

MINUTE EXTRACT

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2022

4 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSURANCE PANEL

The Chief Executive introduced the report, which provided the first update report of Wirral's Independent Assurance Panel, set up to oversee the Council's improvement in response to the external assurance review commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which was published in November 2021. An error in the report was clarified under section 2.3 which should have read that the two other groups voted against the budget with amendments.

The Chair of the Independent Assurance Panel outlined the positive steps that the Council taken to its improvement including achieving the £18m budget savings for 2022/23. She advised that the process of implementing the savings would be a challenge and that the Panel would continue to track their progress. It was noted that the budget gap of £14m for 2023/24 had been agreed, but the Committee was advised that given the rate of inflation, cost of living crisis and pay negotiations, this figure could be expected to raise significantly, and this needed to be accounted for.

The Chair of the Panel noted and supported the ambitious regeneration plans for the borough and encouraged the Council to move quickly and build momentum to get delivery on the ground, citing the cost of living crisis as a potential obstacle in future. The Council was further encouraged to retain its inclusivity of political processes, with cross-party working appearing fragile at time and therefore mutual respect moving forward was necessary to achieve what was required. The improvement in officer member relationships and success of the new Councillor induction programme was noted, with improved working between the three statutory officers likely to see the Chief Executive and Leader more supported.

The Committee thanked the Chair of the Independent Assurance Panel for the fair and accurate reflection. In response to questions from members on various aspects of the report, the Chief Executive outlined that the Local Government Association had been commissioned to undertake a piece of work in response to the recommendations in the Ada Burns report, the conclusion of which would be reported back to members.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Tom Anderson, it was –

Resolved – That

- (1) the contents of the report of the Independent Assurance Panel and the dashboard against the recommendations arising from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities external assurance review be noted and referred to full Council for further consideration.**

(2) the update in respect to the Corporate Peer Challenge be noted and a detailed report be submitted to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.