

**MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MEETING DATE** Thursday, 16 April 2015

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillor June Molyneaux (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Eric Bell, Julia Berry, Charlie Bromilow, Doreen Dickinson, Robert Finnamore, Margaret France, Mark Jarnell, Matthew Lynch, Greg Morgan and Alistair Morwood

**OFFICERS:** Jamie Carson (Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community), Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Customer and Advice Services), Cath Burns (Head of Economic Development), Simon Clark (Head of Health, Environment and Neighbourhoods), Tony Openshaw (Business Advisor), Zoe Whiteside (Head of Housing) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Mike Handley and Kim Snape

**OTHER MEMBERS:** Councillor Mark Gaffney (Chair of Community Safety Partnership), Tracie O'Gara (Lancashire Constabular - Southern Division), Phil O'Donnell (Lancashire Probation Trust) and Brideget Cheyne (VCFS)

**15.OS.33 Minutes**

**15.OS.33a Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

15.OSC.25 - Scrutiny of Executive Cabinet

Councillor Julia Berry was disappointed that the scrutiny of the Executive would not be reviewed to allow the Committee to influence decisions before they were made by considering items on forthcoming agendas of the Cabinet rather than the minutes, when decisions had been made and urged the Committee to challenge more effectively.

**RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 29 January and 5 March be confirmed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.**

**15.OS.33b Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel**

**RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting held on 12 March 2015 be noted.**

**15.OS.34 Declarations of Any Interests**

No declarations of any interest were received.

**15.OS.35 Public Questions**

No questions were submitted.

**15.OS.36 Scrutiny of Executive Cabinet**

**15.OS.36a Executive Cabinet Minutes**

Members considered the minutes of the meetings of Executive Cabinet held on 22 January, 12 February and 26 March 2015.

**RESOLVED – That the minutes be noted.**

**15.OS.36b Notice of Executive Decision**

Members considered the current Notice of Executive Decisions which gave notice of both key and other decisions which the Executive expected to take over the forthcoming 28 days.

**RESOLVED – That the notice of Executive Decisions be noted.**

**15.OS.37 Scrutiny of the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership**

The Committee received a report on the scrutiny of the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership to enable them to undertake its statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder (overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 to determine if local community safety issues were being dealt with effectively.

It was explained that the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership consists of a number of key agencies that form a statutorily determined Responsible Authorities Group (RAG). In previous years this Group met on a quarterly basis to oversee the delivery of the partnerships strategic assessment. However, the decision was taken in 2014, that in an effort to increase partner's capacity, the number of meetings would be reduced to one single meeting per year with the ability to call an extraordinary meeting as necessary.

An annual open meeting and conference was held in October 2014 and many members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended to experience at first hand the new arrangements and actively participate in the process. The conference was well attended by over 40 people who represented a wide and varied cross section of partner agencies, Ward Members, County Councillors and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.

The conference resulted in the production of the Partnership Plan for 2015/16, identifying the five main strategic priorities that would be delivered by the Officer Working Group (OWG) over the forthcoming year.

Prior to the annual conference taking place a web based public consultation was undertaken seeking public views on what broad areas of community safety the Partnership should be addressing that provided limited responses from 12 people across both Chorley and South Ribble areas and their response were provided within the report for information. Although this was a small number it was still an increase on involvement by the public in previous years with extremely poor attendances at specially arranged public meetings.

A number of representatives were in attendance at the meeting to offer their views and experiences of the new arrangements that included:

Mark Gaffney – South Ribble Council (Chair of the Chorley and South Ribble Partnership)

Chief Inspector Tracie O’Gara – Lancashire Constabulary

Phil O’Donnell – Lancashire Probation

Bridget Cheyne – VCFS

Councillor Paul Walmsley – Executive Member for Public Protection (Chorley Council) had been unable to attend but provided a written response on his view of the new arrangements.

It was the general consensus of the Partnership that the new arrangements were an improvement on the previous regime, although it was recognised that further improvements could be made around public engagement. The web based consultation used to engage the public in the process had been more successful than previous years where the public had been invited to an open meeting. The public consultation and conference provided an opportunity for representatives, partners and the public to identify more local issues which appeared to fit with the overall strategic themes that the Partnership were seeking to address which are, Domestic Abuse, Road Safety, Child Sexual Exploitation, Counter Terrorism and Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime.

The delivery of the Partnership’s Plan is driven by the Officer Working Group and the representatives present explained what is happening across a range of organisations to address these issues. There was good partnership working arrangements that existed across the partners and projects were undertaken in a programmed way agreed by all.

In response to a question from the Committee, the representatives discussed the importance of improving the sharing of intelligence based information. Work was needed to overcome barriers to data sharing and better use of intelligence that different organisations hold about vulnerable people in order to target support where is most needed.

The Committee also discussed other areas that included safeguarding, alternative ways of engaging with the public and building on existing relationships.

The Chair thanked all the representatives for attending.

**RESOLVED – That the report be noted.**

## **15.OS.38 Scrutiny Reviews - Monitoring Reports**

### **15.OS.38a Select Move Review - First Monitoring Report**

The Committee received the first monitoring report informing them of progress made against the recommendations of the Task Group review into the Select Move Choice Based Lettings scheme, of which the Council is a member along with nine Registered Providers of social housing.

The task group had concluded that Select Move largely met our customer's needs, satisfaction was good and allocations were being made in a period which was considered to be reasonable.

The number of Chorley households on the Housing Register has fallen over the last two years and whilst the fall in number was mainly due to changes in the Allocations Policy, the increased number of lets in Chorley has also helped.

The task group had identified some areas of Select Move that could be improved upon and with the implementation of the refreshed Allocations Policy and software system upgrade, there have been, and will be ongoing improvements for the customer interface and experience.

Each of the Task Group's recommendations were listed and an update on progress made was reported against each one.

**RESOLVED – That the report be noted.**

### **15.OS.38b Private Rented Sector Housing Inspection Programme Review - Second Monitoring Report**

The Committee received the second monitoring report informing them of progress made against the recommendations of the Task Group review into Private Rented Sector Housing Standards Inspections.

The Regulatory Services Team are responsible for carrying out housing standards inspections across the borough and a case study was provided to give members some additional insight into the type of issues that are identified during housing standards inspections and the actions taken.

The levels of complaints directly from tenants is historically low and as a result the Council had identified that in order to improve housing standards in the private rented sector, a different approach was required to engage with both tenants and landlords.

The Housing Inspection Policy identified that an important avenue for identifying private rented accommodation and raising awareness to tenants was through data sharing with housing benefits. However there have been a number of issues in confirming the legality of sharing the necessary data and after lengthy discussion and contact with the Information Commissioner and the Head of Governance it had recently been agreed that the Housing Benefit data relevant to identifying the tenants and private rented properties addresses could be shared with the Regulatory Services Team.

A protocol for data sharing was drawn up with the housing benefits team and procedures are being finalised. This will greatly improve the existing property database

and enhance the team's ability to target this particular housing sector. Due to the delay in receiving the necessary data required to identify privately rented properties the inspection programme is behind schedule and therefore officers have not had the information necessary to meet the target for completing 80 proactive housing inspections in 2014/15. However, it is anticipated that the new arrangements with Housing Benefits will ensure that in future those targets are achieved.

The proactive housing inspection scheme has also recently been re-branded as the council's 'Healthy Homes Scheme' and the Council are launching a media campaign this spring to target the link between health and housing standards and information will be placed be placed in GP surgeries, Health centres and pharmacies across the borough. Social media and traditional press releases will also support the campaign to raise awareness for tenants and landlords.

The Regulatory Services Manager continues to attend the Landlord Forum and provides updates and information about the Council's enforcement activity as well as information about the Healthy Homes Scheme. The scheme has been received favourably by those landlords in attendance and a number of landlords have offered for their properties to be inspected prior to letting and have been provided with the contact details of the Regulatory Services Team to facilitate

**RESOLVED – That the report be noted.**

#### **15.OS.38c Adoption of Estates Review - Second Monitoring Report**

The Committee received the second monitoring report informing them of progress made against the recommendations of the Task Group review into the Adoption of Estates in Chorley.

The final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group considering the Adoption of Estates was presented to Executive Cabinet on 20 June 2013, and detailed fourteen recommendations, all of which were agreed by the Executive Cabinet in their response on 24 October 2013.

Officers made progress against those recommendations and this was reported to this committee 10 April 2014. Members had welcomed the progress made, but had concern about the amount of estates that remained un-adopted and whilst the Committee accepted that this may be improved upon with the introduction of the new dedicated post within the planning services team, members still considered that in order to obtain effective improvements to the service there needed to be fundamental changes to planning conditions and the legal duty placed upon developers at national level. Members requested a further monitoring report.

The report set out each of the recommendations made and gave an update on progress made against each one. It was generally accepted by the Committee that Chorley could expect to see rewards for current efforts being made in the next five years. Many of the existing schemes now have agreed schedules and gradually areas are starting to be adopted across the borough, especially on the Gillibrand and Buckshaw Village estates.

The culture of partnership working has been one of the biggest development areas and massive improvements have been achieved, working more effectively together even amid personnel changes at Lancashire County Council. The Director of Public

Protection, Streetscene and Community commented that he had been disappointed at the level of information that had been provided at the recent Neighbourhood Working meetings and promised that this would be improved upon at future meetings.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That a third monitoring report be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six months' time.**

**15.OS.39 Report from the Task and Finish Group**

Councillor Robert Finnamore updated the Committee on the work undertaken by the Task Group on Public Transport Issues that included a recent meeting with representatives from the Greater Manchester Transport Committee.

Unfortunately the work of this group has not yet been completed and is expected to continue into the next municipal year with the final report being submitted to Overview and Community Committee in July.

**RESOLVED – That the report be noted.**

**15.OS.40 Work Programme 2014/15**

The Committee noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2014/15.

Members gave some consideration to suitable scrutiny review topics for 2015/16 and it was agreed to include a review of the Health and Well Being Board on the work programme in addition to the Contact Centre.

**15.OS.41 Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**RESOLVED - To exclude the press and public for the following items of business on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.**

**15.OS.42 Chorley BIG Grant Funding Scheme**

In response to a request of the Chair, the Committee received a report informing the Committee of funding allocated to businesses under the Chorley Business Investment Growth (BIG) scheme.

Chorley Council currently provides a diverse range of support services to local businesses to deliver its key commitment of 'Developing a Strong Local economy'. The Chorley Investment for Growth (BIG) capital grant scheme assists local companies to expand and create jobs. This compliments existing Council and partners grant schemes in providing financial support for capital expenditure to businesses with growth ambitions. It has proved helpful to businesses in wanting to take the next step in their development and create employment locally in line with the council's Employment Charter.

Guidance specifies what work is eligible to receive funding and can include the construction of new buildings; the refurbishment/adaptation of existing business premises; site engineering works; the purchase of plant and machinery; signage; hard/soft landscaping and security improvements.

The funds support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who are planning to invest in the range of activities detailed above. An SME is a company which employs fewer than 250 persons (full time equivalent), and has a turnover of less than 50 million Euros and/or has an annual balance sheet of less than 43 million Euros. No more than 25% of the company's capital or voting rights may be held by a parent company which is not itself an SME. Businesses can apply for 50% of total eligible project costs up to a maximum of £10,000. Grants are based on £2,000 per job created but ultimately the grant scheme aspires to achieve far greater job creation than this level.

The Chorley BIG grant payments are phased, with all payments being paid to businesses once the works have been completed or equipment purchased and grant assistance is conditional on receiving business advice and support from the Council's Business Advisor whose remit is to support existing businesses.

Following a review of the Chorley BIG grant in January 2014, a new element was introduced. The 'Community Repayment' requires applicants to provide payback to the value of 50% of the grant received to local community registered charities or social enterprises. This can be offered in either goods or services provided by the applicant or as a time value to allow businesses to share their expertise with local organisations.

Since the start of the grant scheme nine Chorley BIG grants have been approved to a total of £72,302. 15,016 square feet of floor space will be improved or developed and 51 jobs forecasted to be created.

The Community Repayment Scheme has been in operation since April 2014 and has been well received by the applicants who have worked on appropriate payback activities with the Business Advisor. These have included free workshops for the community on topics such as health and wellbeing and stress management provided by the Centre for Whole Health; free use by children of a new sensory room planned at Gelston Manor Day Nursery, and a design competition with students who can see their winning design fabricated at CSM Chorley Ltd.

The Chorley BIG grant scheme will continue into 2015/16 with additional funding agreed through the budget allocation process.

**RESOLVED – That the report be noted.**

#### **15.OS.43 Key Partnership Monitoring Report**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive that provided an update on the performance of the Council's key partnership arrangements.

**RESOLVED – That the report be noted.**

Chair

Date