

Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee

At 7:00pm on Monday 27 January 2025

Held in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby

Present:

Members

Councillor Lyn Buckingham (Chair)

Councillor Leanne Buckingham

Councillor Paul Marks

Councillor Scott Brown (Vice Chair)

Councillor Andy Mercer

Officers

Charisse Monero – Executive Director of Children’s Services

David Watts – Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing

George Candler – Executive Director of Place and Economy

Jane Bethea – Director of Public Health

Sanjit Sull – Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Guy Holloway – Assistant Chief Executive

Dean Mitchell – Assistant Director of Finance Accountancy

Mark Dickenson – Assistant Director of Finance and Strategy

Tom Barden – Head of Performance, Intelligence and Partnerships

Kunwar Khan – Scrutiny Manager (Interim)

Chris Stephenson – Scrutiny Manager

Raj Sohal – Scrutiny Officer

Louise Tyers – Governance Officer

31. Apologies for Non-Attendance

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Steven North and Dr Anup Pandey.

32. Members’ Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations of interest were made.

33. Notification of Requests to Address the Meeting

Chris Stanbra had registered to address the meeting on agenda item 8 – Budget Scrutiny Report 2025/26.

34. Minutes of the Meetings held on 15 October 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

35. Key Performance Indicators 2024/25 – Quarter 2

The Head of Performance, Intelligence and Partnerships presented the report which provided members with an update on the Council's performance across a wide range of services, as measured by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), with the aim of informing scrutiny.

134 KPIs had been reported for Quarter 2 and of those with a target set and where data was available, 50% (37) were on or exceeding target, 19% (14) were within tolerance and 31% (23) were performing below target.

During discussion on the report, the following key points were made:

- i. % of EHC (education health care) plans completed in month issued within 20 weeks (BBF18b) – it was noted that additional funding had been provided to improve performance, were officers confident that they now had the right number of staff in place to complete these plans within timescales? In response, the Executive Director of Children's Services advised that from the low performance of 3%, there had now been a rapid response and now over 60% had been completed within timescales. There had also been around 200 which were out of time, and this was now down to zero. For context, there had been around 4300 applications for EHCPs, which was a significant growth and were often more complex. A strategy had been put in place around permanent recruitment and seven new members of staff had joined the team with another seven about to join. By 1 April 2025, it was expected that a full, permanent structure would be in place. She praised the team in how they had moved forward and the service was now moving to be a good quality assessment service.
- ii. Proportion of Section 42 enquiries where risk is reduced or removed (AFL26) – members congratulated officers on reaching the 95% target for the first time this financial year.
- iii. Number of households whose homelessness was prevented (AFL13) – members noted that we ran our own lettings scheme and enquired whether there was any way to grow that to manage other properties. In response, the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing advised that the Council spoke regularly to landlords who wanted to dispose of their properties but accepted that there was more that could still be done.
- iv. Time taken to re-let standard voids (STP37) – members questioned when the target would be reviewed to recognise and reflect the good work that has been undertaken around voids. In response, the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing recognised the sustained reduction and stated that there was an annual review of targets. The target was also monitored on a monthly basis.

RESOLVED:

To note the performance of the Council and its services for Quarter 2.

36. Budget Forecast Update 2024/25 – Quarter 2

The Assistant Director of Finance and Strategy presented the report which set out the forecast outturn for 2024/25 as at Period 6. The report had been presented to the Executive at its meeting on 14 November 2024. The report set out the material financial issues which had been identified since the budget had been set in February 2024.

The forecast outturn position for the General Fund was an overspend of £9.571m and an overspend of £633k for the HRA. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was forecasting a £9.639m overspend.

The Children's Trust were forecasting an overspend of £8.838m, of which the cost to the Council was £3.903m.

RESOLVED:

To note the budget forecast 2024/25 as at Quarter 2.

37. Capital Outturn 2024/25 – Quarter 2

The Assistant Director of Finance and Accounting presented the report which set out the Capital Forecast 2024/25 as at Quarter 2. The report had been presented to the Executive at its meeting on 14 November 2024. The report set out the material financial issues which had been identified since the budget had been set in February 2024.

The forecast position following the review and reprofiling of budgets was a General Fund underspend of £5.7m and an underspend of £10m for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

RESOLVED:

To note the Capital Forecast 2024/25 as at Quarter 2.

38. Budget Scrutiny 2025/26 – Report of the Budget Scrutiny Panel

At the invitation of the Chair, Chris Stanbra addressed the Committee. Mr Stanbra was of the view that there was a lack of detailed information in the draft budget proposals, which limited thorough scrutiny. More comprehensive information and transparency would enable more effective challenge and further enhance the scrutiny process.

The Chair thanked Mr Stanbra for his comments and explained that there had been a robust process to scrutinise the draft budget this year. This process had involved two phases of scrutiny, which had led to this report. She also clarified that budget scrutiny was an ongoing process throughout the year for the Committee.

The Interim Scrutiny Manager presented the report which provided the Committee with the Budget Scrutiny Panel's findings and evidence-led recommendations on the Executive's draft budget proposals for 2025/26. He highlighted that the budget scrutiny process began in October 2024 and concluded on 24 January 2025 and involved:

- Phase 1: Reviewing in-year financial performance and challenges.
- Phase 2: Examining the draft Budget 2025/26, Medium-Term Financial Plan, Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant, Capital Programme, Treasury Management and service-specific pressures.

The report addressed significant pressures in Adult Social Care (£23.7 million) and Children’s Services (£6.2 million), alongside proposed savings of £26.3 million. It provided strategically themed recommendations to enhance financial resilience, risk management, governance, and the transformation journey.

Mr Khan expressed his gratitude to the Budget Scrutiny Panel members, Corporate Leadership Team, and the Chair for their insightful contributions and support. He also thanked the Executive members and officers for their engagement and the scrutiny team for their support.

The Chair expressed her appreciation to Committee members and officers for their collaboration and responsiveness to the Panel’s questions. She extended special thanks to Mr Khan for his exceptional stewardship, advice and invaluable support as Interim Scrutiny Manager. Recognising his contributions, she wished him well for the future and welcomed Chris Stephenson as the new permanent Scrutiny Manager.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To approve the draft report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel.
- (ii) To agree that the report be submitted to the Executive as the Committee’s response to the draft budget 2025/26.

39. Scrutiny Work Plan for Corporate Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee received the Scrutiny Work Plan as it related to the Committee.

It was noted that there would be additional item for the next meeting on the 2025/26 KPI set and updated Performance Management Framework.

RESOLVED:

To note the Scrutiny Work Plan as it related to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

40. Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked members and officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.

Chair

Date