

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 6 December 2010

Present: Councillor Adrian Lowe (Chair), Councillor Alan Cullens (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Julia Berry, Marie Gray, Alison Hansford, Pat Haughton, Harold Heaton, Rosie Russell, Edward Smith and Peter Wilson

Also in attendance: Councillor Kevin Joyce (Executive Member - Transformation)

Officers in attendance: Gary Hall (Director of Transformation), Jamie Carson (Director of People and Places), Carol Russell (Democratic Services Manager) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

10.OS.55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Perks and Joyce Snape.

10.OS.56 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were declared.

10.OS.57 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that no requests had been received by any member of the public.

10.OS.58 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 November 2010 be held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

10.OS.59 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 11 NOVEMBER 2010

No issues were raised by any Member of the Committee on the minutes for the Executive Cabinet meeting held on 11 November 2010.

10.OS.60 2011/12 BUDGET PRINCIPLES

The Director of Transformation submitted a report on Budget Principles for 2011/12 that was presented by Councillor Kevin Joyce - Executive Member for Transformation.

It was reported that the Executive would consider the Councils budget, based upon a set of core principles to be discussed and agreed at Executive Cabinet on 9 December 2010. The key principles to be adopted were:

- To continue to be a high performing Council
- To contain Council Tax increases
- To protect the Chorley community from the impact of the current economic situation
- Continuing to provide value for money
- Safeguarding front line services and focusing on the removal of bureaucracy and managerial posts
- Looking for opportunities to share services and generate additional revenue
- Preparing for the future and uncertainty over public finances
- To look to reduce debt and the consequent financing charges

It was explained that in previous years the current Executive Cabinet had been able to present their proposed budget prior to the budget setting meeting at Council. The ability to achieve this for 2011/12 had been restricted due to the continued uncertainty regarding the concessionary travel scheme.

In addition it was reported there were a number of proposed changes to funding mechanisms that may occur such as the new home bonus scheme and deregulation of planning fees, which were yet to be approved. It was hoped that some clarity would be given upon the publication of the draft revenue support grant figures, to be revealed shortly.

RESOLVED – That the information and budget principles for 2011/12, outlined in the submitted report be noted.

10.OS.61 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - ALLOTMENTS

The Committee received and considered the final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Allotments. The Chair, Councillor Julia Berry, outlined the work that had been undertaken along with the key findings and recommendations.

The recommendations had the capacity to increase revenue and minimise running costs, with no major budget implications to the Council. Some were organisational and would establish best practice under the following main headings:

- Provision and demand for allotments
- Tenancy Agreements and monitoring and inspection reports
- Allotment charges
- Community growing
- Community management of allotments

It was reported that the Chair of the Chorley Allotments Society had contacted the Council ahead of the meeting, concerned that the views that he had expressed in relation to water charges had not been correctly represented. The Chair noted Mr Taylors comments but was satisfied that no misrepresentation had been made.

Concern was expressed about the use of the current Neighbourhood Areas for the 50/50 allocation split for plots on new allotment sites, considering that the distances between some wards were too great and asked if the Director of People and Places could look into a better arrangement.

RESOLVED

1. **That the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Allotments be approved and submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Cabinet for their consideration.**

10.OS.62 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

10.OS.63 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Committee received and considered the final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Asset Management. The Chair, Councillor Alan Cullens, explained that the Group had recommended a set of strategic principles for the Executive's consideration.

The Chair gave particular thanks to Keith Davy, Chorley Property Services Leader, Liberata for his valuable contribution to the work of the group.

The Group was looking to establish a further review on the use of the Lancastrian room, to commence early in the new year.

The Chair of the Committee sought assurances that the information relating to Chorley Community Housing in the report would be updated before being presented to the next meeting of the Executive Cabinet.

RESOLVED

1. **That the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Asset Management be approved and submitted to the Executive Cabinet for consideration.**
2. **That a further Overview and Scrutiny Task Group on the Use of the Lancastrian Room, Town Hall be established to be Chaired by Councillor Alan Cullens.**

At this stage, the meeting was re-opened to the public.

10.OS.64 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

(a) Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Committee received a copy of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2010/11.

The Programme would be updated to include the review on the use of the Lancastrian room, Town Hall.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be noted.

(b) Forward Plan

The Committee received the Forward Plan for the period 1 December 2010 to 31 March 2011.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

Chair