

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 11 August 2008

Present: Councillor Dennis Edgerley (Chair), Councillor Alan Cain (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Nora Ball, Mike Devaney, Marie Gray, Kevin Joyce, Adrian Lowe, Mark Perks, Rosie Russell, Joyce Snape and Peter Wilson

08.OS.47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Harold Heaton.

08.OS.48 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

08.OS.49 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No members of the public had requested the opportunity to raise questions on any of the agenda items.

08.OS.50 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 June 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

08.OS.51 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Vulnerable Families (Minute 08.OS.38(b)(ii))

The Chair indicated that the Committee would receive an update on the Vulnerable Families Project when it considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) on the 1st Quarter Performance Report 2008/09.

(ii) Astley Park Coach House/Adventure Playground (Minute 08.OS.40(2))

The Chair indicated that the update that had been requested on the Astley Park Coach House Adventure Playground would be found in the Business Plan for the People Directorate contained later in the agenda.

(iii) Common Bank Reservoir (Minute 08.OS.40(3))

The Chair indicated that the update that had been requested on the Common Bank Review would be found in the Business Plan for the People Directorate.

(iv) Concessionary Travel (Minute 08.OS.41(3))

At the last meeting of the Committee, Members had expressed their concern that the initial information regarding concessionary travel had not been received from the Lancashire County Council. Members also expressed their concern that under the Concessionary Travel Scheme, disabled users were restricted to travelling after 9.30am which put those who were working at a financial disadvantage.

Two representatives from Lancashire County Council, Mr Tony Morton (Operational Manager) and Mr Gavin Miller (Accountant) attended the meeting to discuss with Members the scheme and answer questions.

The representatives outlined the scheme that was introduced on 1 April 2008.

There was currently a software problem with the scheme which did not allow the calculation of the cost of the tickets and therefore the cost of the scheme overall to the Council. An interim measure had been introduced and Chorley Council would cover all the cost of journeys commencing in Chorley. The new software package was not expected to be issued until the 3rd quarter of 2008/09 (October/November) and as this was not acceptable, the interim measure had been introduced.

A report produced by the County Council for District Council Leaders had put the total cost of the scheme at £27.3 million, a significant increase on last year, and was 8% higher than the pool (£25 million in the pool). This figure had been based upon results up to 14 June and projected figures.

A formula had been devised in the pooling agreement for the calculation of sharing any deficit as well for any surplus.

In October an updated total scheme cost would be produced and a breakdown by activity would be produced for the budgeting consequences.

With regard to the concern of Members that under the Concessionary Scheme, disabled users were restricted to travelling after 9.30am, it had been agreed by Lancashire County Council, Blackpool and Blackburn Councils that disabled people would be able to travel before 9.30am with those authorities jointly sharing the cost.

An improved picture as to the cost of the scheme was expected to be available in October.

(a) Waste Management Contract (Minute 06.OS.44 refers)

The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Environmental Health Manager setting out the service that will be provided by the new Waste Management Contract.

The new contract was aimed at enhancing the Council's recycling performance and would commence on 1 April 2009 with an option to extend the contract for a further two years.

The contractor that had been awarded the contract had demonstrated through their tender submission the quality, capability and innovation necessary to deliver a first class household refuse and recycling collection service based on a competitive tendering process that delivered the most economically advantageous contract term to the Council.

(b) Memorial Safety in Closed Churchyards (Minute 08.OS.40(4) refers)

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods in response to the request made at the last meeting for a report on the implications to the Council of memorial safety in closed churchyards.

The report provided a summary of the Council's present position with respect to the management of closed churchyards for which the maintenance responsibility, including memorials had been passed to the Council.

RESOLVED – 1) That the report be noted.

2) That a policy be drawn up on memorial safety in closed churchyards and that a draft be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in approximately 6 months time.

08.OS.52 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 14 AUGUST 2008

The Chair reported that there had been no requests from any of the Committee Members for specific consideration of any of the reports to be presented to the 14 August 2008 meeting of the Executive Cabinet.

08.OS.53 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09 REPORT 1 (END OF JUNE 2008)

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) setting out the current financial position of the Council as compared against the budgets and efficiency savings targets it set itself for the General Fund.

The report indicated that the Council was expected to make overall target savings of £320,000 in 2008/09 which equated to £80,000 for the first quarter. Excellent progress had been made with savings of £150,000.

The report highlighted the significant variations from the Council's budget, with members highlighting several issues including a further overspend against the revenue budget this year for the costs associated with a planning appeal. The report indicating that the final costs of the appeal would be subject to agreement over what was reasonable for the Council to pay, but indications were that the sums involved may be significant.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(Councillor Kevin Joyce left the meeting at 7.30pm).

08.OS.54 CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2008/09 - MONITORING

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) updating Members on the 2008/09 capital programme and seeking authority of the Executive Cabinet to review the availability of capital resources for the funding of the programme.

It was proposed that the programme be increased by £163,040 funded fully from external sources.

Several changes to financing the programme had been made and a number of external factors would contribute to a shortfall in expected capital receipts.

The cost of funding the lighting at the Coronation Recreation Ground had exceeded the budget of £60,000 and in order to proceed with this scheme it was recommended that the overall shortfall of £16,280 be met from Council capital resources. Members believed that the Police had made a contribution to the scheme and queried whether this was still available and this would be clarified.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

08.OS.55 CHORLEY PARTNERSHIP 1ST QUARTER 2008/9 PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) outlining the improvements that had been made to the Chorley Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for Chorley) since the last quarter and to

keep Members informed about the current work being co-ordinated by the LSP and the future plans for the LSP.

The report indicated that the first quarter had seen a lot of activity for the Partnership and listed the progress made to date on the current projects.

Members indicated that it had been difficult to access information about the LSP projects or the work of the LSP sub-groups and it was suggested that "intheknow" could be used to keep members better informed.

A concern was raised that the Chair of the Chorley Childrens Trust was a District Councillor who was also a Lancashire County Councillor, serving as Chair of their Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(Councillor Adrian Lowe left the meeting at 8.00pm).

08.OS.56 CHORLEY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2007/8

The Committee received from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) the Chorley Partnership Annual Performance Report for 2007/08.

The report indicated that the Partnership had had a successful year with 5 out of its 6 projects either completed or ongoing into 2008/09. Out of the performance indicators that could be reported on at this point in the year, 71% of targets had been met or exceeded with 86% improving on last year.

The thematic groups of the LSP continued to make progress in working towards the priorities of the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Chorley's overall position in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, which gave an indication that the quality of life had improved from 172nd to 158th out of 354 local authorities in the country.

The Annual Report outlined the year in review, as well as looking ahead to the 11 new projects and targets for Chorley within the new Local Area Agreement.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

08.OS.57 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Forward Plan for the period 1 August 2008 to 30 November 2008.

The Committee had previously indicated its wish to have the opportunity of considering and commenting on the Chorley Community Safety Partnership – Local Action Plan and approval of the Neighbourhoods Directorate – Value for Money Review and Structure (This item to be covered by two reports elsewhere on the agenda).

08.OS.58 BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING STATEMENTS - 1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2008

The Committee received the first quarter Business Plan and Performance Monitoring Statements from the following Directorates:

- Business Directorate
- Neighbourhoods Directorate
- People Directorate

- Business Transformation Directorate
- Policy and Performance Directorate

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) submitted a report summarising the Business Plan Monitoring Statements that had been completed by directorates.

Members noted the various key messages of the Directorates and identified the difficulty with on-line access booking system for the “Get Up and Go” programme to which it was reported that it was already being addressed by Customer Services.

RESOLVED – That the Business Plan Monitoring Statements be noted.

08.OS.59 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - FIRST QUARTER OF 2008/09

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) submitted the first quarter performance management report which set out the performance against the Corporate Strategy and the Council’s National Indicators for the first quarter of 2008/09, 1 April to 30 June 2008.

The report indicated that the overall performance of the key projects in the Corporate Strategy was very good with 25 of the projects (81%) either completed, progressing ahead of plan or on plan.

The report identified the completed key projects showing the key outcomes from the projects which had been completed in the first quarter of 2008/09. In total 13 (42%) of the key projects in the refreshed Corporate Strategy had now been completed, an increase of 16% on the position last quarter.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

08.OS.60 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND VERBAL REPORT FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Committee received from the Chair of each of the Task and Finish Groups an update on their respective inquiries.

The Committee received the scoping documents that had been produced by the Task and Finish Group inquiry into Chorley Community Housing.

RESOLVED – 1) That the update reports be noted.

2) That the scoping document produced for the Chorley Community Housing inquiry be approved.

3) That a Task and Finish Group be established to scrutinise aspects of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to be Chaired by Councillor Mark Perks and to include Councillors Nora Ball and Dennis Edgerley with others to be appointed.

08.OS.61 NEIGHBOURHOODS DIRECTORATE - VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW

At the request of the Committee to have an opportunity to consider and comment on this report in advance of its consideration by the Executive Cabinet, the Committee received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on the findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from the internal value for money review conducted in the Council’s Neighbourhood directorate.

The review had been undertaken by an internal review team to assess how well value for money was being delivered and improved across the services within the Neighbourhoods Directorate. The report set out the review objectives and using a

methodology developed in-house the team assessed value against 5 criteria - rationale, efficiency, economy, effectiveness and impact and each service within the directorate was then scored against the criteria enabling the review team to assess how well value for money was being achieved.

In conclusion the review was an important starting point on the 3 year programme of VFM reviews agreed by the Executive Cabinet in 2007 with the outcomes and learning from the review benefiting future work on the programme.

The outcomes from the review had been critical to informing and directing the restructure of the Neighbourhoods Directorate which will deliver efficiency savings for the Council.

RESOLVED – That the following recommendations to the Executive Cabinet be supported:

- 1) That the final report be noted and approved for publication.
- 2) That the recommendations within the report be approved for implementation.
- 3) That the learning from this initial review be used to improve the methodology for future reviews carried out within the 3 year programme.

08.OS.62 PRESS AND PUBLIC EXCLUDED ITEM

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

08.OS.63 NEIGHBOURHOOD DIRECTORATE - RESTRUCTURE

At the request of the Committee to have an opportunity to consider and comment on this report in advance of its consideration by the Executive Cabinet, the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) submitted a report on the proposed structure for the Neighbourhoods Directorate taking forward the recommendation approved by the Executive Cabinet on 14 February 2008 and those service function reviews included within the Council's budget for 2008/09.

The report indicated that the Neighbourhoods Directorate had recently undergone a Value for Money review which highlighted some key efficiencies and areas upon which to improve effectiveness, which require some review of the role and function of employees of the Neighbourhoods Directorate teams.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to the Executive Cabinet be supported.

Chair