

Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday, 22 January 2008

Present: Councillor Geoffrey Russell (Chair) and Councillors Terry Brown, Mike Devaney, Mrs Doreen Dickinson, Daniel Gee, Pat Haughton, Keith Iddon, Kevin Joyce, Hasina Khan, June Molyneaux, Mick Muncaster, Joyce Snape and Mrs Stella Walsh

08.CCS.01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Henry Caunce, Mick Davies, David Dickinson and Thomas McGowan.

08.CCS.02 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by Members relating to the items on the agenda.

08.CCS.03 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 20 November 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

08.CCS.04 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No members of the public requested to speak at the meeting.

08.CCS.05 BUDGET SCRUTINY FOR 2008/2009

The Panel considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on budget scrutiny. The report set out the spending and performance context for key spending areas at the Council, details of the rationale between the Executives draft budget proposals and details of the key budget proposals for 2008/09.

Members noted that the budget proposals aimed to achieve the objectives set out in the refreshed corporate strategy. It was noted that the updated Corporate Strategy includes new targets, particularly in relation to climate change and older and younger peoples activities.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) outlined the spending and performance context for key spending areas at the Council and answered a number of queries raised by Members. The Panel congratulated the Council on the achievement of maximum scores for both the use of its resources and value for money in the annual use of resources assessment. Improvements in satisfaction have been seen alongside improvements in performance and this score demonstrates that the Council continues to offer good value for money.

Members made several general suggestions for the Executive Cabinet to consider:

1. To increase the number of Environmental Wardens.
2. To provide another vehicle for the Environmental Wardens.
3. To improve the process to request the cleaning of footpaths, clearing of hedgerows and ditches outside the urban core. Currently there can be confusion as to where the responsibility for this lies and how best to deal with Lancashire County Council when the responsibility lies with them.
4. To increase the use of the machine that removes chewing gum throughout the Borough.
5. To distribute to Members the schedule of work for street cleaning and grass cutting for their information and comments.
6. To identify areas where there is a lack of recreational facilities and either provide additional facilities or improve transport links to existing facilities nearby.
7. To explore concessionary arrangements with South Ribble where residents would be entitled to concessions within Chorley but South Ribble recreational facilities are closer.

The Panel made observations on the following:

1. The customer service received when a missed bin was reported was excellent and the bin had then been collected promptly.
2. The conditions of the new waste and recycling contract to put financial penalties on the contractor for not returning the receptacle to the point of collection and new style receptacles for recycling were commended.
3. It was hoped that the issue of waste littering areas after collection would be reduced under the new contract.
4. It was hoped that the plans for Market Walk phase 2 would come into fruition in the future.

On the base budget review savings 2008/09 Members asked for clarification on several items and commented that the maintenance of bus shelters and street furniture, although not the responsibility of Chorley Council, did have a positive impact on the streetscene. It was noted that one of the corporate priorities was to “develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live”. The increase in charges for the hire of the Lancastrian was noted with some concern.

Members considered the schedule of potential savings for Directorate savings targets 2008/09. It was highlighted that proposed savings should not have a negative impact on the service delivered to the customer. Support was given to merging the enforcement functions currently delivered by Governance and Neighbourhoods.

The Panel discussed the proposals for increasing fees and charges in 2008/09. Members discussed the increase proposed for grant of right of burial fees and a suggestion was made that the increase be phased.

Councillors Terry Brown, Hasina Khan and Joyce Snape left the meeting at 8.10pm.

Members considered the plans for Capital Resources and noted that the priorities were affordable housing, the town centre, sustainability and climate change and investing in the green corridor. Members clarified several points and supported the proposals relating to affordable housing and the green corridor. It was noted that Chorley Council would manage the homelessness function in the future.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) for his report and attendance at the meeting. It was noted that the discussion on budget scrutiny had been useful and the approach to budget scrutiny had been an improvement on last year.

RESOLVED – That the

- 1. report be noted and**
- 2. comments of the Panel be forwarded to the Executive Cabinet.**

Councillors Pat Haughton and Danny Gee left the meeting at 8.15pm.

08.CCS.06 SCRUTINY INQUIRIES - EFFICIENCY GAINS AND ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

The Chair of the Efficiency Gains Sub-Group, Councillor Mrs Stella Walsh, updated the Panel on the ongoing inquiry. Feedback sessions had been held with Directors in December and there were further sessions later this month to receive information from the remaining Directors, the Corporate Procurement Officer, Customer Access Officer and the external auditor. The Sub-Group would be considering it's final report on 27 February and would report to the Panel on 11 March.

Councillor Mike Devaney, Chair of the Absence Management Sub-Group reported that the inquiry was progressing well. It was noted that there were pockets within the Council where there were still issues with absence management and this would be investigated further.

The Sub-Group would be meeting with the Executive Member for Resources on 19 February to discuss the recommendations and final report. The report would also be presented to the Panel on 11 March.

RESOLVED – That progress on the Scrutiny inquiries be noted.

08.CCS.07 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2007 2008 and in particular the items relating to the Panel.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be noted.

Chair