire County Council

Scrutiny Management Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 23rd July, 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

G Mirfin

S Clarke

J Shedwick

S Cunliffe

J R Singleton JP

J Mein

M Tomlinson

County Councillors Stephen Clarke and John Singleton replaced County Councillors Steve Rigby and Rob Bailey respectively for this meeting only.

The Chair announced that item 6 would be taken before item 5 to accommodate the attendance of the Director of Strategic & Integrated Commissioning.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillor John Fillis.

2. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Management Board

The Chair presented a report which outlined the Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Management Board.

It was noted that since the membership was agreed by Full Council, and the publication of the agenda for this meeting, County Councillor Lorraine Beavers was to be replaced by County Councillor Jennifer Mein on a permanent basis.

Resolved: That;

- (i) The appointment of County Councillor D Westley as Chair and County Councillor S Hind as Deputy Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board for the 2024/25 municipal year be noted.



- (ii) The membership of the Board, following the county council's annual meeting on 23 May 2024, subject to the permanent change of County Councillor Jennifer Mein for County Councillor Lorraine Beavers be noted.
- (iii) The Scrutiny Management Board Terms of Reference be noted.
- (iv) The Terms of Reference for the four scrutiny committees be noted.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

4. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 16 April 2024

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 16 April 2024 be approved as an accurate record.

5. Budgeted Savings Tracker

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Noel O'Neill, Interim Director of Finance and Commerce, Kate Lee, Head of Service Financial Management (Operational), Kashif Ahmed, Director of Strategic & Integrated Commissioning and County Councillor Alan Vincent, Cabinet Member for Resources, HR and Property (Deputy Leader).

Members were presented with a report on the tracking and delivery of savings agreed by Full Council in the current and previous financial years. It was highlighted to Members that £73 million of the £80 million predicted savings were achieved, and the savings for 2024/25 had increased by approximately £28 million. It was further highlighted to the committee that the Budget Savings Tracker would be brought to the committee every quarter, to ensure adequate scrutiny.

Comments and questions were as follows:

- Concerns were expressed regarding what was felt to be above average pay increases for public sector employees and that subsequently, the Budget Savings Tracker would need to be reviewed as a result of this decision. It was highlighted to Members that the report was subject to change and funding from central government and through monitoring of spending, it would be adjusted accordingly.
- Regarding Adult Services, Members highlighted that 42.29% of savings were in this Directorate, and the concentration of amber categories also fell under Adult Services. On whether these savings would be particularly difficult to achieve, It was highlighted that the largest part of the council's budget was in Adult Services, therefore this was a direct correlation. Members were reassured that a number of benchmarking exercises had been undertaken in Adult Services to ensure the development of cost-effective solutions.
- It was queried if savings would be monitored through any Combined County Authority (CCA) arrangements in the future. It was highlighted to Members



that the CCA would have its own governance structure, and therefore would be scrutinised independently of Lancashire County Council.

- Regarding Education and Children's Services, it was queried if the 'Use of Resettlement Grant Income' service (reference ECS003) was ringfenced to young people new to the country and how this linked overall. Members were informed that more information on this would be circulated to the Board after the meeting.
- Members were informed that virements were not easily achievable anymore, instead it was explained that savings were investigated to determine if these were a one off or permanent reduction and was a piece of work the Finance team was working on.
- Members requested that a comparison be included in the Budget Savings Tracker along with more narrative on key savings to monitor progress. It was confirmed that this would be included in the next report to the Scrutiny Management Board.
- It was explained to the Board that 'ECS005 - Funding MIT advisers through central schools block' saving under Education and Children's Services could no longer be funded and therefore, was in the red category of the report. Further information on the reasons for this were requested.
- Regarding Appendix A, it was felt the table listed as 'all county council services' was too broad a description and it was queried what all council services referred to. It was acknowledged that more narrative was needed to reflect what was captured under this heading, but essentially it referred to services that affected all of the council e.g. in a cross-cutting way., The terminology would be reviewed for future reports.

Resolved: That the report be considered.

6. The County Council's Financial Position - 2023/24 Outturn

The Chair welcomed Noel O'Neill, Interim Director of Finance and Commerce, Kate Lee, Head of Service Financial Management (Operational, and County Councillor Alan Vincent, Cabinet Member for Resources, HR and Property (Deputy Leader) to the meeting to present the report on The County Council's Financial Position – 2023/24 Outturn.

It was highlighted to the Board that the report notes the council overspent by £5.22 million but that the balances were robust despite this. A significant factor in the overspend was reported to be due to the volatile market on recyclates as well as agency staff costs and integrated school transport costs. It was further highlighted that due to continued monitoring and good financial scrutiny, the overspend had been managed and fell throughout the year. Members were further made aware that there was a positive balance on school reserves in Lancashire. Many other local authority areas had negative balances in this regard due to increasing pressures of SEND provision.

Comments and Questions were as follows:



- One member queried whether the individual Scrutiny committees could be given a similar report for the purpose of reviewing those savings that were marked as amber to provide a more detailed level of scrutiny. It was acknowledged that the scrutiny committees, rather than the Board should carry out such tasks as part of the scrutiny work, but that presenting financial reports such as these would not be necessary.
- On the relationship between the school reserves balance and how SEND provision was budgeted for, it was confirmed that the Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee would be reviewing SEND matters as part of reports due to come to the September meeting.

Resolved: That the report be considered.

7. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24

The Board was presented with the draft Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report for 2023/24 which would be presented to Full Council on 17 October 2024 and published on the council's website. The Chair thanked the scrutiny support officers for their work in supporting the function.

Resolved: That the Draft Overview and Scrutiny Report for 2023/24 be approved.

8. Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes 2024/25

The Board was presented with the Work Programmes for the Scrutiny Management Board and the four scrutiny committees for 2024/25.

It was requested that agreement in principle be given to the Community, Cultural and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee to establish an evidence day or task group to further investigate the partnership working topic scheduled for March 2025. It was noted that any such arrangement would need to be mindful of the upcoming pre-election period in March 2025 to ensure the work is completed in a timely manner. It was suggested if an evidence day/task group materialises that the terms of reference is shared with the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board in the first instance.

Resolved: That the Scrutiny Management Board:

- (i) Scrutiny Management Board's own work programme and those of the four scrutiny committees for 2024/25 be approved.
- (ii) Request to establish an evidence day or task group to further investigate the partnership working topic in principle, be agreed.
- (iii) Update on the activity of the Political Governance Working Group be noted.



9. Request from Full Council - Mental Health in the Construction Industry

The Chair presented a report which outlined a Notice of Motion from the Full Council meeting held on 23 May 2024 relating to Mental Health in the Construction Industry. The Motion requested that the Scrutiny Management Board consider how to proceed and it was suggested that a rapporteur be appointed to investigate the matter further.

The Board agreed with this suggestion and, in his absence and subject to his agreement, County Councillor John Fillis was nominated to be appointed as the rapporteur on this matter.

Resolved: That, subject to his agreement, County Councillor John Fillis be appointed as rapporteur on behalf of the Scrutiny Management Board to carry out an investigation into the topic of Mental Health in the Construction Industry.

10. Councillor Support Steering Group - Constitution, Membership, Terms of Reference, and Recent Activity

The Chair presented a report of the Councillor Support Steering Group, including its Constitution and Terms of Reference and an outline of activity from its recent meeting. It was noted that there was a request to increase the size of membership of the steering group from 9 members to 11 members.

Resolved: That the;

- (i) Increase in membership of the Councillor Support Steering Group from 9 to 11 members be approved.
- (ii) Membership, and Terms of Reference for the Councillor Support Steering Group be noted.
- (iii) Report of the Councillor Support Steering Group be received.

11. Urgent Business

None

12. Date of Next Meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board be held on Tuesday 5 November 2024 at 2pm in Committee Room B – The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston.

H MacAndrew
Director of Law and Governance

County Hall
Preston

