

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT
BOARD
30 MARCH 2023**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR R B PARKER (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors T J N Smith (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J Brockway, M Brookes, P M Dilks, R J Kendrick, N H Pepper and A M Hall

Councillors: R D Butroid and M J Hill OBE attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes OBE (Chief Executive), Andrew Crookham (Executive Director Resources), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Andy Fenn (Head of Facilities Management), Donna Fryer (Head of Portfolio and Resources, IMT), Andrew McLean (Assistant Director - Transformation), Clare Rowley (Head of Transformation), Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer) and Stuart Wright (Contract Manager)

116 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I D Carrington, C S Macey and E W Strengiel.

117 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

118 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2023

RESOLVED:

That minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

119 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman advised that he had attended the last meeting of the Executive on 7 March 2023 to present the comments from the Board on the revenue and capital budget

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monitoring reports and the quarter three performance against the corporate plan. In relation to the Board's comments on the revenue budget monitoring and the underspend in Children's Services, the Executive was informed there had been some additional in year funding allocated from the government which had resulted in the underspend, however, there was still some planned use of reserves by Children's Services. With regards to the home to school transport overspend, the Executive was advised that the pressures identified this year were also likely to impact on the following year's budget and the volatility of the marketplace meant that some of these pressures were outside of the Council's control. The transformation programme for home to school transport had over delivered on the projected savings but these had been absorbed by inflationary pressures.

With respect to the Board's comments on the quarter three performance against the corporate plan and the debate that took place on waste and recycling, the Executive identified that there was a need for the Council to have its own local targets moving forward in addition to the ones that were reported to the government. In relation to complaints and the Board's suggestion that the Audit Committee should receive more frequent reporting, the Chief Executive confirmed that this was being taken forward, with reporting possibly being provided on a quarterly basis in the future. Lastly, with regard to school performance, the Executive was advised that Children's Services continued to work with the Regional Director in relation to academies, and work had been undertaken with members and district councils to clarify roles and responsibilities in this area. However, as schools were inspected on a three to five year cycle, movement against the targets for these two measures would be slow and not seen quarter by quarter.

Executive Councillor Announcements

The Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) reported that members would be aware of the announcement on the previous day by the Government, of the proposal to create a transit camp at RAF Scampton. If, and when, the decision was made, West Lindsey District Council had indicated that they would challenge that decision. In the meantime, all relevant organisations were working together to determine how best to manage this situation, if it became a reality.

120 CONSIDERATION OF CALL-INS

None had been received.

121 CONSIDERATION OF COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION

None had been received.

122 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Head of Transformation presented a report to the Board which provided an update on the Transformation Programme. The report provided a high-level project overview and included details around benefits and savings that had either been delivered or were planned. The governance arrangements for the programme were re-iterated in order to provide assurance that each project had its own project board and project leads. Appendix A of the report provided further details in relation to each individual project within the Transformation Programme including current status and progress against each milestone. It was noted that none of the projects or programmes were 'red' or 'red/amber' status.

It was highlighted that two projects were listed as an 'amber' status which were the Business World Redesign and Smarter Working, however successful delivery of these projects was still feasible. In relation to the Business World Redesign project, this was listed as amber due to the complexity of the project, but it still remained on track to 'go live' on 1 April 2023. A further update would be provided to the Board in June. In terms of the Smarter Working project, a focused update would be brought to the Board at its September 2023 meeting.

Areas to note that were listed as 'green' included the Corporate Support Optimisation which had delivered savings of £1.8m but there had been a challenge in the change to the way support functions were delivered, but it continued to be on track for full implementation by March 2024.

During discussion of the report, the following points were raised:

Educational Travel

- It was confirmed that this was also known as Home to School Transport.
- Clarification was sought in relation to the budget for educational transport as well as the average daily cost, and the Board was advised that this was around £46 million per year. In terms of a daily cost, this equated to the Council spending approximately £235,000 per day on school transport. This figure included travel for children and young people to mainstream schools, as well as more bespoke transport options for children with special educational needs, which may include passenger assistance for those with more complex needs.
- Work on alternative travel solutions was under way which included personal transport budgets, reviewing the eligibility process, and greater use of business intelligence data.
- The green/amber status of this project was particularly in relation to the financial elements.
- It was queried to what extent the costs varied year on year, and the Board was advised that the biggest variation was in relation to transport to special schools. The numbers of children on buses travelling to mainstream schools did not fluctuate significantly. Budgets were able to be set fairly accurately in the January/February as GP data was used for pupil place planning which enabled very effective planning to take place.
- The implementation of the new IT system was bringing together data from different locations which enabled better planning to take place.

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Children in Care

- It was confirmed that the County Council did operate a number of children's homes within the County, and Robin House was the first of an additional three children's homes that were to be owned and operated by the County Council. These additional homes were being provided in response to the increase in children that were being placed out of county in order to meet their needs. In-house services were much more cost effective and enabled the child to remain closer to their family.
- It was queried whether the opening of these additional homes would mean that children that had been placed out of county would now be brought back. The Board was advised that there were between 80-90 children currently placed out of county (the exact number would be confirmed outside of the meeting). Monthly meetings took place where these placements would be discussed and whether it would be appropriate to bring any of the children back into county.
- In terms of the link to the Corporate Plan, it was queried how happiness was assessed, and it was explained that the 'Signs of Safety' framework had been adopted.

Devolution

- The Chief Executive confirmed that Lincolnshire had been invited to enter into discussions with government regarding a devolution deal, and it was noted that a meeting would take place after the elections in May 2023.
- Members were reminded that it was only upper tier authorities which were able to negotiate with government, however there was an expectation that there would be engagement with district councils. It was noted that currently, the 10 council leaders of Greater Lincolnshire had all signed up to the deal. It was acknowledged that there were still some governance issues that needed to be resolved.
- The Board was also advised that benefits of a devolution deal would not just be limited to additional funding, it was also likely that there would be greater powers. However, one of the main benefits was that those areas with a devolution deal would be prioritised by government.
- It was confirmed that there was a requirement for a consultation, however what form this should take was not particularly well defined. There were consultations taking place in other areas which would be monitored closely. If there was a decision to go ahead with a deal, the results of any consultation would be taken into account.

People Strategy Implementation

- This was currently listed with 'green' status and was on track for successful delivery as scheduled.

Business World Re-design

- This was still due to 'go live' on 1 April 2023 as scheduled.
- In relation to testing, it was reported that extensive parallel pay roll testing had been carried out over the past 18 months. During this testing it was found that there had been £468 across the entire schools payroll which did not reconcile, following which testing was agreed to be stopped as all identified discrepancies were found to be down to user error and not system error.

- There had been significant testing around how absences and pensions data was managed, which had been successful. An additional run on flexible payments had also been carried out.
- The final data migration was due to be completed. It was expected there would be minimal issues.
- It was expected that all employees would be paid correctly in April. There may be a time lag before staff would be able to start inputting again, which would only affect payments such as expenses or overtime. All salary data had been entered. The main issues had arisen around complex absences.

Corporate Support Services Contract Implementation

- It was noted that this project was scheduled to take two years due to the challenges around the Serco contract. This was a significant piece of work and would aim to provide a more consistent resource for the rest of the organisation. It was noted that there was still work to be developed and further details could be included in a future update.

Corporate Support Optimisation

- This project would be looking at the end to end processes including aiming to reduce duplication and identifying where manual processes could be optimised.

Smarter Working

- This was currently listed as 'amber' status. The Smarter Working policy was consistently reviewed in terms of services. A review of the property estate would be taking place, with a particular focus on the Lincoln Campus.
- In relation to work-life balance, it was queried whether any benefits of this could be seen within the organisation and if any data was captured on the wider life effects of this policy. It was noted that staff surveys were conducted during the year, and the vast majority of the workforce were positive about the initiative. However, it was agreed that it would be a good idea to include more qualitative measures and was something that could be included in future surveys.
- It was noted that the deadline of 2026/27 was based on the savings profile and the expected savings being realised from the closure of buildings. The business case for the future use of the Lincoln campus was currently being worked through.
- Officers advised that the work around the localities was a little more complicated, as the frontline staff working in the localities worked in a more flexible way.

RESOLVED

1. That assurance be given to the progress and outcomes of the Transformation Programme.
2. That a further update be received in September 2023, including a focused overview of Smarter Working.

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Consideration was given to a report which updated the Board on the performance of the Property Services Contract with VINCI facilities at the end of the seventh year of the contract with an interim report for year eight.

The Contract Manager – Corporate Property introduced the report which included updates on Contractors Performance, Service Manager’s Assessment, Health and Safety, Finance, Key Performance Indicators for Year seven and Year eight to date, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) projects, Capital Receipts, recovering from the impact of Covid, VMOST and Continuous Improvement.

During discussion, the following was highlighted:

- Members were pleased to see the information around positive interventions included in the report. It was commented that this corporate structure allowed the people on the ground to take decisions and demonstrated a very healthy corporate position.
- It was noted that electricity prices had doubled in October 2022, and it was queried what processes were undertaken to ensure that new buildings were sustainable in terms of energy use. The Board was advised that work was underway to reduce the carbon footprint of new buildings and increase energy efficiency. Consideration was also given to the carbon footprint of the materials used in the building itself, as well as including LED’s, solar panels and air source heat pumps. However, there could be a conflict between reduction of carbon and revenue costs but there was a process for calculating the carbon footprint of a building, but there were limitations in relation to the budget available, which would be taken into consideration.
- The new Lincoln St Christopher’s school building would be up to 60% more efficient. There was an aim to deliver all the SEND schools as programmed, but there were budget constraints. In order to mitigate budget pressures, all buildings would be capable of having solar panels, so they could be added at a later date if necessary, once budgets for all projects had been finalised.
- In terms of KPI performance, it was queried how important those tasks were which did not meet contractual timescales. It was noted that these were contract failures rather than compliance failures, and the contracts did have stretch targets, so these would have been tasks which were completed outside of the required timescales.

RESOLVED

That assurance was provided on the performance of the Property Services Contract.

Consideration was given to a report to provide the Board with a high-level view to show progress on highlighted projects being commissioned through IT. The Board was advised that there were currently three projects which were listed as an 'amber' status.

During discussion of the report, the following was highlighted:

- The key focus had been on how projects were approved and prioritised, and there was now an improved process in place.
- Members commented that they found the report very helpful, in particular, the use of the term 'path to green'.
- Work was underway to identify areas where a cloud first strategy could be used, as there were a number of legacy systems. Work was underway with the service areas that used these applications to ensure they were brought up to a more modern standard.
- In terms of the project to swap out desktops to laptops, it was queried what the benefits were of this, and how would they be measured. It was noted that the main benefit was enabling staff to be able to work from any location.
- It was queried whether the STAMP Replacement project would close as scheduled on 31 March 2023. The Board was advised that this system went live on 19 December 2022, and some minor issues on the snagging list were currently being worked through. However, members were assured that the user experience was not affected.

RESOLVED

1. That assurance had been given on the progress of the highlighted projects currently being commissioned through IT.
2. That a further update be received at the 28 September 2023 meeting.

125 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

Consideration was given to a report by the Chairman of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, which set out the recent work and planned work programme of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, as referenced on pages 80 – 85 of the agenda pack.

It was reported that two further items had been added to the agenda for the meeting on 16 June 2023, these were the Team Around the Child Annual Report for 2022/23 and the Young Carers Annual Report for 2022/23. In addition, an item on the Review of Regulated Services had been added to the agenda for the 21 July meeting and reports on the new Lincolnshire Secure Children's Home had been provisionally added to the 21 July and 1 December meeting for pre-decision scrutiny.

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The Chairman of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee was thanked for the comments made around foster carers, and welcomed the recent decision to increase fostering allowances.

It was queried whether there was anything which could be done to influence outcomes for children in academies. The Board was advised that officers did provide significant support to academies, and worked with the Regional Director for Schools.

Consideration was also given to a report by the Chairman of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee, which set out the recent work and planned work programme of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee, as referenced on pages 86 – 94 of the agenda pack.

In response to a question around road safety, it was noted that the data for Lincolnshire now seemed to be heading in the right direction.

RESOLVED

(1) That the Board was satisfied with activity undertaken since 15 December 2022 by:

- (a) The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; and
- (b) The Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

(2) That the Board was satisfied with the planned work programmes of:

- (a) The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee; and
- (b) The Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

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The Board noted the work programme.

The meeting closed at 11.42 am