

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 6 September 2005

Present: Councillor J Walker (Chair), Councillors T McGowan and Mrs S Walsh (Associate Chairs) and Councillors E Bell, Mrs P Case, P Goldsworthy and R Parr

Also in attendance: Councillors (none)

05.OS.38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Davies, Perks and Mrs M Wilson.

05.OS.39 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

None of the Members disclosed any interests in relation to matters under consideration at the meeting.

05.OS.40 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 July 2005 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

05.OS.41 BUDGET TIMETABLE AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN THE BUDGET PROCESS

The Director of Finance had requested the inclusion of the item on the meeting's agenda in order to secure guidance from the Members on the future role and involvement of the non-Executive Members in the scrutiny of the budget determination and monitoring processes.

The Director reminded the Committee of the revised guidance in relation to the new Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime, which would place greater emphasis and relevance on Authorities' financial management processes (ie how an Authority managed and allocated its resources) and an internal 'value for money' assessment of the use of resources.

The Members' views were sought on the identification of any particular area or key issues on which they considered that non-Executive Members should concentrate and how best they thought that the overview and scrutiny regime might contribute effectively to the budget setting process and subsequent performance management.

At the conclusion of the ensuing debate, the Committee accepted that the overview and scrutiny Members' role on budgetary matters was, firstly, to respond to the consultation exercise on the draft budget and, secondly, to scrutinise budget spending and its effectiveness in the achievement of corporate priorities and identified targets.

It was **AGREED:**

(1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to retain its consultative role during the preparation of the draft budget for 2006/07 and requests the Director of Finance to submit to the next meeting suggestions as to the most effective means by which overview and scrutiny Members can be consulted on the 2006/07 budget process.

(2) **That this Committee accepts the need to develop its role in relation to the monitoring and scrutiny of the Council's financial management performance and to consider how that role can be undertaken most effectively in the future.**

05.OS.42 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND THE ROLE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Head of Corporate and Policy Services has been invited to attend the meeting to clarify the differing roles and responsibilities of Executive and non-Executive Members in relation to performance management, which was defined as 'taking action in response to actual performance to make outcomes better than they would otherwise be'.

The role and objectives of Overview and Scrutiny Members were identified as:

- Providing a check on the activities of the Executive through 'Call In' powers.
- Involvement in policy development and monitoring and review of policy formulation and implementation within the community planning framework.
- Involvement in improvement review.
- Scrutiny of external bodies and agencies.

In order to assist this role, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive quarterly reports on both the Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators and Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). In addition, quarterly Business Plan updates would be presented to the Committee and its three Associate Panels.

The Head of Corporate and Policy Services reminded the Members that the new Performance Management Plus software package enabled the publication on the intranet of data showing each Units' performance in relation to its achievement of BVPIs and the Council's corporate priorities. The published date would indicate whether or not each Unit was meeting its respective objectives and targets.

The new system had been designed to make the data more accessible and useful, but Members' views on any means of improving or further developing the system were invited. The Committee commended and welcomed the new software system and a Member requested the Officers to consider the inclusion, for the purposes of comparison, the previous quarters' performance indicators.

The Chair circulated a note of a meeting of the Lancashire Overview and Scrutiny Member/Officer Network he had attended on 15 July 2005, which drew attention to the areas on which Overview and Scrutiny Members would need to focus in order to satisfy the key lines of inquiry for Corporate Assessment

identified in the Audit Commission's publication 'CPA – The Harder Test and Overview and Scrutiny'.

05.OS.43 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Head of Corporate and Policy Services presented two reports monitoring the Authority's performance in relation to both the Best Value Performance Indicators and the Council's Corporate Key Performance Indicators during the first quarter period of 2005/06. The Service Units' bi-monthly Business Plan monitoring statements would be submitted to the next cycle of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Panels.

A number of service issues were raised by the Members, particularly in respect of performance targets which had not been achieved.

05.OS.44 DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENTS

The Chair had requested the item on the agenda to discuss his suggestion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be allowed the opportunity to scrutinise draft policy and strategy documents before they were agreed for consultation purposes.

Other Members referred to Overview and Scrutiny Members' role in policy development and considered that their views should be sought before draft policies and strategies were formulated.

It was **AGREED** that the Executive Cabinet be requested to take account of Overview and Scrutiny Members' role in policy development and agree mechanisms to ensure that non-Executive Members are consulted on new policy proposals before draft documents are compiled.

05.OS.45 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Council's current Forward Plan which set out details of the key decisions which the Executive Cabinet, individual Executive Members or Officers were expected to take during the four months period from 1 September to 23 December 2005.

The Committee noted that a number of items were scheduled to be dealt with before the end of September and the Chairman intimated that he would wish to question the identified decision maker(s) if any of the anticipated decisions were not made.

05.OS.46 CUSTOMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

The Committee received the draft Inquiry Project Outline (Scoping) Document prepared and compiled by the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel in connection with its projected scrutiny inquiry into the Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement.

The Committee members hoped that one of the achievements of the inquiry would be a reduction in the number of incorrectly issued penalty notices.

It was **AGREED**:

- (1) That the Inquiry Project Outline (Scoping) Document be approved.
- (2) That the requested budget allocation of £1,200 for the conduct of the inquiry (including provision for market research) be approved.

05.OS.47 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (ENCLOSED)

The Committee received and noted the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its three associated Panels for the remainder of 2005/06, which illustrated the status of current inquiries, ongoing items and issues presently being monitored.

05.OS.48 SMOKING IN PLACES - CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Head of Corporate and Policy Services reported receipt of a Government Consultation Paper on proposals to introduce a ban on smoking in public places and sought the Committee's instructions on a request from the Chorley and South Ribble Primary Care Trust for the Council's views on its proposed response to the consultation.

It was **AGREED** that both the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel be each requested to consider the Consultation Paper and submit their respective views to the next meeting of this Committee on 13 October 2005.

05.OS.49 SELF EVALUATION WORKSHOP

The Chairman reminded the Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Self-Evaluation Workshop to be held on 20 October 2005 and asked the Members to encourage all members of their respective political groups to attend the workshop.

Chair