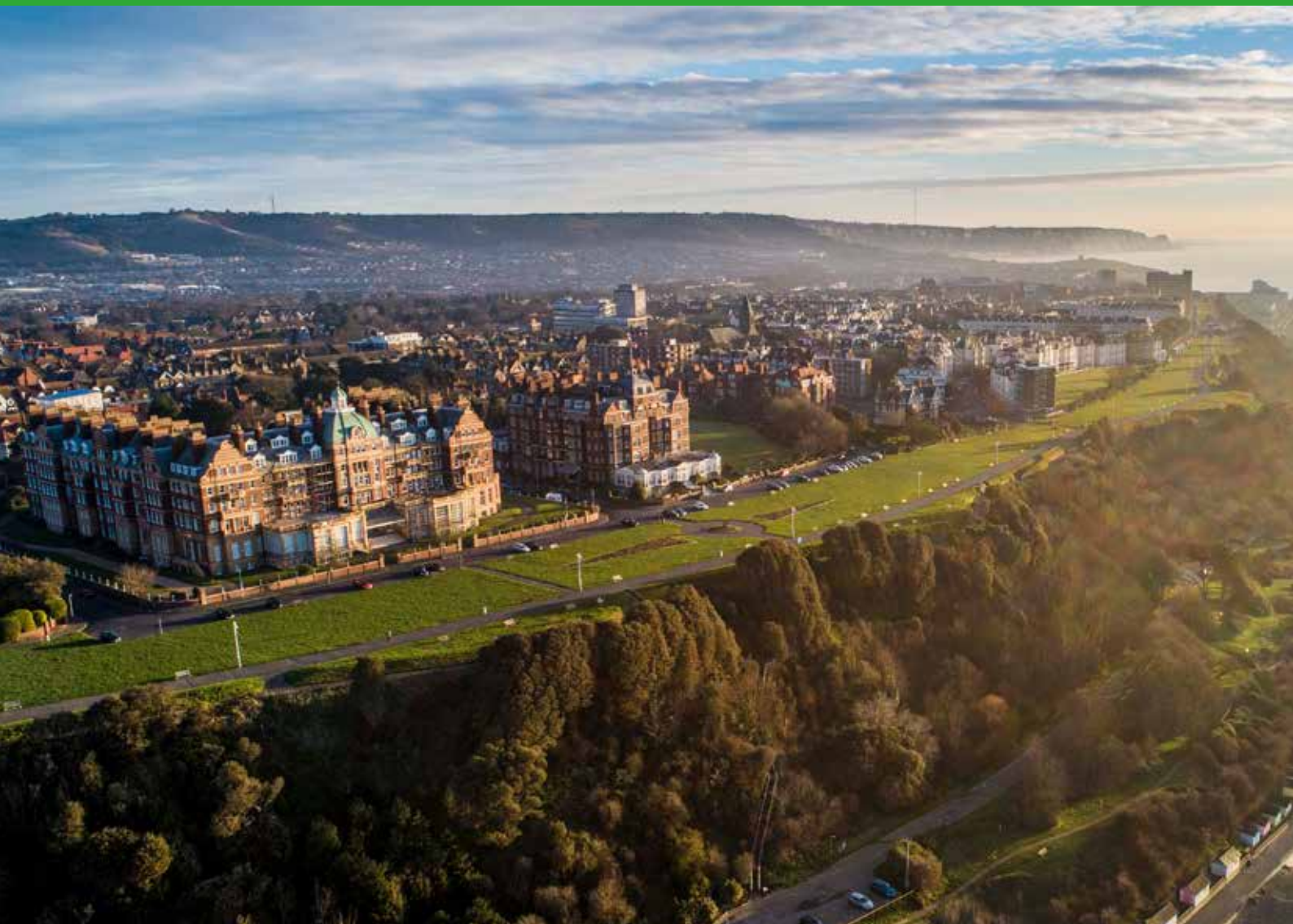


# Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024–25

Folkestone & Hythe District Council



## Foreword by Overview & Scrutiny Chair Cllr Laura Davison

A lot of work has gone into sessions of the Overview and Scrutiny committee for the council year 2024/25. I'm grateful to committee members and officers for the time and commitment they have put in to ensuring the committee works well and has a meaningful role to play. This year there have been three important highlights. The session we held early on in the year focussing on the new EU Entry Exit system was a really key opportunity to bring together parish councils, KCC officers and the district council to discuss potential concerns about changes to the system post Brexit. In the autumn we focussed on a huge issue for our residents - the quality of our bathing water and flooding risks across the district. We made sure members of the public had the chance to send in questions to this session and we pressed to make sure we had representatives from the Environment Agency, Southern Water and the Internal Drainage Board there on the night. The work of the committee has led to more engagement and practical action on trying to address the risks to our bays and beaches - jewels in the district's crown. Finally, a sub-group of our committee spent time scrutinising proposals to enter into a collaboration agreement to enable progress on Otterpool Park. This remains on our radar as we look forward to the 2025/6 session.

Aside from these highlights we have continued to receive updates on important projects like the new corporate plan, Folca, Folkestone A Brighter Future, environmental initiatives and had important input through our finance sub-committee into the budget process. We have continued with regular Cabinet member question sessions, and this has proved to be useful in giving opportunities to focus on particular aspects of work - for example giving the first opportunity for the leader of the

council to speak about local government re-organisation in a public setting.

In November the committee sat in its important function as the Crime and Disorder scrutiny panel, overseeing community safety work across the district. The committee has also considered resolutions referred to us by full council, including on improving our approach to boosting the local economy through improved local procurement contracts. We have been particularly delighted that a motion to set up a youth council which came before us has now been implemented in the form of a twice-yearly forum where the young people involved set the agenda. This is a great step forward and one we want to see continue in future.

As committee chair, I was expecting our committee to be abolished with the implementation of the new committee system in the new council year. However, the Cabinet system is being retained so the committee will continue to exist next year. As a result, residents and officers have been asked to propose topics for the Scrutiny programme for the forthcoming year. The current committee is in the process of analysing these and I am sure the new committee will enjoy engaging in the next range of topics in the forthcoming year.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this important process and to all the officers, committee members and guests who have been involved with the work of the committee during the year, particularly Jake in Committee Services for his diligence and to my vice chair Cllr John Wing who has always been willing to step in as needed.

**Councillor Laura Davison**

*Chair of the Folkestone and Hythe Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

F&HDC decisions are largely made by the council leader and cabinet under a scheme of delegation set out in the council's constitution. The OSC is made up of non-cabinet members and its membership is politically balanced, drawing on the input from all parties that make up the council. Members scrutinise and review the council's decisions, considers how it makes policy to shape the resulting policy framework, examines how the council performs against key targets and indicators in deploying its budget, and investigates specific issues affecting the district.

The committee can:

- Question cabinet's decisions
- Make its own recommendations to Cabinet
- Ask the cabinet and other decision-makers to reconsider decisions
- Refer a decision to the Full Council (known as a call-in)

Call-in usually refers to key decisions, i.e. those with a significant impact on finance or local communities, it is a powerful tool in supporting local democracy.

Overview & Scrutiny has met nine times during the 2024/25 year and considered 26 items. A summary is given below:

**28 May 2024**

## **FOLCA Project Update:**

The item provided members with an overview of the current status on the Folca project including an update on the proposals for a town centre medical centre.

**Members resolved to note the presentation and asked that community aspects be considered, and updates provided when the item returns to the committee.**

## **Procurement Plan (Local Suppliers):**

The report provided members with an overview of section 5 of the procurement plan regarding local businesses and SME participation. It explained how procurement has supported the goals of the plan, within the constraints of the regulations and the council's procurement structure.

**Members resolved to receive and note the report, but also requested that the item return to the committee in due course to re-address the issues raised in the motion from council (<https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=17594>).**

**23 July 2024**

**Cabinet Member update:**

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Tim Prater, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance and Councillor Gary Fuller, Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement and Accountability attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide members with a cabinet member update.

**Actions to protect the council's operations against a cyber-attack:**

The report provided an overview of the security and processes that Folkestone and Hythe District Council have in place to mitigate the impact of a cyber-attack.

**Members resolved to receive and note report: OS/24/02.**

**24 September 2024**

**Cabinet Member update:**

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Polly Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Transport, Regulatory Services and Building Control provided members with a cabinet member update.

**Flooding, Poor Water Quality and Internal Drainage Board:**

Members received a joint presentation (see attached) on Inland Flooding and Bathing Water Quality facilitated by Folkestone & Hythe District Council Officers, with external organisations, Southern Water, The Environmental Agency, Romney Marsh Area Internal Drainage Board, and Kent County Council.

### **LUF Update:**

Members received a presentation providing updates on the programme's timeline, FABF programme, public engagement, and programme risks.

### **Creation of a Task and Finish Group to support delivery of Otterpool Park:**

The report set out proposals for the formation of a Task and Finish Group to support the delivery of Otterpool Park, including the draft Terms of Reference, and invites nominations for the Membership and Chair of the Group.

#### **Members resolved to:**

- **To receive and note report OS/24/07,**
- **That Councillors Laura Davison, Bridget Chapman, Alan Martin, James Butcher and John Wing be appointed; and,**
- **That Councillor Laura Davison is elected as Chair of the Task and Finish Group,**
- **To note the draft Terms of Reference for agreement at the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group**

### **Cabinet Member update:**

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Stephen Scoffham, Cabinet Member for Climate, Environmental and Biodiversity, and Councillor Jeremy Speakman, Cabinet Member for Assets and Operations provided members with a cabinet member update.

### **Corporate Plan – Consultation Responses:**

The report summarised the responses to the council’s consultation on the new Corporate Plan themes and priorities and detailed the next steps towards approving a new Corporate Plan in February 2025.

#### **Members resolved to:**

- **To receive and note the summary of consultation responses and the results of the focus groups (Appendices 3 and 4).**
- **To note the Working Group’s recommended updates to the new Corporate Plan themes and guiding principles and to provide comments on the amended version (Appendix 5).**

### **Update on Council’s Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Work:**

The report summarised the council’s work on climate change for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), focusing on the District-wide Carbon Plan and the Sustainable Futures Forum. The report provided an update to the report of 25 April 2023 (ref: OS/22/12).

#### **Members resolved to receive and note report OS/24/09.**

### **Green Grant Programme:**

The report set out the proposals for Folkestone & Hythe District Council to utilise £250,000 allocated for environmental projects for a new green grant programme. The scheme would support the priorities and objectives of the council’s draft District-wide Carbon Plan.

#### **Members resolved:**

- **To note the establishment of the Folkestone & Hythe Green Grant Programme and approve the proposed process and criteria for providing grants to local community groups and businesses as set out below.**
- **To note the proposed utilisation of £250,000 to operate the Folkestone & Hythe Green Grant Programme.**
- **To note the proposed establishment of a decision panel to make decisions on grant applications as set out in paragraph 3.8.**



### Cabinet Member update:

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Mike Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Community and Collaboration and Councillor Rebecca Shoob, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness provided members with his Cabinet Member Update.

### Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership Plan 24-27

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on local authorities, police, and key partners to reduce crime, disorder, and antisocial behaviour in their communities by working in partnership through the creation of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). Under this legislation the responsible authorities are required to implement Community Safety Plans.

The Committee reviewed the new 24-27 CSP plan and received an update from the CSP on their latest work.

Members received a presentation in the following order for each of the Community Safety Partners present (slides attached): Folkestone & Hythe District Council (Introduction, Community Safety, and Safer Streets), Kent Police, Kent County Council and Shepway Home-Start.

#### Members resolved:

- **To receive and note report (OS/24/11), and to note the content of the report and accompanying CSP plan; and,**
- **To note the plan will be taken to full Council on 29th January 2025 for approval.**

### **Cabinet Member update:**

In accordance with the Constitution, Councillor Jim Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy, provided members with his Cabinet Member Update.

### **Creation of Folkestone and Hythe Youth Forum**

The report set out the proposal for the creation of a Youth Forum for the district.

#### **Members resolved:**

- **To receive and note report OS/24/12; and,**
- **To agree to recommend to Full Council that a youth forum for the district is created as detailed in the report.**

### **Otterpool Park: Strategic Direction, Funding & Delivery FY 25/26:**

The report set out the progress made by Otterpool Park LLP (OPLLP) over the last 18 months, against the recommendations that were made in Report Number C/23/50.

The report included detail on delivery and financial risks for FHDC and outlined the budget proposals for the financial year 2025/26 to deliver the ongoing program of work set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report.

#### **Members resolved:**

- **To receive and note report OS/24/13; and,**
- **To consider the presentation and provide feedback in order to inform a report to Cabinet.**



**18 February 2025**

### **Cabinet Member update:**

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Rich Holgate, the Cabinet Member for Place Plan, Heritage, Tourism and District Economy provided members with his Cabinet Member Update.

### **Procurement Plan (Local Suppliers):**

Following the last OSC meeting ([link](#)), feedback indicated that the previous procurement report did not fully address the member's motion ([link](#)) regarding local businesses / SMEs and their participation in public procurement.

In response, report OS/24/79 outlined the steps taken since then, including the engagement with neighbouring authorities and the exploration of best practices, such as the Preston City Council Model. It also provided an update on the current measures to improve data collection, address regulatory frameworks, and ensure alignment with objectives.

### **Review of Private Sector Housing Enforcement:**

Following the opposition business heard at full council on [02 October 2024](#). The presentation reviewed private sector housing enforcement and considered a selective licensing scheme. The presentation also outlined the work undertaken by the private sector housing team, the forthcoming Renters Right Bill and its implementation and considerations on selective licensing.

**Members resolved to receive and note all reports at the above meeting.**

**11 March 2025 (Special Meeting)**

### **Appointment of the Chair of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

Members were asked to note the Labour Groups representative and to elect a Chair of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

#### **Members resolved:**

- **To note the nomination from the Labour Group to appoint Councillor Chapman as the Labour representative to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee; and,**
- **To appoint Councillor X as Chair of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee.**

### Transparency of the Planning Process:

This item will set out how the Council encourages and provides public participation in the planning process and the steps already taken to ensure the process is transparent and that Members are kept abreast of relevant planning issues in their ward and across the district.

**Members will be asked to receive and note the item.**

### Equality and Diversity Policy:

This report will present the draft Equality and Diversity Policy for 2025-29 due for consideration by Cabinet on 21st May 2025.

**Members will be asked to resolve the following:**

- **To receive and note the report.**
- **To consider and feedback on how the equality objectives set out as part of the policy on pages 10 and 11 of appendix 2 are implemented and monitored.**

### New Anti-Social Behaviour, Public Spaces Protection Order:

Following Cabinet on 26 March 2025; Cabinet resolved to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the 6 week consultation process.

This report is due to set out proposals to implement a new anti-social behaviour Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO).

**Members will be asked to resolve the following:**

- **To receive and note report OS/24/16; and,**
- **To provide any comments and feedback on the proposed new ‘Anti-Social Behaviour Public Spaces Protection Order’ to be considered in the public consultation exercise.**

### OSC Annual Report:

This report sets out the work that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee have completed during 2024/2025.

**Members will be asked to receive and note report OS/24/15**

## OSC Work Programme 2025/26

This report sets out a proposed work programme for Overview and Scrutiny work for the municipal year 25/26.

### **Members will be asked to resolve the following:**

- **To receive and note report OS/24/14;**
- **To adopt and implement the Scrutiny work programme, set out in paragraph 1.3 of the report, for the municipal year 25/26; and,**
- **To note paragraph 1.4 of the report.**

## **Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

This Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was created in October 2020 to scrutinise the council's performance against key performance indicators (KPIs) and financial monitoring data against the budget. It makes recommendations to the main committee, where appropriate, which is also reported to Cabinet in support of their decision making.

The sub-committee comprises of five councillors who are drawn from the OSC membership.

### **Review of the year from Chair, Cllr Connor McConville**

It has been a privilege to continue to chair the Finance and Performance Committee for another year. The committee have had five very productive meetings throughout the municipal year and discussed a number of important agenda items. The Sub-Committee gives councillors the time to consider and analyse often sizable financial and performance-based reports and provides the opportunity to ask probing questions.

Just like OSC, the sub-committee does not exist to make decisions, instead it holds the council to account with regards to its budget process and overall performance. The Sub-Committee had very positive meetings with regards to setting the budget for 2025/26 and also looking the quarterly performance of the council both against agreed budgets and our Key Performance Indicators. Over the course of the sub committee's meetings a lot of discussions has taken place, and many points have been taken on board by both the finance and performance teams to continue to improve the operations of the council.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their time and dedication. Cllr Tim Prater, cabinet member for finance for attending the meetings to support his officer team. All the finance and performance management team members for their comprehensive reports and for presenting the quarterly updates. Finally, to all the committee services team for their continuous hard work.

### **Annual Performance Report 2023/24 and Draft KPIs 2024/25**

The report set out how the Council had delivered for local people in the district in 2023-24 in relation to the priorities documented within its Corporate Plan 'Creating Tomorrow Together' (2021-30) and presented amendments to Corporate Key Performance Indicators (CKPIs) that will be used to monitor progress during the 2024-25 year.

### **General Fund Revenue Provisional Outturn 2023/24**

The report summarised the 2023/24 provisional outturn position (subject to external audit) for the General Fund revenue expenditure compared to the approved budget for the council. Along with the provisional revenue outturn position, while the 2023/24 statutory accounts are currently being prepared for publication on the Council's website.

### **General Fund Capital Provisional Outturn 2023/24**

The report provided the provisional final outturn of the current financial position for the General Fund capital programme in 2023/24, based on expenditure to 31 March 2024, and identified variances compared to the latest approved budget.

### **Housing Revenue and Capital Provisional Outturn 2023/24**

The report summarised the 2023/24 provisional outturn position (subject to audit) for the HRA revenue expenditure and HRA capital programme compared to both the latest approved budget and quarter 3 projections.

**Members resolved to receive and note all reports at the above meeting.**

### **Quarter 1 Performance Report 2024-25:**

The report provided an update on the Council's performance for the first quarter of the year covering 1st April – 30th June 2024. The report enables the Council to assess progress against the approved key performance indicators arising from the Council's Corporate Action Plan.

### **General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring – 1st Quarter (Q1) 2024/25:**

The report set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at the end of the 1st Quarter (Q1) in 2024/25. The report provides Members with an overview of budget performance, including an overview of reserves and balances, to enable the Cabinet to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to the officers on the performance of those budgets. At the end of Quarter 1, there is a favourable end of the financial year projected position of £154k on the Council's revenue budget, of £19.4m. This position is based on activity as at 30th June 2024, projected trends in income and expenditure and changes to Council funding.

### **General Fund Capital Programme Budget Monitoring – 1st Quarter (Q1) 2024/25:**

The report provided an initial projection of the current financial position for the General Fund capital programme profiled for 2024/25, based on expenditure to 30 June 2024, and identifies variances compared to the latest approved budget. This report will be considered by the Cabinet on 25th September 2024.

### **HRA Budget Monitoring – Quarter 1 (Q1):**

The report provided a projection of the end of year financial position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue expenditure and HRA capital programme based on net expenditure to 30 June 2024.

### **Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24:**

The report reviewed the Council's treasury management activities for 2023/24, including the actual treasury management indicators. The report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Council is required to comply with both Codes through Regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

**Members resolved to receive and note all reports at the above meeting.**

### **Performance Report – Quarter 2 (Q2) 2024/25:**

The report provided an update on the Council’s performance for the second quarter of the year covering 1st July– 30th September 2024. The report enables the Council to assess progress against the approved key performance indicators arising from the Council’s Corporate Action Plan.

### **General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring – 2nd Quarter (Q2) 2024/25:**

The report set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at the end of the 2nd Quarter (Q2) in 2024/25. The report provides Members with an overview of budget performance, including an overview of reserves and balances, to enable the Cabinet take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to the officers on the performance of those budgets. At the end of Quarter 2, there is an unfavourable end of the financial year projected position of £61k on the Council’s revenue budget, of £19.5m. This position is based on activity at the end of September 2024, projected trends in income and expenditure and changes to Council funding.

### **General Fund Capital Programme Budget Monitoring 2024/25 – 2nd Quarter (Q2) 2024/25:**

The monitoring report provided an initial projection of the current financial position for the General Fund capital programme profiled for 2024/25, based on expenditure to 30 September 2024, and identifies variances compared to the latest approved budget.

### **HRA Budget Monitoring Quarter 2:**

This monitoring report provides a projection of the end of year financial position for the Housing Revenue Account (“HRA”) revenue expenditure and HRA capital programme based on net expenditure to 30 September 2024.

### **Treasury Management 2024/25 - Quarter One:**

This report provides an update on the Council’s treasury management activities that have taken place during 2024/25 against the agreed strategy for the year. The report also provides an update on the treasury management indicators approved by Cabinet earlier this year.

### **Treasury Management 2024/25 - Quarter Two:**

The report provided an update on the Council’s treasury management activities that have taken place during 2024/25 against the agreed strategy for the year. The report also provided an update on the treasury management indicators.



### **Budget Strategy 2025/26:**

The report provided a draft Budget Strategy for comments from the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-committee and set out the guidelines for preparing the 2025/26 Budget. The report supported the Corporate Plan and aligned with the direction and objectives of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The revised MTFS to 2028/29 will be presented alongside the Council's General Fund budget report in February 2025.

### **Fees and Charges 2025/26**

The report provided a draft fees and charges schedule for comments from the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-committee which will be considered by Cabinet in December 2024.

**Members resolved to receive and note all reports at the above meeting.**

### **Draft General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3 (Q3) 2024/25:**

The report set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at the end of the 3rd Quarter (Q3) in 2024/25. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including an overview of reserves and balances, to enable the Cabinet to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to the officers on the performance of those budgets. At the end of Quarter 3, there is an end of the financial year projected position of £94k overspend on the Council's revenue budget, of £19.5m before the use of earmarked reserves. The position was based on activity at the end of December 2024, projected trends in income and expenditure and changes to Council funding.

### **Draft General Fund Capital Programme budget Monitoring (Q3) 2024/25:**

The monitoring report provided an initial projection of the current financial position for the General Fund capital programme for 2024/25, based on expenditure to 31 December 2024, and identified variances compared to the latest approved budget.

### **HRA Budget Monitoring Quarter 3:**

The monitoring report provided the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-committee ('F&PSC') with a draft of the Cabinet report for the projection of the end of year financial position for the Housing Revenue Account ("HRA") revenue expenditure and HRA capital programme based on net expenditure to 31 December 2024.

### **Draft Housing Rent Setting Budget Report 2025/26:**

The report set out the draft Housing Revenue Account ('HRA') Rent Setting for 2025/26 for approval and proposes an increase in weekly rents and an increase in service charges for 2025/26 both for approval by both Cabinet and Council.

### **Draft Housing Revenue Account Revenue And Capital Original Budget 2025/26:**

The report set out the Draft Housing Revenue Account ('HRA') Revenue and Capital Budget for 2025/26. Members were asked for comments or recommendations for Cabinet.

### **Draft General Fund Budget 2025/26:**

The report set out the Council's Draft General Fund budget for 2025/26 and the updated MTFS.

### **Update to the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme 2025/26:**

The report updates the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme for the five-year period ending 31 March 2029. The General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme is required to be submitted to full Council for consideration and approval as part of the budget process.

### **Investment Strategy 2025/26:**

The report set out the Council's proposed strategy for its service and commercial investments in 2025/26 to be approved by full Council.

### **Capital Strategy 2025/26 and Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025/26:**

The report set out the Council's proposed strategy in relation to capital expenditure, financing, and treasury management in 2025/26 to be approved by full Council. The report also sets out the Prudential Indicators for capital expenditure and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2025/26 to be approved by full Council.

### **Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26:**

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement sets out the Council's proposed strategy for its treasury management activities for 2025/26, including Treasury Management Prudential Indicators.

**Members resolved to receive and note all reports at the above meeting.**

**11 March 2025**

### **Performance Report 2024/25 – Quarter 3:**

The report provided an update on the Council's performance for the third quarter of the year covering 1st October to 31 December 2024. The report enabled the Council to assess progress against the approved key performance indicators (KPI's) arising from the Council's Corporate Action Plan.

**Members resolved to receive and note the report C/24/83.**

