

Minutes

Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 10 October 2023
Present	Councillors James Butcher, *Laura Davison, David Godfrey and John Wing (Chair)
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Connor McConville Councillor Laura Davison also gave apologies for lateness.
Officers Present:	Gavin Edwards (Performance and Improvement Specialist), Daniella Loxton (Capital & Treasury Senior Specialist), Jonathan Smith (Chief Accountant) and Jemma West (Democratic Services Senior Specialist)
Others Present:	Councillor Tim Prater (Folkestone & Hythe District Council) (* for part of the meeting)

6. **Election of Chair for the meeting**

Proposed by Councillor Butcher,
Seconded by Councillor Godfrey; and

RESOLVED:

That in the absence of the Chair, Councillor Wing be elected as Chair for the meeting.

(The resolution was agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

7. **Declarations of interest**

Councillors Butcher and Wing made declarations in respect of their role of Directors on the Board of Oportunitas. They both advised that a dispensation had been applied.

8. **Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23**

The report reviewed the Council's treasury management activities for 2022/23, 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.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance was present at the meeting to assist with any queries relating to this report.

The Senior Finance Specialist (Capital and Treasury) introduced the report, and drew attention to table 4 of the report, which gave a breakdown of where the funds had been invested. She advised that there was an error in the table, and the average return was 2.97% on the investment.

Members commented on various issues and the following points were discussed:

- Which table did paragraph 3.2 relate to? The Senior Finance Specialist (Capital and Treasury) confirmed that this paragraph related to table one, and the figure of £142.8m was incorrect, and should read £141.4m. She advised this would be amended.
- Would the Investment Strategy be reported to the Sub-Committee? The Chief Accountant advised that he believed the Strategy would come to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but he would provide clarity on this matter after the meeting.
- In terms of paragraph 5.3, was the council generated return net of fees of 2.97% considered to be a good rate? The Senior Finance Specialist (Capital and Treasury) confirmed that this was the average of all investments, and the pooled funds average was about 4%, so over the year, that was considered pretty good.

Proposed by Councillor Godfrey,
Seconded by Councillor Butcher; and

RESOLVED:
That report OS/23/03 be received and noted.

(The recommendations were agreed by affirmation of the meeting).

9. **Q1 Performance Report 2023/24**

The report provided an update on the Council's performance for the first quarter of the year covering 1st April – 30th June 2023. The report enables the Council

to assess progress against the approved key performance indicators arising from the Council's new Corporate Action Plan.

Key performance indicators will be monitored during 2023-24 and reported to Members quarterly.

Members commented on various issues and made points including the following:

- In respect of paragraph 2.2.7, how was the percentage comparable?
- Paragraph 2.2.6 stated that the timescale for completion of LED streetlight conversions was October 2023. Would this target be met?
- In paragraph 2.5.5, it was a concern that three data breaches missed the target for assessment time due to teams not spotting the emails advising of the breaches.
- Was there a target for officer responsiveness to emails, and how was this measured? There seemed to be delays in the planning team.
- How did the organisation measure what was being done to ensure that those in areas of the district outside of Folkestone were given the same level of service?
- There was nothing of concern in the performance figures, but as this was only the first quarter, things could of course change throughout the year.
- Could more information be provided in respect of homelessness approaches and rough sleepers? There seemed to be a downward trend on these KPI's.
- Were the number of outstanding actions in terms of fire risk assessments being monitored?

The Performance and Improvement Specialist responded to some of the comments and made points including the following:

- In respect of paragraph 2.2.7, the target for household waste recycling was 50%, the provisional figure of 49.2% was not far off. Benchmarking against other authorities was carried out, and these comparisons could be provided to the Sub-Committee after the meeting.
- The timescales for the completion of roll out of LED lighting would be confirmed after the meeting.
- In respect of data breaches, there were resourcing issues in some teams, meaning the emails were missed. However, the organisation was consistently reminding officers of the importance of reporting data breaches promptly, and he would seek more detail on the technical reasons why the emails were missed.
- The corporate standard for email responses was 5 days for acknowledgement and a response within 20 days. This would vary depending on service area and the complexity of the emails. He would seek to find out how this was monitored within the Planning team.
- The figures and reference points in terms of population of the district had come from external services such as ONS. In terms of ensuring those outside of Folkestone received equal service, this would be different for each

individual service. The annual equality report would only include general demographic information..

- The figures around homelessness prevented were down, but still above the target of 4%. The data was only partial due to a change in system.
- He would seek further information in respect of the monitoring of outstanding actions for fire risk assessments.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance stated that he also had concerns in respect of paragraph 2.5.5, that teams had such a backlog in terms of emails, that important emails were being missed. He suggested there should be a process to ensure emails could be filtered to ensure such important emails were given priority. The Assistant Director of Governance and Law responded that this had been identified as an issue, and offered assurance that data breaches were taken seriously. She advised that staff received regular training on the importance of information governance, but clearly there was work to be done, and she would relay the concerns raised to the relevant officers, to ensure that going forward, email inboxes got the swift attention they needed.

Proposed by Councillor Godfrey,
Seconded by Councillor Butcher; and

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report C/23/40 be received and noted.**
- 2. That the performance information for Quarter 1 2023-24 in Appendix 1 be noted.**

(Voting figures: 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).