

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 17 November 2005

**Present:** Councillor J Walker (Chair), and Councillors E Bell, Mrs P Case, T McGowan, R Parr, M Perks and Mrs S Walsh

## 05.OS.61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

## 05.OS.62 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTEREST

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

## 05.OS.63 MINUTES

**RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 October 2005 be confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.**

## 05.OS.64 BUSINESS PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS

The Committee received the second quarter updates of the Business Plan for the period 1 July to 30 September 2005 for Corporate and Policy Services, Human Resources, Legal Services and Finance Services.

Under the Corporate and Policy Services Business Plan, the Committee referred to the possibility of the Committee looking at the Community Safety Partnership.

Under the Human Resources Business Plan the Committee made reference to the continuing challenge of reducing sickness absence and the need to closely monitor the situation.

The Committee made reference to the payment of invoices and the various checks and balances and internal credit checks on their payment.

The Director of Legal Services reported on the work of her services in dealing with the implementation of the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 and the high volume of hearings as well as the reduction in the number of local searches being processed by the Land Charges Unit resulting in a fall in income for the Unit.

Members made reference to the quality accreditation, LEXCEL, the Law Society's Practice Management Standards, which the Service had recently been reaccredited. Reference was also made to the preparation of an Outline Business Case in respect of the implementation of a case management software system for Legal Services, which would enable a more effective time recording, monitoring of the progress of cases and provide better performance information. Members considered there was a need to prioritise on these efficiencies.

It was **AGREED** that the Business Plans for Corporate and Policy Services, Finance Services, Human Resources and Legal Services be noted.

## 05.OS.65 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS

The Head of Corporate and Policy Services submitted the quarterly monitoring reports on the performance against the Council's Best Value Performance Indicators and Key Performance Indicators for the current Municipal Year up to 30 September 2005.

The Committee noted the increase in the cost of waste collection per house and that this was being dealt with, as well as the length of time taken to deal with planning applications.

It was **AGREED** to note the Performance Monitoring Reports.

#### **05.OS.66 REVENUE BUDGET 2005/06 - MONITORING**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Finance setting out the Council's current financial position as compared against the budgets and efficiency savings targets it had set itself for 2005/06 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.

The report indicated that it was appropriate to take further actions to help ensure the budget came back into balance and Members were informed of the actions until such time as the budget position improved.

The Committee **AGREED** to note the report and the actions to be taken to help ensure the budget comes back into balance.

#### **05.OS.67 CAPITAL BUDGET 2005/06 - MONITORING**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Finance setting out the current expenditure position for the 2005/06 Capital Programme and forecast the revisions made to the categorisation of schemes in the Capital Programme.

Members were notified of the action that will be taken with budget holders to identify savings to match expenditure increases and the review and analysis of the schemes.

The Committee **AGREED** to note the report and the action to be taken.

#### **05.OS.68 DRAFT BUDGET OUTLOOK 2006/2007 - 2008/2009**

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the draft financial position of the Council following the initial drafting of the 2006/2007 budget and the budget forecast for the following two financial years.

Members were informed that significant savings will be required over the next three years and that the key factors of, the level of grant settlement and planning delivery grant would influence the budget gap.

The Committee **AGREED** to note the report.

#### **05.OS.69 BUDGET SCRUTINY PROCESS FOR 2006/07**

The Committee received a report of the Chair informing Members of the proposed process for scrutinising the Cabinets draft budget proposal for 2006/2007, which will be submitted for consultation after the Executive Cabinet meeting scheduled for 12 January 2006.

The report indicated that this Committee was keen to demonstrate that it had added value to the budget setting process and consequently it proposed a slightly different approach to that had been taking in previous years.

The report indicated the specific issues and areas of non-performance that scrutiny could look at in more detail and the proposed arrangement of the Scrutiny meeting in February 2006.

The Committee **AGREED** to note the report.

#### **05.OS.70 FORWARD PLAN**

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

The Committee noted that some of the items on the previous Forward Plan had been dealt with and some items rolled forward to the December Plan. A request was received for the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel to look at the item or decision on partnering/outsourcing proposals for Property Services and the Markets function.

The Committee **AGREED** that the Plan be noted and that if time allows, the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel look at the issue of partnering/outsourcing proposals for Property Services and the Markets function due to be considered by the Executive Cabinet on 12 January 2006.

#### **05.OS.71 ACCESSIBILITY OF CYCLING AS A LEISURE PURSUIT IN CHORLEY**

The Committee received from the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel their draft final report on their inquiry entitled "Accessibility of Cycling as a Leisure Pursuit in Chorley".

The report identified the findings and recommendations that had come out of the inquiry.

The Committee **AGREED** that the report and under mentioned recommendations be approved and forwarded to the Executive Cabinet for consideration.

##### Aims/Objectives

##### a) To reduce the confrontation between the various activities

1. That those landowners who have shared user routes improve the environmental conditions by improving sight lines and visibility.
2. That the Council looks into the feasibility of creating short circular routes suitable only for families driving out to the country to take their children for a five mile ride as exists in National Parks and some Access Areas.
3. That the Council looks into the feasibility of creating a mountain bike trail in Rivington, which would be a year, round activity and would be good for the local economy.
4. That the Council looks into the feasibility of creating a purpose built off-road leisure track for youngsters and children in Yarrow Valley Park (Youths and youngsters with support to take over the design and maintenance of this facility which would enhance the vision that the Council is considering sports for all and encouraging children/youths to have a "Healthy Lifestyle".
5. That the Council looks into the feasibility of creating a safe cycle route along the Yarrow Valley and River Goit between White Coppice and Anglezarke.

6. That the Council examines ways to improve the publicity of existing routes.

Aims/Objectives

- b) To reduce the confrontation between the various activities

7. That the Council facilitates the education of users by a Code of Conduct to focus on the rights and responsibilities of all user groups in order to reduce ambiguities concerning issues such as rights of way, passing etiquette, the increase use of bells, control of dogs and the recommended speeds that should be adjusted for safety and courtesy.
8. That those land owners who have shared use routes should have information panels to the access points detailing the Code of Conduct and a contact point to where comments, complaints and conflicts can be reported.
9. That the Council looks into the feasibility of funding cycling and proficiency schemes within the Borough. (NB already a LCC function via Education in Schools).

Aims/Objectives

- c) To identify the current areas and can they be extended

10. That the responsible authority be requested to improve both off-road and the Sustrans route 55 through Chorley as well as developing the route through Chorley to join up the route from Preston to Wigan.
11. That the responsible authority be requested to complete the Sustrans route 55 as far as Adlington, to provide the connecting route via route 91 to the Rivington areas, as well as forming the primary route where other on/off-road cycling schemes can join to form a hub in the future.
12. That the Council examines ways of better provision to encourage children to cycle to school; this would ease local traffic congestion. For example the off-road cycling scheme along Foxholes Road (near Tesco's supermarket), but stops abruptly at the roundabout where it matters. This scheme should be extended along Balshaw Lane; the road is wide enough, if the grass verge was used on both sides of the road. This needs some commitment, it has been done in many towns elsewhere.
13. Where an off-road scheme finishes the cyclist is left to rejoin the highway, by a halt sign, as in the design on the A6 at Cuerden and A581 at Euxton. A good design has been used in Blackburn.

#### **05.OS.72 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INQUIRIES - UPDATE**

The Committee received and noted the update reports from the Associate Chairs on the recent activities of their respective Panels.

#### **05.OS.73 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2005/2006**

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, inquires, ongoing items and issues currently being monitored.

Chair

