

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 28 October 2021

Chairman: Councillor M Sartin

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564243)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report for October 2021 be noted.

Report:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 12 October 2021

1. The Committee reviewed the FY21/22 quarter 1 Corporate Performance Reporting but only for exceptions, projects at red or amber status, as the full report had previously been scrutinised by the Stronger Council Select Committee. C Graham, Project Manager (Performance), advised that the report also included an updated set of all the KPIs, regardless of status, because there had been some gaps in the data at the time the select committee had scrutinised it. Within Performance more focus would be given to the start-up phase of projects, as well as budget control and resourcing.

2. Climate Change Officer, F Edmonds, and S Lloyd-Jones (Sustainable Transport Officer) reported on their respective areas within the update report before the Committee. A public consultation on the draft Climate Change Action Plan was to take place from October to November and would comprise online elements as well as a series of in person events organised for members, the Youth Council and the community to attend. A proposal to plant around 2,300 trees in Jessel Green (Loughton) to enhance the local environment was being funded by a £65,000 grant from the Forestry Commission's Local Authorities Treescapes Fund. There would be a public consultation to help decide on the final planting design. Members were apprised of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme to help raise the energy efficiency of low income and low energy performance homes with a focus on energy performance certificate (EPC) ratings of E, F or G. It was also reported that a carbon literacy toolkit had been trialled with some Service Managers that would be used to teach staff the basics of climate change science.

3. S Lloyd-Jones outlined progress on electric charge points in the District's car parks and to provide an increase in on-site charging at the Civic Offices to accommodate EFDC and Qualis fleet conversion to EV. A campaign was underway to understand incentives and barriers to the adoption of EV by minicabs and taxis. The use of street lamps was not favoured by ECC but at least 36% of local homes did not have access to viable off-street parking, which would seriously impede EV adoption within the next 18 months. General local commuting was still low as a result of hybrid / working from home and other major users like the elderly, who were still being cautious. An EV bus would be trialled in November and December between the Broadway and the Epping Forest Retail Park in Loughton. Demand responsive travel (DRT) would be piloted in the District to Epping Green and Harlow and work was ongoing as there was a demand from school pupils who needed to reach schools in Epping, Loughton and Chigwell.

4. The Covid update report provided by A Small, Strategic Director and 151 Officer, highlighted that Covid cases were under control at the moment and since the report was written, this had fallen to 220 cases per 100,000 in the District. The report set out the current position, the Council's current response actions and the actions it might take in response to a significant worsening of the local or national position. Staff were largely working from home and were being asked to find a balance between home and office working. The Government had recently stated it had a Plan A and Plan B for its Covid-19 response during the autumn and winter, but our way of working was still compliant.

5. The Committee discussed how it wished to proceed on the Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel. It was recognised that all local councillors (District and Parish) should be involved as well as local communities and businesses, and the public. The Committee agreed that the Task and Finish Panel should be reconvened for one more meeting to look at where it wanted to go or to refocus on one of the four options outlined in the report.

6. Members had the opportunity to review the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions of 1 October 2021. The Committee reviewed its own work programme but there was concern if new staff during their induction were adequately informed of how the Council was run in relation to its members. The presentation new councillors received on this was good but what did the People Team do for new staff during their induction process? It was agreed this would be added to the work programme possibly for the January 2022 meeting.

7. The Committee agreed to the proposed Terms of Reference for the Stronger Place Select Committee that were outlined by its Chairman, Councillor A Lion. The select committee chairmen also updated the Committee on recent business transacted at meetings and the current status of their respective work programmes.