

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 10 November 2008

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

Also in attendance: Officers Lesley-Ann Fenton, Gary Hall, Jamie Carson, Jane Meek, Ishbel Murray, Carol Russell and Dianne Scambler (Trainee Democratic Services Officer)

08.OS.74 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Nora Ball, Rosie Russell and Peter Wilson.

08.OS.75 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were declared.

08.OS.76 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no question from members of the public.

08.OS.77 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 September 2008 be held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

08.OS.78 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

08.OS.79 THE COUNCIL INVESTMENT PROCESS AND THE DEPOSIT IN LANDSBANKI

The Chair asked the Committee to consider the undertaking of a review of the Council's Investment Process and the deposit in Landsbanki.

Although the item had been discussed at the recent Council meeting, the Chair felt that there were several questions that remained unanswered that needed further investigation.

Councillor Alan Cullens, Executive Member for Resources stated that although he was not opposed to the review, he did have some concerns about the costs and amount of officers time that would be incurred on matters which had already been looked at both locally and nationally.

Members of the Committee discussed the request; there was an opinion that the actions of the officers concerned had already been investigated and that to gain anything extra would rely on obtaining information from the credit agencies. It was also highlighted that it had been agreed at Council that the draft Treasury Management Strategy for 2009/10 would be brought to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comments.

RESOLVED - That the proposal for the Committee to review the draft Treasury Management Strategy was defeated.

08.OS.80 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 13 NOVEMBER 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 13 November 2008 meeting of the Executive Cabinet.

08.OS.81 CHORLEY TOWN CENTRE AUDIT AND DESIGN STRATEGY

Members received a report of the Corporate Director (Business) summarising the key aspects of the Chorley Town Centre Audit and Urban Design Strategy. The Strategy envisages Chorley as a vibrant, diverse, sustainable, accessible and attractive place. It highlighted the opportunities and challenges for Chorley Town Centre and recommended a number of Urban Design Objectives, and associated projects and implementation processes as a means to realise this vision.

Members welcomed the strategy and acknowledged that it was a document that had been widely consulted on. Consideration was given to how the Council could encourage the evening economy of the Town Centre and improve our cultural offer beyond daytime activities.

Members also asked to be kept fully informed of when the works mentioned in the project timetable were commencing or had actually been completed on a regular basis and it was thought that this could best be achieved through the Members e.bulletin, 'intheknow'.

RESOLVED – 1. That the Town Centre Audit and Urban Design Strategy as a guide to future town centre interventions be endorsed.

2. That the 10 objectives and related projects as set out in the Implementation Timetable, be adopted and approved, subject to a review of the medium term financial strategy and agreement of the budget for 2009/10

3. That Members be kept informed of the projects progress through the Member e.bulletin 'intheknow'.

08.OS.82 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09 REPORT 2 (END OF SEPTEMBER 2008)

The Assistant Chief Executive presented a report setting out the Council's current financial position as compared against the budget and efficiency savings targets it set itself for 2008/09 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 £160,000 for the first two quarters. Excellent progress had been made with savings of £234,000 already achieved.

Significant savings had been made relating to salaries mainly as a result of vacant posts being kept vacant pending the outcome of directorate and departmental restructures due to take effect within the coming months.

There were a number of areas that will be monitored closely as the year progresses, these are:

- Contributions to corporate savings and efficiency targets
- Major income streams, in particular car parking fees, land charges and markets
- Concessionary travel costs
- Benefit costs.

With the economy now moving towards recession, the impact was starting to be felt across several areas of the Council's services with income levels being significantly lower than those budgeted for.

The report highlighted a potential overspend of up to £250,000 in respect of concessionary costs and it was recommended that contingency plans be developed to identify further savings that could mitigate the effect of this, should a significant overspend materialise.

Members raised concerns that the twelve districts had not yet all signed up to the pooling arrangements for the concessionary travel scheme and consideration was given to what would be the impact on the Council should the pooling arrangement fall down.

The Assistant Chief Executive also reported that two pots of money had been identified for Neighbourhood Working. Staffing costs of £100,00 had been committed, but the £150,000 identified to pump prime projects had not yet been committed and would be dependant of the outcomes identified within the neighbourhood action plans.

- RESOLVED – 1. That the report be noted.**
2. That the additional sum of £10,800 be taken out of working balances to specific reserve to meet the final costs of equal pay claims.
3. That contingency plans be developed to make additional savings to mitigate the impact of potential overspending in respect of concessionary travel, estimated to be up to £250,000 in 2008/09 and to work towards accelerating the process of the LCC pooling arrangements.

08.OS.83 BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING STATEMENTS - 1 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2008

The Committee received the second quarter Business Plan 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 the directorates.

Members noted the various key messages of the Directorates, drawing particular attention to the negotiations of the Section 106 monies for the Group One, Buckshaw Village outline planning application, the cost to the Council with regard to fly tipping and the possibility of more allotments in the Borough.

RESOLVED – That the Business Plan Monitoring Statements be noted.

08.OS.84 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - SECOND QUARTER OF 2008/09

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) submitted the second quarter performance management report, which set out performance against the 2008/09, 1 July to 30 September 2008.

The report indicated that the overall performance of the key projects in the Corporate Strategy was very good with 27 (87%) of the projects either completed, progressing ahead of plan or on plan.

The report identified the completed projects and showed the key outcomes from the projects that had been completed to date. In total 20 (64.5%) of key projects, in the refreshed Corporate Strategy had now been completed, an increase of 22% on the position last quarter.

The Assistant Chief Executive also explained that the Council had registered its concerns with Lancashire County Council that the Local Area Agreement performance target for percentage of land assessed as having below acceptable levels of detritus was too high (22%) and the Council had set itself a much lower target of 4%

Members requested more information on National Indicator 156, number of households in temporary accommodation and also projects that Groundwork had contributed too within the Borough.

**RESOLVED – 1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Strategic Housing Manager be asked to provide information on NI156 to a further meeting of the Committee..**

08.OS.85 CHORLEY PARTNERSHIP 2ND QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) outlining the improvements made by the Chorley Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for Chorley) since last quarter, to keep Cabinet informed about the current work being co-ordinated by the LSP and future plans for the LSP.

The report outlined how the Chorley Partnership had performed over the second quarter and contained updates on:

- The work of the LSP, through its 11 strategic projects, including expenditure.
- The key performance indicators from the Sustainable Community Strategy and the first reporting period of the LAA

The report indicated that the Chorley Partnership's projects are in the main on track and are progressing well and were already starting to deliver on its Local Area Agreement targets.

Members raised concerns that there was no information on the project on raising Mental Health Awareness, which would hopefully help to tackle the stigma attached to mental health. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) reported that there had been some personnel changes at the PCT but that every effort was being made to collect this information.

Members raised an issue about the level of advice and information that Age Concern gives to people in need relation to benefits that they maybe entitled too. The Corporate Director (People) advised a meeting of Chorley Old People's Forum was due to take place the following day and any issues could be addressed through this forum.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

08.OS.86 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Forward Plan for the period 1 November 2009 to the 28 February 2009.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

08.OS.87 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND REPORTS FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Committee received the updated Overview and Scrutiny Wok Programme for the remainder of the Municipal year.

The programme included the envisaged timescale for the ongoing scrutiny inquiries and the planned monitoring of past inquiry recommendations.

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

(1) Chorley Community Housing

Councillor Devaney informed the Committee that the Task Group had now met five times and that the final meeting of the Task Group would be taking place on 12 November 2008 and that the final report would be presented to the next Committee meeting on 1 December 2008.

(2) Streetscene

Councillor Adrian Lowe reported that the Task Group had met 6 times and at its meeting on 20 November would consider evidence from the Parish Councils and the Equality Forum and it was intended that the draft final report would be presented to this Committee on 1 December 2008.

(3) Joint Scrutiny Inquiry with Preston and South Ribble on Affordable Housing.

Councillor Dennis Edgerley reported that the Group had met twice; they had agreed the scoping document and the division of labour between the three authorities. However the Chair expressed his concern about the administrative difficulties that could arise from moving the meetings from one place to another.

(4) Chorley Partnership

Councillor Devaney informed the Committee that the Group had met twice and was still scoping the document, as there was a need for the Members of the Group to understand more about the Partnership and its Thematic Groups. This subject had also been identified by one third of Members in the recent Member training and development interviews and as a result a member learning session was to be held on 17 November 2008 to which all Members of the Council were invited. Comments raised would be taken to the next meeting of the Task Group on 24 November 2008 for consideration.

- RESOLVED – 1. That the work programme be noted.**
2. That the verbal reports from the Task Groups be noted.

Chair