

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 29 September 2008

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

Also in attendance: Councillors Eric Bell and Julia Berry

08.OS.64 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Peter Wilson.

08.OS.65 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

08.OS.66 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

08.OS.67 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 August 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

08.OS.68 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Astley Park Coach House/Adventure Playground (Minute 08.OS.51)

Councillor Perks reported that the Council has been successful in securing £45,000 in grant money from the Playbuilder Fund for the new Adventure Playground in Astley Park.

(ii) LSP Task and Finish Group (Minute 08.OS.60)

Councillor Perks explained that further to the formation of the above task group to which he had been appointed Chair, he had subsequently decided to withdraw due to his current membership of the LSP Board as an LCC Councillor and his membership of the LSP Executive until earlier this year.

08.OS.69 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 2 OCTOBER 2008

The Chair reported that he had requested that three items from the agenda for Executive Cabinet on 2 October 2008 be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(a) Climate Change Strategy - Progress on Implementation

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director (Business) updating Members on the implementation of the Council's Climate Change Strategy which had been adopted in May 2008. The report sought Executive Cabinet approval to approve the release of £120,000 of Climate Change funding in 2008/09 and £60,000 in 2009/2010.

The proposal was that the £120,000 be used for the following projects:

- £60,000 for business grants
- £20,000 for grants for solar panels
- £10,000 for Greening Chorley Markets
- £30,000 to bridge match funding gap for individuals, the “third sector” and small medium enterprises.

Members discussed their reservations on the use of solar panels and the importance of cavity wall and roof space insulation.

RESOLVED – That the following comments be made to the Executive Cabinet on 2 October 2008:

- 1.1 The Committee has reservations about the effectiveness of solar panels in the UK particularly bearing in mind the high cost of installation. Energy saving measures such as cavity wall insulation and roof space insulation are known to be more energy efficient. It is therefore proposed that the £20,000 allocation for grants towards domestic solar panels, be widened to encourage more innovative ways of generating and/or saving energy in the domestic sector.**
- 1.2 The Committee further requests that the Executive Cabinet investigates the Council’s own requirements in terms of restrictions placed on listed buildings to eg prevent the installation of double glazing and other energy saving measures.**

(b) Growth Point - Programme of Development

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director (Business) updating Members on the next stage in the Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point Programme of Development for submission by the deadline of 27 October 2008. This follows the approval of the Growth Point Expression of Interest by the Government. The Programme of Development will set out the details of the proposed development sites including any associated infrastructure costs and when the sites are due to be developed. The aim is to accelerate development with the main benefit being the achievement of more affordable housing and funding for the development of Buckshaw Village Railway Station.

Members discussed the shortfall in the funding for Buckshaw Village Station and the regional significance of the project. They also discussed the value of the growth point programme and how it could generate more affordable housing.

RESOLVED – The Overview and Scrutiny Committee requests that when further guidance becomes available about the nature of Growth Point, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be kept informed.

(c) Future Contractual Arrangements for Civil Parking Enforcement in Chorley

The Committee considered a report seeking Executive Cabinet approval to enter into new contractual arrangements for civil parking enforcement in Chorley at the end of the present contract in September 2009. The proposals were to agree to continue in partnership with Lancashire County Council in principle for on-street enforcement of parking offences but to look at sharing services with other authorities in relation to off-street and on-street enforcement.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

08.OS.70 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2008/09 AND ONWARDS

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) seeking approval to changes to the current years capital programme and reviewing the availability of the capital resources required to finance the programme.

The report proposed that the 2008/09 capital programme be reduced by £970,270, made up of £949,400 slippage to 2009/10 plus other reductions totalling £20,870, including:

- a net increase of £45,800 for the covered market financed by revenue contribution (LABGI grant);
- an increase in the externally funded Clayton Brook Play Area budget of £13,740;
- deletion of the £80,410 Astley Park Woodland Management Project, to be included in the revenue budget.

RESOLVED – That the revised Capital Programme for 2008/09 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved at a total cost of £9,227,320.

08.OS.71 COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL: REAL PEOPLE, REAL POWER-PROPOSALS RELATING TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Corporate Director (Governance) submitted a report on the proposals relating to overview and scrutiny contained within the White Paper “Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power.”

The report outlined the proposals currently out to consultation as a result of the White Paper.

The government wishes to raise the visibility of scrutiny and has combined recent proposals in the Local Government and Involvement in Health Act 2007 with some new approaches to scrutiny. Overall, however, these are limited and in many local authorities are already in place. Proposals include:

- encouraging more creative involvement of the public in scrutiny
- moving committee meetings and hearings out of the town hall and into the community, considering webcasting
- greater public involvement in suggesting and selecting topics for review
- making information more readily available and accessible on websites and at council offices
- councillor call for action
- formalising dealing with petitions with any appeals being considered by overview and scrutiny
- further embracing powers to require information from partners
- power to have area scrutiny committees in two tier areas
- requiring dedicated scrutiny resources in County and Unitary Councils

The White Paper also contains proposals for increasing the visibility of local public officers so that they are open to public scrutiny and questions.

RESOLVED – 1) That the proposals relating to changes in the overview and scrutiny function contained within the Government’s White Paper entitled “Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power” be noted; and

2) That the Committee receive a report on any future legislation or regulation as a result of the consultation process.

08.OS.72 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Forward Plan for the period 1 October 2008 to 31 January 2009.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Forward Plan be noted.

2) That it be noted that the Town Centre Audit and Design Strategy report will be submitted later in the year.

08.OS.73 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND VERBAL REPORT FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Committee received updates from the Chair's of each Task and Finish Group.

(1) Chorley Community Housing

Councillor Devaney gave an update in the Chorley Community Housing Task Group which had recently considered the views of a number of Residents Associations. The evidence presented indicated a reasonable level of satisfaction with CCH, although much less so with some of their contractors. Issues of concern were however streetscene services and car parking within CCH areas. Still to be considered is CCH targets on affordable housing.

(2) Streetscene

Councillor Lowe reported that the Task Group had had a slow start but had recently met at Bengal Street to view the depot and equipment and some members had been out with operatives. The Group would be consulting external customers including Parish Councils. The scoping document for the review was submitted for approval.

(3) Local Strategic Partnership

The first meeting of this Group was scheduled to take place on 1 October 2008.

(4) Joint Scrutiny with South Ribble and Preston on Affordable Housing

Councillor Edgerley reported that there were meetings of this group scheduled on both 30 September and 1 October 2008 to agree a way forward for the inquiry.

RESOLVED – 1) That the verbal reports from the Task Groups be noted.

2) That the scoping document for the Streetscene Inquiry be approved.

3) That the membership of the LSP Task & Finish Group be agreed as follows:

**Councillor M Devaney (Chair)
Councillors D Edgerley, N Ball, H Khan, A Cain and M Grey.**

Chair