

Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 12 March 2024
Present	Councillors James Butcher, Laura Davison, Alan Martin, Connor McConville (Chair) and John Wing.
Apologies for Absence	None.
Officers Present:	Gavin Edwards (Senior Performance Officer), Ewan Green (Director of Strategy and Resources), Jake Hamilton (Committee Services Officer), Jonathan Hicks (Governance, Performance & Risk Manager) and Rod Lean (Chief Officer - Place & Growth)
Others Present:	Councillor Tim Prater.

24. **Declarations of interest**

Councillors James Butcher and John Wing both declared voluntary interests as Directors of Oportunitas.

25. **Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023-24**

Gavin Edwards, Senior Performance Officer introduced the item.

The report provided an update on the Council's performance for the third quarter of the year covering 1 October – 31 December 2023. The report enables the Council to assess progress against the approved key performance indicators arising from the Council's new Corporate Action Plan.

Following the Senior Performance Officers introduction, members raised the following points:

- As per paragraph 2.4 of the report, Quality Homes, and Infrastructure. What is the council doing to manage the gap between the need for affordable homes and the availability? – Members were advised that this question would be referred to the Housing team for clarification.

- As per KPI 'Affordable homes delivered by the Council and its partners' in appendix 1. Members noted that the target is shown as green, however, the council is currently not on target – Officers clarified that this was an error within the appendix.
- KPI 'Number of new priority play areas provided by the Council' as per positive community leadership of appendix 1. Will the recent landlips within the district impact the play areas? – This question will be referred to the service area for clarification.
- As per appendix 1, A thriving Environment, 'Percentage of street lighting within the district converted to LED'. If a number of streetlights are removed from the programme, will this impact the Councils target? – This question has been referred to Fred Miller, Transportation Manager.
- As per appendix 1, Quality Homes and Infrastructure, 'Average number of rough sleepers in the period'. Members expressed their concerns about the numbers reported and asked whether the cuts by Kent County Council (KCC) had an effect on the performance? – Members were advised of some of the potential reasons as to the increase, i.e. the increase in attractiveness of the area, cost of living increases, and sustainability of tenancy agreements.
- Members commented on the decrease in 'average number of households in Bed and Breakfast Accommodations.'
- As per KPI '% food premises broadly compliant (equivalent to 3 rating)', appendix 1, Positive Community Leadership. As the Council is consistently achieving its target, should the target (3 rating) be increased? – Officers confirmed the KPI target (3 rating) is set by the Food Standards Agency.
- KPI 'Number of community safety events held, and projects delivered (public)' in appendix 1. As this target has improved, members asked whether an additional KPI, measuring engagement levels could be introduced – Officers advised they would take this feedback on board for future consideration.
- Further to the above KPI, members had positive comments about the volume of activity being delivered, in relation to the increase in Council Tax.
- Members noted that the council is not on track to meet the 70% KPI target for the 'Total funding allocated from the Romney Marsh Business Hub grant support scheme', as seen in appendix 1, due to the number of applications received. Members requested clarity on the number of applications received outside of the grant – Rod Lean, Chief Officer of Place and Growth advised members that the grant was introduced to incentivise businesses to locate into the Hub. The Council plans to review this grant programme, with the aim to consider other ways of utilising the funding in the Romney Marsh area.
- Members noted that despite staff training, the council is not achieving its 100% (Monthly) KPI target on both 'Percentage of data breaches assessed within 72 hours to decide if it is reportable to the ICO' and 'Percentage of reportable data breaches that were submitted to the ICO within 72 hours'. Members asked for officers' thoughts on whether these KPI's could be measured differently, so that the council is not

consistently underachieving – Officers advised the council has recently gone through a transformation programme and as part of that a new team Governance, Information and Risk team has been setup and will be reviewing processes and performance, with a greater emphasis on how the council manages data breaches.

- As per KPI ‘Number of Breaches issued under the Public Space Protection Order’ in appendix 1. Members asked as to whether the council could consider a different method of reporting this data as currently this KPI is reflected as red due to one notice being issued, however, Members explained that this could be conceived as a good outcome – Officers advised members that this suggestion could be explored. It was also noted that officers are looking to work more closely with service areas, so they can better understand the data and how that meets the service ambition and aims of the corporate plan.
- Members asked whether this committee will have another chance to provide feedback to officers regarding next year’s KPI, before they are presented to Cabinet – Officers confirmed that further updates will be provided.

Proposed by Councillor Alan Martin,
Seconded by Council John Wing; and,

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note report C/23/92; and,**
- 2. To note the performance information for quarter 3, 2023-24 in appendix one.**

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).

26. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Update

Rod Lean, Chief Officer for Place and Growth introduced the item.

The report outlined the activity to date regarding the UKSPF and REPF programmes, giving an overview of the schemes, activities being implemented, and outputs being achieved.

Following the Chief Officer of Place & Growth’s introduction, Members raised the following points:

- Members enquired as to how both the UKSPF and REPF were going? – Officers confirmed that both programmes were performing well. Several of the projects were noted i.e. Mobile Pantry, UKSPF Skills, Home Essential Fund, Romney Marsh Coastal Destination, and the Transport project.

- In relation to the tables and targets within the report, what duration of time were these measured and when were they set? – Officers confirmed the data in the tables were up to September 2023 (officers advised members that further data can be provided). Targets were set during the initial development of plans prior to the projects being confirmed.
- Members noted the good work from the Mobile Food Pantry Project and advised that the project has also just started to operate in Chariton.
- Members asked for clarification as to whether any of the other food related projects had started i.e. education, cooking classes? – The Mobile Food Pantry Project will be providing demonstrations from Spring 24, however, to date no classes have been provided. The Council is working with East Kent College, aiming to implement 6-week classes to start around September 2024 and another one in January 2025.
- In relation to the UKSPF Skills proposal, will all the funding be channelled into organisations, or will the Council be retaining some of the funding for skill fairs, etc? – Officers explained that essentially there are two elements to the proposal. One; funding allocated to organisations for upskilling and two; that a bespoke grant scheme be developed and administered by the council to support industry specific and bespoke training programmes.
- Members asked that they be more involved in providing ideas and feedback to officers for any unallocated grant funding.
- Members enquired as to how the REPF; Transport project was developing? – Officers confirmed that discussions were ongoing regarding finding a sustainable fast track transport system to enable local Romney Marsh residents to access training, work, and hospital appointments for example.
- How was the REPF criteria set? – This was set by Central Government and the Council.
- Members asked for clarification on the Rural Grant Scheme and the amount that can be applied/awarded per project? – It was clarified that grants can vary from £3,000 to £30,000 per annum, depending on the scale of the application, long-term impacts, and wider benefits for the local rural economy.
- Members asked whether the funding had been evenly distributed across the district? – Officers confirmed the current/proposed projects are geographically spread and that an up-to-date list of projects can be provided..
- Members asked as whether the grant panel had local ward member representation? – Officers confirmed that the panel had member representation.
- Members enquired as to why both the Romney Marsh Coastal Destination Project and Transport Project were picked? – Officers confirmed that the Romney Marsh Coastal Destination Project was an important project for tourism and the local economy. The Transport Project has been considered for several years by the Romney Marsh Partnership, as fast transport links is a key barrier to access training, jobs, and hospital appointments for the Romney Marsh residents.

- Members asked that they be involved with future conversations around re-allocation of funds, so that they have a chance to provide feedback.
- Members asked that the item return to the Committee towards the end of the project.

Proposed by Councillor Laura Davison,
Seconded by Councillor Connor McConville; and,

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note report: OS/23/11; and,**
- 2. To note progress to date from both UKSPF and REPF programmes.**

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).