

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Agenda and Reports

For consideration on

Monday, 6th December 2010

In Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Chorley

At 6.30 pm



PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC QUESTIONS/SPEAKING AT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETINGS

- Questions must be submitted to the Democratic Services Section by no later than midday, two working days before the day of the meeting to allow time to prepare appropriate responses and investigate issues if necessary.
- A maximum period of 3 minutes will be allowed for a question from a member of the public on an item on the agenda. A maximum period of 30 minutes to be allocated for public questions if necessary at each meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This will provide an opportunity for members of the public to raise and ask questions on any issue falling within the remit of the Committee.

26 November 2010

Dear Councillor

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 6TH DECEMBER 2010

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Chorley on Monday, 6th December 2010 commencing at 6.30 pm.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for absence**

2. **Declarations of Any Interests**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda. If the interest arises **only** as result of your membership of another public body or one to which you have been appointed by the Council then you only need to declare it if you intend to speak.

If the personal interest is a prejudicial interest, you must withdraw from the meeting. Normally you should leave the room before the business starts to be discussed. You do, however, have the same right to speak as a member of the public and may remain in the room to enable you to exercise that right and then leave immediately. In either case you must not seek to improperly influence a decision on the matter.

3. **Public Questions**

Members of the public who have requested the opportunity to ask a question(s) on an item on the agenda will be asked to put their question(s) to the Committee. Each member of the public will be allowed to ask one supplementary question within his/her allocated 3 minutes.

4. **Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 November 2010 (enclosed).

5. **Executive Cabinet - 11 November 2010 (Pages 5 - 10)**

The Committee are asked to consider the minutes of the last Executive Cabinet meeting held on 8 November 2010 (enclosed)

6. **2011/12 Budget Principles**

To consider the report of the Director of Transformation (to follow)

7. **Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Allotments (Pages 11 - 26)**

The report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Allotments is enclosed for the approval of the Committee.

8. **Future agenda items**

a) **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme (Pages 27 - 28)**

To consider the enclosed updated Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2010/11.

b) **Forward Plan (Pages 29 - 32)**

To consider the enclosed Forward Plan for the Council for the four month period from 1 December 2010 – 31 March 2011.

9. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

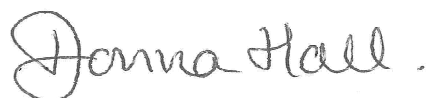
To consider the exclusion of the press and public for the following item of business on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

10. **Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Asset Management**

The report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Asset Management for approval of the Committee (to follow).

11. **Any other item(s) the Chair decides is/are urgent**

Yours sincerely



Donna Hall
Chief Executive

Dianne Scambler
Democratic and Member Services Officer
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Distribution

1. Agenda and reports to all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Adrian Lowe (Chair), Councillor Alan Cullens (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Julia Berry, Marie Gray, Alison Hansford, Pat Haughton, Harold Heaton, Mark Perks, Rosie Russell, Edward Smith, Joyce Snape and Peter Wilson for attendance.
2. Agenda and reports to Donna Hall (Chief Executive), Gary Hall (Director of Transformation), Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy),

Jamie Carson (Director of People and Places), Chris Moister (Head of Governance), Carol Russell (Democratic Services Manager) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer) for attendance.

This information can be made available to you in larger print or on audio tape, or translated into your own language. Please telephone 01257 515118 to access this service.

આ માહિતીનો અનુવાદ આપની પોતાની ભાષામાં કરી શકાય છે. આ સેવા સરળતાથી મેળવવા માટે કૃપા કરી, આ નંબર પર ફોન કરો: 01257 515822

ان معلومات کا ترجمہ آپکی اپنی زبان میں بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہ خدمت استعمال کرنے کیلئے براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر ٹیلیفون

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 8 November 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, Joyce Snape and Peter Wilson

Officers in attendance: Gary Hall (Director of Transformation), Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy), Jamie Carson (Director of People and Places), Chris Sinnott (Head of Policy) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

10.OS.45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mark Perks.

10.OS.46 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

Councillor Julia Berry declared an interest in Item 7 – Chorley Partnership 2nd Qtr 2010/11 Performance Report in relation to the Chorley Help Hub project.

10.OS.47 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 31 August 2010 be held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

10.OS.48 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

10.OS.49 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 2 SEPTEMBER AND 14 OCTOBER 2010

No issues were raised by any Member of the Committee on the minutes for the Executive Cabinet meetings held on 2 September and 14 October 2010.

10.OS.50 CHORLEY COUNCIL PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - SECOND QUARTER OF 2010/11

The Head of Policy presented the report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy setting out the performance against the Corporate Strategy and the Councils National Indicators for the second quarter of 2010/11.

The Corporate Strategy 2010/11 identified 33 key projects. The overall performance of the key projects remained excellent with 91% of projects being completed, closed off, or rated 'green' and progressing ahead. This was an improvement on the last quarters performance. The 9% of projects that were rated 'red' or 'amber' were expected to be brought back on track over the next quarter.

Overall performance of the key measures in the Corporate Strategy remained strong, with 93% of measures performing above target or within the 5% tolerance. Where performance was below target, action plans had been developed that outlined what action would be taken to improve performance.

Members commented on the ending of the free swimming scheme. The report stated that evaluation had shown that although there had been a good public take up of free swimming, this was mainly by people who were existing swimmers rather than new starters. It was however noted that the scheme had ended when central funding had stopped.

The Director of People and Places reported that the evaluation work had been carried out nationally and that the link to the results would be circulated to Members. The document is available on the Department for Culture, Media and Sports website <http://www.culture.gov.uk/publications/7190.aspx>

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a link to the national evaluation report on the DCMS's website be emailed out to Members.

10.OS.51 CHORLEY PARTNERSHIP - PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR SECOND QUARTER OF 2010/11

The Head of Policy outlined the report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy that updated Members on the performance of the Local Strategic Partnership for the second quarter of 2010/11.

The information provided was based on performance against the 2007 Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement Targets and it was explained that measures would be developed in line with the new Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2020 and be reported on, from April 2011.

Overall crime had reduced by 6.5% compared to this period last year and reductions had been seen in most categories of crime and the number of new businesses being established was now back on target and performing well, with 33 new businesses being established against a target of 26.

Chorley Partnership had commissioned 9 projects for 2010/11. Seven of these projects were rated green, indicating that performance is as planned or ahead of target.

Only one of the projects was currently off track and rated as red. The Chorley Help Hub had been delayed due to delays with the lease negotiations. Until suitable premises were secured the project would be on hold.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10.OS.52 BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING STATEMENTS

The Committee received the Business Plan and Monitoring Statements for the first six months of 2010/11.

(a) Partnerships, Planning and Policy Directorate

The Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy reported against the key actions and performance indicators.

There had been a number of notable achievements for the Directorate that included:

- The development of an Alcohol Improvement Programme aimed at reducing alcohol related admissions.
- Another successful Chorley Picnic in the Park event that included the Chorley Smile Awards.
- Working in partnership with local voluntary sector businesses to secure 12 new vacancies in the Future Jobs Fund programme.

The report also highlighted those actions that were currently behind schedule, giving details for the delays and what action would be taken to get them back on track.

Performance against the processing of planning applications as off target due to a significant increase in planning applications during the first 6 months of the year when compared to the same period last year.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(b) People and Places Directorate

The Director of People and Places reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators.

Key achievements for the directorate included:

- A Civic Society Award for the Coach House Café at Astley Park
- The retention of the Green Flags at Yarrow Valley Country Park, Tatton Recreation Ground and Withnell Linear Park
- Country Park accreditation for Yarrow Valley Country Park

The majority of key actions in the Business Improvement Plan had been delivered on schedule and an explanation had been given for those that were currently off target.

It was noted that measures taken to improve performance against NI195b and NI195c improved street and environmental cleanliness: levels of detritus and graffiti had been successful and there was evidence to suggest that this would be back on target in the next quarter.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(c) Transformation Directorate

The Director of Transformation reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators.

Notable successes for the directorate included:

- A 100% completion of staff Performance Appraisals
- Attaining an unqualified audit opinion on the statement of accounts.
- Implementation of a cycle to work scheme.

The Transformation Directorates key focus for improvement in the first part of 2010 had been on evaluating options in respect of the Councils ICT infrastructure and network. Replacements had been procured and the second half of the year would see the implementation phase.

Members were informed by the Director of People and Places that Members would shortly be receiving information via intheknow, on improvements to the way the contact centre deal with contact from Councillors. A request was made for an update on the virtual Town Hall project and Members asked if the viewing of plans within the planning portal on the website could be improved upon.

It was also reported that the Council had introduced a single financial system across the shared service with South Ribble Council that would progress against the milestones and deliver further financial savings.

Analysis of the key performance indicators showed that performance across the directorate had been maintained and targets achieved.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That an update on the Virtual Town Hall be provided to Members.**

10.OS.53 TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

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

(a) Allotments

Councillor Julia Berry reported that the Group had now met four times and were due to meet again the following day.

At this meeting the Group would be asked to consider all the information they had gathered to date and make recommendations on the management and maintenance of Allotments.

At its final meeting at the end of November, the Group would be asked to consider the draft Final Report. It was anticipated that the Groups findings would be presented to both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Cabinet meetings in December.

(b) Asset Management

Councillor Alan Cullens reported that the Group had now met four times and that the draft final report would be considered at its next meeting later that week.

The Task Group would also be asked to consider other information and look at further options for changes in the Town Hall and Union Street offices at this meeting.

It was anticipated that the final report would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Cabinet at their meetings in December.

RESOLVED – That the reports be noted.

10.OS.54 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**(a) Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan**

The Committee received a copy of the updated Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2010/11. In light of the recent Government Spending Review Members considered moving budget scrutiny to early next year.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

(b) Forward Plan

The Committee received the Forward Plan for the period 1 November 2010 to 28 February 2011.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

Chair

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 11 November 2010

Present: Councillor Pat Case (Deputy Leader of the Council in the Chair) and Councillors Eric Bell, Peter Malpas, Greg Morgan and John Walker

Also in attendance:

Lead Members: Councillors Harold Heaton (Development Control), Keith Iddon (Licensing) and Rosemary Russell (Health and Older People)

Other Members: Councillors Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Henry Caunce, Alan Cullens, Anthony Gee, Alison Hansford, Pat Haughton, June Molyneaux, Alan Platt, Debra Platt, Geoffrey Russell and Peter Wilson

10.EC.219 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of the Executive Leader (Councillor Peter Goldsworthy) and Councillor Kevin Joyce.

10.EC.220 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by any of the Executive Cabinet members in any of the meeting's agenda items.

10.EC.221 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 14 October 2010 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

10.EC.222 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Executive Leader reported that there had been no requests from any members of the public to speak on any of the meeting's agenda items.

10.EC.223 CHORLEY COUNCIL PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - SECOND QUARTER OF 2010/11

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy which set out and reviewed the Authority's performance in respect of the key projects and performance measures included in the Corporate Strategy, together with a number of other national indicators measured locally, during the second quarter of 2010/11.

The report revealed a good positive performance, with 91% of the key projects either having been completed or on track for completion. The report explained the reasons for the delays in the two projects rated "amber" and the one project rated "red", each of which were expected to be brought back on track during the current quarter period.

93% of the measures identified in the Corporate Strategy were performing either above target or within the 5% tolerance and action plans had been put in place to improve performance in relation to these four measures.

The report also clarified the circumstances affecting the four performance indicators measured locally, indicating that a full complement of staff within the Development Control Section should assist in the Section's performance in the processing of planning applications.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.224 CHORLEY PARTNERSHIP - PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR SECOND QUARTER OF 2010/11

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy on the activities of the Chorley Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) particularly through the delivery of the objectives of the Lancashire Area Agreement and the 2007 Sustainable Community Strategy over the second quarter of 2010/11.

The Executive Member (Policy and Performance) highlighted the following significant statistics and trends revealed in the report:

- The overall level of crime had reduced by 6.5% compared to the same period in 2009/10, with reductions in most categories of crime.
- The target for the establishment of 26 new businesses during the quarter had been exceeded by 7.
- 7 of the 9 projects commissioned by the Chorley Partnership in 2010/11 were proceeding on or ahead of schedule. The “amber” rated project to develop the Cotswold Community Kitchen was expected to be progressed following the recent appointment of a Co-ordinator. Following delays caused by problems arising with the premises proposed to be used by Help the Homeless for the Chorley Help Hub, further discussions were taking place on ways of progressing the project.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.225 FOOD WASTE COLLECTION SCHEME

The Director of People and Places presented a report seeking endorsement of a scheme for the collection of food waste from the majority of households within the Borough in accordance with the requirements of the adopted Lancashire Waste Strategy.

Under the scheme, residents provided with a brown bin for garden waste would be requested to place food waste within the brown bin for collection on a fortnightly basis. Terraced, and other properties without gardens, would be provided with a brown 23 or 25 litre outdoor caddie for food waste, which would be collected on a weekly basis.

The preferred scheme would entail an initial one-off capital cost of £30,000, with collection costs having already been factored into the current 10 year contract with Veolia.

Decisions made:

- (1) That the scheme outlined in the submitted report for the collection of food waste separately for composting from households in the Borough be approved for implementation.**
- (2) That the appropriate procurement exercise and publicity campaign be commenced in early 2011 to ensure that the scheme is able to be operated in accordance with the Lancashire Waste Strategy.**

Reasons for decisions:

1. The preferred scheme for collecting food waste will ensure the Council meets the requirements of the Lancashire Waste Strategy, including increasing its recycling rate.
2. The scheme will enable the Council to continue to receive the £800,000 per annum waste cost share agreement payment from Lancashire County Council.
3. The preferred scheme represents the lowest cost option, with an initial capital outlay of £30,000 and no ongoing revenue commitment.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

1. Continuing with the current refuse collection and recycling arrangements would result in the Council being ineligible for the waste cost share agreement payment from the County Council.
2. An alternative scheme using a small kitchen caddie and compostable liners prior to depositing food waste in a larger receptacle would involve considerably more expenditure.

10.EC.226 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY, 2010/11

The Director of Transformation presented a report on the Council's Treasury Management activity and performance up to 30 September 2010.

The report confirmed that the Council continued to comply with the prudential indicators specified in the adopted Treasury and Investment Strategies and that investments continued to be made with only highly rated institutions.

The report also indicated that the Council, on average, had received a return of 0.66% on its surplus cash balances of £8.2m during the first half of 2010/11. Therefore, in order to achieve the maximum interest, the Executive Cabinet was recommended to endorse an increase in the investment limits in approved institutions within a general control framework.

Decisions made:

1. **That the report be noted.**
2. **That the Council be recommended to approve the following increases in its investment limits:**
 - (a) **term deposits with the part nationalised banks be limited to £3m;**
 - (b) **term deposits with other institutions be limited to £2m;**
 - (c) **deposits in call accounts and Money Market Funds be limited to £3m;**
 - (d) **deposits with local authorities be limited to £3m.**
 - (e) **no deposit with any one institution shall exceed £3m, and all deposits shall continue to be only with UK institutions.**

Reason for decisions:

To enable better placement of the Council's cash balances, consistent with the overriding priority of security and liquidity, and to optimise returns.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

10.EC.227 REVENUE BUDGET, 2010/11 - MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Transformation presented a report monitoring the Council's financial performance during the second quarter of 2010/11 in comparison with the budgetary and efficiency savings targets for the financial year.

The report revealed that savings of £225,000 had already been achieved in the first half of the financial year and that it was anticipated that additional savings would be made during the year sufficient to meet the expected annual overall saving of £360,000.

The projected outturn showed a forecast underspend of around £153,000, which would be added to the Council's working balances.

Decisions made:

- (1) That the report be noted.**
- (2) That approval be given to the use of additional Planning Fee income received in 2010/11 to finance the one-off software upgrade to the Idox system currently in use in the Planning and Building Control Sections.**

Reason for decisions:

To ensure the Council's budgetary targets are achieved.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

10.EC.228 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**Decision made:**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

10.EC.229 ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURES**(a) Revenues and Benefits Shared Services**

The Director of Transformation circulated a report on proposals for a phased implementation of a shared Revenues and Benefits service between Chorley and South Ribble Councils, including Benefit Fraud and residual Exchequer functions.

The aim of the restructure proposals, which had been compiled in close collaboration with affected staff from both authorities, was to create a leaner, flexible, and sustainable shared service that was responsive to customer needs, whilst generating significant financial savings to both Councils.

Decisions made:

- (1) That the proposals contained within the confidential report of the Director of Transformation for a phased implementation of a shared Revenues and Benefits service between Chorley and South Ribble Councils, including Benefit Fraud and residual Exchequer functions, be approved for consultation with staff and trade unions, with a view to firm decisions being made at the next Executive Cabinet meeting.
- (2) That the planned phased approach to effect financial efficiencies and transform the Service Delivery Model across both authorities, should the proposals be implemented, be accepted.

Reason for decisions:

In order to facilitate a phased approach to securing a sustainable shared Revenues and Benefits service between Chorley and South Ribble Councils.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

1. A Revenues and Benefits service hosted externally.
2. Enhanced single Council service delivery.
3. One council outsources all Revenues and Benefits services to the other Council.

(b) Shared Financial Services Restructure

The Executive Cabinet considered a report tabled at the meeting by the Director of Transformation on proposals to restructure the Chorley/South Ribble Shared Financial Services following a review of the efficiency of the current partnership since its inception almost two years ago.

The review had entailed an assessment of the level of resources required to ensure that the structure of the service was “fit for purpose” and able to address future challenges and customer requirements. The need to focus on core activity and establish structures and procedures that would ensure that the service was delivered in the most efficient and cost effective manner as possible had been paramount in the compilation of the recommendations.

The recommendations under consideration proposed a reduction in the total number of posts undertaking the shared functions and full year budget savings in the region of £120,000 (excluding savings envisaged in respect of the planned Revenues and Benefits shared service) to be shared equally between Chorley and South Ribble Councils.

Decision made:

That the proposals contained within the confidential report of the Director of Transformation for the restructure of the Shared Financial Services unit be approved for consultation with staff and trade unions, with a view to firm decisions being made at the next Executive Cabinet meeting.

Reasons for decision:

The proposed restructure will:

- Respond to changing customer needs and improving customer satisfaction;

- Provide workforce development and staff resilience at critical periods in the annual accounting cycle and succession planning;
- Ensure a 'fit for purpose' structure that will be sustainable in the long term,
- Achieve continued value for money through efficiencies.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

All feasible structure options have been assessed.

(c) Restructure of People and Places Directorate; Strategic Housing section; Policy and Communications section; and Administrative and Transactional Services

The Chief Executive circulated a report which highlighted the responses received from staff and UNISON to the proposals to restructure teams within the People and Places Directorate; Strategic Housing section; Policy and Communications section; and Administrative and Transactional Services which had been approved for consultation purposes at the last Executive Cabinet meeting on 14 October 2010.

The report summarised the principal concerns, issues and arguments contained within the representations received and recommended, in conclusion, that, following a careful assessment of the responses, no changes be made in the proposed new structures.

While the request that consent to the final decisions on the proposals be delegated to the respective Executive Members, a number of Councillors sought a short delay of the final decisions to allow Members more time to assimilate the consultation responses.

Decision made:

That decisions on the recommendations contained in the confidential report of the Chief Executive submitted to the last Executive Cabinet meeting on 14 October 2010 for an organisational restructure affecting the People and Places Directorate; Strategic Housing section; Policy and Communications section; and Administrative and Transactional Services be delegated to the appropriate Executive Members responsible for the respective portfolios, but that the decisions be deferred for at least one week to allow all Members to consider further the confidential report tabled at the meeting summarising the responses of staff and UNISON on the proposals.

Reason for decision:

To allow Members the opportunity of reading and assessing the feedback from staff and UNISON on the restructure proposals agreed at the last Executive Cabinet meeting for consultation purposes.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

A number of alternative revised staffing structures have been evaluated and rejected.

Executive Leader

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Allotments

November 2010



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1. PREFACE

The Scrutiny inquiry into Allotments was requested by two members of the public.

We collected evidence from a number of different sources including allotment holders, the Community Growing Officer for the Council and consulted the Chorley Disability Forum.

A site visit of allotment sites was undertaken by the Group and documentation was analysed that included current Tenancy Agreements and a report on Allotments and Community Growing that had been approved by the Executive Cabinet, outlining current allotment provision and arrangements.

The recommendations have the capacity to increase revenue and minimise running costs with no major budget implications to the Council, some are organisational and will establish best practice.

I would like to thank the Task Group Members for their deliberations, the Officers and those who made a contribution to this report.

Councillor Julia Berry
(Chair)

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of two members of the public, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked the Task Group to undertake a scrutiny inquiry to look at Allotments in Chorley.

Objectives

1. To assess current provision and demand for allotments within Chorley
2. To examine the content of the tenancy agreements and rules governing occupation.
3. To assess the current monitoring and inspection procedures of allotment sites.
4. To review the current charging mechanism against the cost of administration.
5. Encourage community growing/partnership working across the Borough.
6. To consider the potential for forming Committees and User Groups within individual allotment sites to give tenants greater control and allow them to cover some of the functions currently carried out by officers.

Desired Outcomes

1. Increase the provision of allotments through standardisation of existing and future plots and fairness of allocation.
2. Improve management controls to enforce higher standards on allotment plots, which in turn will improve their overall appearance.
3. Ensure charges for allotments are fair and reflective of other authorities and where possible cover the management costs.
4. Introduce guidance and education of residents on the waiting list to encourage growing on alternative sites/shared facilities or at home.
5. Encourage future self management of the Allotments

Task Group Membership

Councillor Julia Berry
 Councillor Anthony Gee
 Councillor Marie Gray
 Councillor Alison Hansford
 Councillor Harold Heaton
 Councillor June Molyneaux

Officer Support:

Lead Officers

Martin Walls	Head of Streetscene Services
Andrew Brown	Parks and Open Spaces Officer (Development)
Alan Bothamley	Streetscene Co-ordinator (Grounds Maintenance)

Democratic Services

Dianne Scambler Democratic and Member Services Officer

Meetings

The meeting papers of the Group can be found on the Council's website:

www.chorley.gov.uk/scrutiny. This includes the inquiry project outline and other relevant information on policy and procedures.

Contribution of Evidence

The Task Group would like to thank all those who have provided evidence and contributed to the Inquiry, including:

Miss Eleanor Smith,

Mrs Iris Smith,

Mr Bill Taylor, Chair of Chorley Allotments Society

Eileen Bee, Chorley Disability Forum

Jennifer Moore, Head of Planning Services, Chorley Council,

Steve Aldous, Enforcement Officer, Chorley Council,

Sarah Turner, Community Growing Officer, Chorley Council/PCT,

Lindsey Ralston, Assistant Parks and Open Spaces Officer, Chorley Council

Recommendations

The Executive Cabinet is asked to consider the following recommendations:

Provision and demand for allotments

- That applicants apply annually to the Council for an allotment.
- That vacant plots from within existing allotment provision be offered to applicants who have been on the waiting list the longest.
- That applicants on the general 'any site' waiting list only be allowed refusal of one plot, then placed on to the relevant Neighbourhood Area list.
- That any new sites be allocated by a 50/50 split between the Neighbourhood Area applicants and the general 'any site' applicants to support Neighbourhood Working.
- That Chorley Allotments Society be consulted on the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.
- That the Council considers the provision for allotments when negotiating Section 106 monies.
- That the Head of Planning Services, Chorley Council be requested to develop a set of guidelines and good practice for use by private allotment owners.
- That the Chorley Allotments Society working in partnership with the Council be encouraged to facilitate an exchange scheme across all the sites.

Tenancy Agreement and monitoring and inspection procedures

- That the Tenancy agreement be reviewed to include:
 - Appropriate rules and conditions to promote higher standards of maintenance
 - Definitive guidance on non compliance issues, to protect the Council's position.
- That the Council provide suitable perimeter fencing on all its new sites that will be adequately maintained.
- That the Council be responsible for the delineation of the actual plot, but that the allotment holder be then responsible for defining their boundaries, using safe and suitable materials.

- That subject to consent, the allotment holder be responsible for erecting structures on the plot for the purposes of storage and cultivation using safe and suitable materials within a total floor space (to be determined)
- That the new Tenancy Agreement be implemented on all new sites and when an existing allotment is occupied by a new holder.

-

Allotment charges

- That the annual charge of £39.50 be increased annually on 1 April in line with inflation.
- That the concessionary rate be phased out over the next two years, 75% of rental to be charged in 2011/12 with the full rental being charged in 2012/13.
- That the annual charge should be regardless of plot size.
- That it be Council policy to reduce the larger plots as and when they become available, dependant on the site and demand for that location. This would be monitored and the work undertaken, according to need.
- That the present mains water provision be maintained on the two sites but at cost neutral to the Council.
- That the allotment holders be charged for the water provision based on the usage of the previous rental year. The charge would be implemented in 2012/13 based upon water usage in 2011/12.
- That the provision of a free water butt for all new allotment holders be withdrawn or offered at cost.
- That information help and guidance be provided to new allotment holders on the sustainability agenda.

Community Growing

- That the Council be encouraged to continue working closely with Lancashire Wildlife Trust over the next three years, sharing information, staff time and resources to ensure the success of the Community Food Growing Action Plan.

Community Management of Allotments

- That allotment holders on any new site be supported and encouraged to pilot a community based management arrangement.
- That the Council would endorse the value of its allotment holders joining the Chorley Allotments Society through the contract and other associated paperwork.
- That User Groups be established as and when required for the purposes of consultation.

3. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Evidence

The Group received and considered several reports and documents, these included:

1. Allotments and Community Growing Report
2. Existing Allotment Tenancy Agreement
3. Current Charging details
4. Details on the current Allotments Waiting List
5. Feedback from Chorley Disability Forum

Witnesses

The Task Group interviewed:

Mr Bill Taylor, Chair of Chorley Allotments Society and member of the public that requested a review of allotments.

Miss Eleanor Smith, (represented by Mrs Iris Smith) a member of the public that requested a review of allotments.

Sarah Turner, Community Growing Officer, Chorley Council/PCT

Jennifer Moore, Head of Planning Services, Chorley Council

Steve Aldous, Enforcement Officer, Chorley Council

Site Visit

On 16 July 2010, the Group visited a number of different allotment sites:

- Private allotment site – Brown House Lane, Wheelton
- Council allotment site – Crosse Hall Lane, Chorley
- Comparative neighbouring authorities site – Plank Lane, Leigh

4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 1: To assess current provision and demand for allotments within Chorley.

Chorley Council currently has 147 plots on seven sites with differing levels of provision and management methods, all are occupied. It is impossible to calculate accurately how long people would have to wait before being offered an allotment but on average it is estimated that this would be 7 years assuming the current level of plot turn around and growth of the waiting list continued.

Recent measures have been taken to increase the number of allotments in Chorley over the past few years. When larger plots are handed back, they are divided to create a more manageable size. In 2009 a further 33 plots were created in this way and the Council is currently in the process of looking to develop new allotment sites in the Borough.

The Astley Park Walled Garden was created in 2008 and is a community space enabling Chorley residents to learn about, watch or get involved in growing fruit and vegetables. There are two large plots and four raised beds for use by all. There are also a great number of established growing schemes, mainly in primary schools but there also some private allotment sites across the Borough.

It was recognised that the overall layout and access to allotments was crucial for disabled people. Wheelchair users need accessible parking that is reasonably close to their allotment, with level, smooth (definitely not cindered), unobstructed pathways and raised beds. Unobstructed pathways are also important for people with visual impairments. The provision of smooth (tarmac) footpaths and car parks would greatly increase costs and reduce the number of sites that could be developed. However, the Council are required to consider these issues in the future, to ensure the development of sites that are reflective of need.

The Council would also look to secure external funding for this provision and regular inspections and enforcement of good housekeeping standards through the implementation of the revised Tenancy Agreement would ensure that pathways are kept clear and accessible.

Officers were presently working in partnership with the Chorley Allotments Society, and various equality groups on different ways of working on allotments and community growing initiatives by assessing the needs of the individual.

At the start of the review Chorley had a waiting list of around 400 applicants and Members were shown various statistics on how this figure had increased since 2003, with the last couple of years providing the biggest increases. The popularity of food growing has greatly increased primarily due to publicity on television gardening shows, the environmental sustainability agenda and the current financial climate.

There are currently no fixed procedures in place to assess the present accuracy of the waiting list and Members were of the opinion that the onus should be upon the individual to inform the Council yearly of their intention to remain on the list.

The Group expressed a view about the importance of implementing Neighbourhood Area waiting lists to support the Neighbourhood Working agenda and considered that any future applicants should be allocated to their relevant area. Any applicants still wishing to remain on the waiting list for acceptance of a plot on any of the sites would only be allowed one opportunity for refusal, and then be placed on the relevant Neighbourhood Area list.

Thought was given to how the plots should be allocated when they become vacant. It was considered that available plots on existing sites would be allocated to applicants who had been on the waiting lists the longest. For all new allotment sites, the Group proposed a 50/50 allocation split between applicants on the relevant area list and the general any site list.

The Council are currently producing a Local Development Framework (LDF) that will replace the Local Plan. The LDF will be made up of a number of documents including a Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) which will allocate land for various uses such as housing, employment and leisure. As part of this document there will a review of current leisure allocations, including allotments, to identify which sites should continue to be allocated and protected and to identify whether there is a need to allocate more sites. The Chorley Allotments Society were invited to be part of the consultation process.

A request was also made for the Council to consider allotment provision when negotiating Section 106 monies in relation to planning developments across the Borough.

There was a view that more private landowners would be prepared to develop allotments if planning policy allowed them and the Group acknowledged that there seemed to be some confusion over planning permissions on private allotment sites. To this end, the Head of Planning Services at Chorley Council offered to develop a set of guidelines and good practice that would be aimed specifically at avoiding enforcement actions and applying for planning permissions on sites.

Recommendations:

- That the applicant apply annually to the Council for an allotment.
- That any vacant plot from within existing allotment provision be offered to applicants who have been on the waiting list the longest.
- That any applicant on the general 'any site' waiting list only be allowed refusal of one plot, then placed on to the relevant Neighbourhood Area list.
- That any new sites be allocated by a 50/50 split between the Neighbourhood Area applicants and the general 'any site' applicants to support Neighbourhood Working.
- That Chorley Allotments Society be consulted on the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.
- That the Council considers the provision for allotments when negotiating Section 106 monies.

- That the Head of Planning Services, Chorley Council be requested to develop a set of guidelines and good practice for use by private allotment owners.
- That the Chorley Allotments Society working in partnership with the Council be encouraged to facilitate an exchange scheme on all the sites.

Objective 2 – To examine the content of the tenancy agreements and rules of governing occupation and Objective 3 – To assess the current monitoring and inspection procedures on allotment sites.

All tenants must sign up to a Tenancy Agreement when they take up occupancy of a plot. It is this document that sets out the rules and conditions that must be adhered to.

The present Tenancy Agreement had been updated around eighteen months ago to include a condition about the keeping of chickens and rabbits on the plots.

Members were keen for these controls to be tightened in order to facilitate effective management and enforcement procedures and to avoid subjectively being applied when considering further action.

Presently Chorley has no restrictions on what can be allowed on the plots in terms of sheds and fences etc. This has led to a fairly informal arrangement. Where the plot holders have an open rein to erect what they want. This has led to some sites looking untidy as the types of sheds and fences are never uniform.

Although it was agreed that imposing such restrictions the site would look a lot tidier and easier to maintain, there was also a view that the plot holders should be allowed to recycle materials if able, in order to drive through the sustainability agenda. It was felt that the plot holder could define their own boundaries using suitable materials to erect suitable structures for storage and cultivation, subject to consent and a defined maximum floor space (to be determined)

If the allotment holder uses any materials that the Council consider to be unsafe or hazardous they will be asked to remove them from the plot and this standard will be enforced through the Tenancy Agreement.

Members acknowledged that perimeter fencing was very important for allotment holders in terms of security and that the Council should maintain this fencing more frequently. It was however recognised that 'too much' security may promote attractiveness to crime.

Recommendations:

- That the Tenancy agreement be reviewed to include:
 - Appropriate rules and conditions to promote higher standards of maintenance
 - Definitive guidance on non compliance issues, to protect the Council's position.
- That the Council provide suitable perimeter fencing on all its new sites that will be adequately maintained.

- That the Council be responsible for the delineation of the actual plot, but that the allotment holder be then responsible for defining their boundaries, using safe and suitable materials.
- That subject to consent, the allotment holder be responsible for erecting structures on the plot for the purposes of storage and cultivation using safe and suitable materials within a total floor space (to be determined)
- That the new Tenancy Agreement be implemented on all new sites and when an existing allotment is occupied by a new holder.

Objective 4 – To review the current charging mechanism against the cost of administration.

The current charge for an allotment is £39.50 per year with a 50% reduction for old age pensioners. This currently generates an income of around £6000 and does not currently cover the costs of administration and management of the allotments, which includes the provision of water on two of the sites.

The Chorley Allotments Society considered that an adequate size for a plot should be 125sqm, this would provide 4 X 15m beds to work the rotational system, plus 1 X Shed, 1 X Greenhouse, 2 fruit trees and paths.

The Council aims to provide a standard plot size of 100 – 120sqm on any new site, however this size could be reduced or increased to reflect the location and demand in an area.

Members agreed that the existing annual rental charges needed to be reviewed. Some consideration was also given to the differing sizes of the plots and whether or not this should be reflective of the price.

At present two of the sites have clean piped mains water on site. This is not controlled and open to abuse. In addition the high cost of supply impacts directly on the overall running costs to the service. On newer sites the provision of butts to encourage plot holders to take a more sustainable approach had received a mixed response, the scheme is at considerable cost to the Council and the allotment holders deem them to be too small in size.

Officers advised Members that the cost of installing clean piped mains water to the remainder of its sites, would generate high costs and it was accepted that this was not a feasible option in the current financial climate.

It was however recognised that although the present water provision should remain, this needed to be cost neutral to the Council and Members considered charging the allotment holders for this amenity. This view had also received support from the Chorley Allotment Society and there seemed to be an expectation that tenants would be prepared to pay more for the level of amenity they received.

Members considered the implementation of a new water provision charge in 2012/13. Allotment holders would be notified in April 2011 that the charges would be based on the water usage on site in 2011/12, this would allow time for any further views and feedback and it is hoped that this will encourage the allotment holders to take a more sustainable approach and promote good housekeeping and self management on site.

Members also discussed ceasing the provision of water butts. Instead new allotment holders will receive help and guidance about the sustainability agenda, advice on suitable water collection and contact details for suppliers.

Recommendations:

- That the annual charge of £39.50 be increased annually on 1 April in line with inflation.
- That the concessionary rate be phased out over the next two years, 75% of rental to be charged in 2011/12 with the full rental being charged in 2012/13.
- That the annual charge should be regardless of plot size.
- That the plot size on new sites be 100 – 120sqm unless location or demand dictates a different size.
- That it be Council policy to reduce the larger plots as and when they become available, dependant on the site and demand for that location. This would be monitored periodically and work undertaken, according to need.
- That the allotment holders be charged for the water provision based on the usage of the previous rental year. The charge would be implemented in 2012/13 based upon water usage in 2011/12
- That the provision of a free water butt to new allotment holders be withdrawn or offered at cost.
- That information, help and guidance be provided to new allotment holders on the sustainability agenda.

Objective 5 – Encourage community growing/partnership working across the borough

In 2009, NHS Central Lancashire led on and commissioned a feasibility study on Community Food Growing (CFG), and the findings were presented to the Chorley Partnership – Health and Well Being Thematic Working Group. A multi stake-holder task and finish group was established to drive forward the recommendations for Chorley.

Chorley Council are working in partnership with NHS Central Lancashire, Public Health Directorate, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and the Chorley Partnership Health and Well Being Thematic Group to deliver national, regional and local targets through a co-ordinated and integrated partnership approach.

The Primary Care Trust (PCT) has invested resources for the next three years on the promotion, co-ordination and pump priming initiatives that support CFG. Lancashire Wildlife Trust has taken the lead role to write and oversee the delivery of a Community Food Growing Action Plan for Chorley, and a Community Food Growing Officer, based at the Council offices has been employed for three days a week to implement the plan.

Recommendations:

- That the Council be encouraged to continue working closely with Lancashire Wildlife Trust over the next three years, sharing information, staff time and resources to ensure the success of the Community Food Growing Action Plan

Objective 6 – To consider the potential for forming Committees and Users Groups within individual allotment sites to give tenants greater control and allow them to cover some of the functions currently carried out by officers.

The Chair of Chorley Allotments Society commented that this group had only just started to take off and did not feel that they would be in a position to take on board this role at the present time due to a lack of resources from within. They presently have 85 members; with some being private allotment holders and already have difficulties maintaining a Committee.

The Group recognised the value and importance of the Chorley Allotments Society and wanted to encourage more allotment holders to join.

It was pleasing to learn that relations between the Council and the Society have recently improved, but an acceptance that the partnership need to be strengthened before the feasibility of such a scheme could be further explored. In the meantime Chorley Allotments Society has expressed an interest to be consulted on and become more involved.

Members and officers were also supportive of the idea of forming User Groups that were committed to the principles of inclusivity, for consultation purposes.

Members considered that allotment holders on new Council sites should be encouraged to pilot a community based management arrangement with a view to, if successful, rolling out to other sites in the future.

Recommendations:

- That allotment holders on new Council sites be supported and encouraged to pilot a community based management arrangement.
- That the Council would endorse the value of its allotment holders joining the Chorley Allotments Society through the contract and other associated paperwork.
- That User Groups be established as and when required for the purposes of consultation.

5. CONCLUSION

The Council recognises that the provision of allotments is a valuable facility for the community, providing an excellent opportunity to grow your own fruit and vegetables, meet new people and get plenty of fresh air and exercise. They are sustainable; reduce the carbon footprint of the food that we eat and the impact on our environment.

It is acknowledged that the Chorley Allotments Society provides a valuable contribution to the promotion of community cohesion by supporting all allotment holders with help and guidance to develop their plots and improve environmental sustainability and the Council will endeavour to continue working in partnership with the Society to build on our existing relationship.

The recommendations will allow for the effective management and maintenance of the Allotments and the Council are committed in continuing to look at ways of increasing provision in line with current and future demand.

Chorley Council



2008-2009
*Transforming Services:
Citizen Engagement
and Empowerment*



2009-2010
Cohesive and resilient communities



2009-2010
Better outcomes for people and places

	1 June	9 Aug	31 Aug	11 Oct	8 Nov	6 Dec	14 Feb	28 Mar
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Holding the Executive to account

Partnerships, Planning and Policy	MS PR CP				MS PR CP			
People and Places	MS				MS			
Transformation	MS				MS			
Performance of key partnerships and financial stability of certain key partners		*						
Refocusing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee		*						
Closed church yards policy - to be confirmed								
Growth Point update – to be confirmed								
Forward Plan	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Executive Cabinet minutes	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Budget Scrutiny						*	*	

Policy Development and Review of Council Services (Task and Finish Groups)

Allotments		V	S		C	R		
Asset Management		S	C		C	R		
Highways (to be confirmed)								
Tourism in Chorley								
Town Centre Vitality		F						
Neighbourhood Working							M	
Streetscene Issues			M					

External Scrutiny

Affordable Housing (South Ribble and Preston)		F					M	
Local Strategic Partnership			M					
Crime and Disorder		R						*
Health								

Other

Work Programme	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Annual Report	*							
Annual Review and Potential topics	*							
Review of the Year								*

Key:

Holding the Executive to account

- MS Business plan monitoring statements
- PR Performance report and
- CP Chorley Partnership performance report
- BS Budget scrutiny

Policy Development and Review of Council Services and External Scrutiny

- S Scoping
- C Collecting and considering evidence
- R Report
- F Feedback and action from EC
- M Monitoring
- V Verbal Update
- ML Member Learning Session

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CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 DECEMBER 2010 TO 31 MARCH 2011

1. This Forward Plan sets out the details of the 'key' and other major decisions which the Council expects to take during the next four month period. The Plan is rolled forward every month and is available to the public 14 days before the beginning of each month.
2. A 'Key' Decision is defined as:
 - 2.1 Any executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring significant expenditure or the making of savings where there is:
 - a change in service provision that impacts upon the service revenue budget by £100,000 or more; or
 - a contract worth £100,000 or more; or
 - a new or unprogrammed capital scheme of £100,000 or more.
 - 2.2 Any executive decision which will have a significant impact in environmental, physical, social or economic terms on communities living or working in two or more electoral wards. This includes any plans or strategies which are not within the meaning of the Council's Policy Framework set out in Article 4 of the Council's Constitution.
 - 2.3 Under the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution, a 'Key' Decision may not be taken, unless:
 - it is published in the Forward Plan;
 - five clear days have lapsed since the publication of the Forward Plan; and
 - if the decision is to be taken at a meeting of the Executive Cabinet, five clear days notice of the meeting has been given.
 - 2.4 The law and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in the Forward Plan in accordance with Rule 18 (General Exception) and Rule 19 (Special Urgency) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.
3. The Forward Plan has been extended to now include details of any significant issues to be considered by the Executive Cabinet, full Council and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It is hoped that this will better meet the needs of both elected Members, Officers and the public.
4. Anyone wishing to make representations about any of the matters in the schedule below may do so by contacting the officer listed. Copies of the Council's Constitution and agenda and minutes for all meetings of the Council may be accessed on the Council's website: www.chorley.gov.uk. Most meetings of the Council are open to the public and meeting dates are also on the Council's website.

Donna Hall
Chief Executive
Publication Date: 26 November 2010

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Earliest Date decision can be taken	Proposed Consultees	Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representation s may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Consideration of final report of Overview and Scrutiny Task Group's inquiry into Asset Management	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Executive Member (Transformation)	6 Dec 2010	Strategy Group	Draft report to be submitted to the consultees	Draft final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group	Director of Transformation Tel: 01257 515480 gary.hall@chorley.gov.uk Friday, 3 December 2010
Consideration of final report of Overview and Scrutiny Task Group into Allotments provision	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Executive Member (People)	6 Dec 2010	Strategy Group	Draft final report to be submitted to the consultees	Draft final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group	Director of People and Places Tel: 01257 515815 jamie.carson@chorley.gov.uk Friday, 3 December 2010

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Earliest Date decision can be taken	Proposed Consultees	Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Acceptance of tender for the supply and maintenance of 14 multifunctional devices throughout the authority to replace current devices, desktop printers, lexmark printers, copiers and fax machines	Executive Member (Transformation)	Executive Member (Transformation)	31 Jan 2011	Strategy Group	Details of tenders received to be supplied to the consultees	Schedule of tenders received	Director of Transformation Tel: 01257 515480 gary.hall@chorley.gov.uk Monday, 24 January 2011
Executive's response to recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Task Group's inquiry into Highways issues	Executive Cabinet	Executive Leader	17 Feb 2011	Strategy Group	Report to be supplied to the consultees	Report of Director of People and Places	Director of People and Places Tel: 01257 515815 jamie.carson@chorley.gov.uk Monday, 7 February 2011

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Earliest Date decision can be taken	Proposed Consultees	Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representation s may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Determination of the General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax for 2011/12	Council	Executive Member (Transformation)	1 Mar 2011	Strategy Group, Internal and External Stakeholders	Draft budget principles to be supplied to consultees	Draft Revenue and Capital budgets for 2011/12	Director of Transformation Tel: 01257 515480 gary.hall@chorley.gov.uk Monday, 14 February 2011