

MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE Thursday, 28 January 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillor Hasina Khan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Aaron Beaver, Eric Bell, Paul Clark, Margaret France, Margaret Lees, Matthew Lynch, June Molyneaux, Greg Morgan, Alistair Morwood, Debra Platt and Kim Snape

OFFICERS: Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Customer and Advice Services), Jamie Carson (Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mark Jarnell

16.OS.21 Declarations of Any Interests

There were no declarations of any interest.

16.OS.22 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

AGREED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 October 2015 be confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

16.OS.23 Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel

AGREED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 3 December 2015 be noted.

16.OS.24 Public Questions

There were no questions from any member of the public.

16.OS.25 Minutes of Executive Cabinet meetings

AGREED – That the minutes of the Executive Cabinet held on 22 October, 19 November and 10 December 2015 be noted

16.OS.26 Notice of Executive Decisions

The Committee considered the list of Executive Decision that was published on 18 January 2016. In response to a query about the proposed decision for Unrecoverable Council Debts, the Chief Executive confirmed that it would be recorded in the budget papers.

AGREED - That the Executive Decisions published on 18 January 2016 be noted.

16.OS.27 PCSO deployment in the neighbourhood policing arena

The Chair advised that the agenda item was deferred until the next meeting on 31 March 2016, to allow for the outcome of the Council's budget be announced at the Council meeting on 1 March 2016.

16.OS.28 Budget Scrutiny - Draft budget and summary budget position over the medium term 2016/17

The Committee considered a report which had been presented at the Executive Cabinet meeting on 21 January, on the draft budget position for the medium term that set out the budget position for 2016/17 including the forecast for the following two years to 2018/19 and also presented the relevant proposals in respect of:

- Potential investment in the Council's Corporate Strategy priorities in 2016/17
- Increasing budget resilience in the longer term and structuring the budget, taking into account the Spending Review (SR 2015)
- Providing funds to support the transitional period of the fundamental service review being undertaken by Lancashire County Council
- Budget consultation

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources attended the meeting to give an overview of the proposals and answer any questions of the Committee.

It had been proposed that Council Tax be frozen in 2016/17. This would be the fourth consecutive year that the current administration had achieved a balanced budget position for the forthcoming financial year without increasing Council Tax.

Due to the successful implementation of the MTFs, budget efficiency savings totalling £0.214m had been applied to the budget to achieve a balanced budget position for 2016/17. This had mainly been achieved by the Council entering into a Business Rates Retention Pooling agreement within Lancashire effective from 1 April 2016.

In addition, contributions to the New Investment Packages for 2016/17, totalling £2.845m for both Revenue and Capital projects, the New Homes Bonus also provided an opportunity for the Council to invest in three other additional areas to protect public services within the borough and increase financial resilience given the revolutionary funding changes.

A budget of £0.500m would be available for the next two years to assist in the transitional period public services currently provided for and funded by Lancashire County Council and a £0.500m provision per annum to increase General Balances to

mitigate against the financial risk of a core grant income shift to 100% local taxation sources. £0.603m was also available to be used to invest in projects that would provide income streams to the Council.

Potential investment proposals were summarised in the report and set out in detail in project mandates. Funding had been achieved by not building all the New Homes Bonus income received since 2013/14 into the base budget. An approach taken to enable the Council flexibility and resilience in order to address the volatile and variable nature of future core funding which continued to be under review by central government. The latest round of projects would bring the total new investment on the Council's corporate priorities to £12.008m since 2013/14.

The consultation on the proposed budget focused on obtaining feedback on the key investment areas in order to help priorities activity. It would also highlight the impact of a reduction in Council funds and seek the views of residents on the budget. The consultation would invite responses from residents, partners, parish groups and other stakeholders through a variety of methods which included a short survey. The results would be analysed and published in February for consideration as part of budget finalisation.

Members of the Committee highlighted various aspects of the report, which included the forecasted figures for the Market Walk project in light of the reduction of units available. The Executive Member for Resources explained the reasoning behind not reducing the forecast for Market Walk at this time.

In response to concerns raised about the loss made in respect of Chorley Flower Show, the Executive Member for Resources confirmed that there had been a 3% overspend. However, as it had been the first time Chorley had hosted the flower show and the weather had not been ideal; the event had been considered a success making approximately £30k. It was clarified that it was not the intention to compete with other flower shows in the area, but to capitalise on their popularity. There had been awareness that the event could make a loss in its first year but that it was an investment in the future. Lessons learned from the event would be implemented for this year's Show, which would include a discount for booking tickets in advance.

A full debate on the proposals would take place at the Council meeting on 1 March.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Resources for attending the meeting.

AGREED – That the report be noted.

16.OS.29 Final Monitoring Report - Overview and Scrutiny Task Group (Adoption of Estates)

The Committee received the third and final monitoring report from the Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community informing them on progress made against the recommendations of the Task Group review into the Adoption of Estates.

The final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group considering the Adoption of Estates was presented to the Executive Cabinet on 20 June 2013, and detailed fourteen recommendations, all of which were agreed by the Executive Cabinet in its response on 24 October 2014.

Members were made aware of adoptions that had been completed. Some of them would be full developments such as Fairview. Others would be elements of particular streets for example Buckshaw and Gillibrand. However, a number of factors had resulted in progress not being made as anticipated against some recommendations which included –

- Internal staffing issues
- Lancashire County Council not able to provide pre-application highways and transport related advice.

Members welcomed the progress that had been made. However, concern was raised about the length of time it was taking for some areas to be adopted such as Lower Burgh Way. It was recognised that timescales were an issue. However, the Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community reiterated to members that the developer could choose not to transfer areas to be adopted by either the Borough or County Council and instead make their own arrangements, such as engaging a management company to maintain the development.

In response to a query raised by Councillor Beaver regarding an un-adopted estate in his ward, the Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community advised that he would speak to Councillor Beaver outside the meetings.

It had been suggested that small areas of Buckshaw Village located within the South Ribble boundary had already been adopted. The Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community agreed to establish how South Ribble Borough Council had achieved this progress given adoptions for this area were in the main led by Chorley Council and would seek speedy adoption for the rest of Buckshaw Village.

The Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community advised that one key finding from the Task Group was that all those involved in the adoption process, including developers, were keen to work together to progress adoptions of estates faster. It was made clear that a more co-ordinated response was required from the Council and its partners, in particular from Lancashire County Council and United Utilities, to help speed the process along by making their relevant inspections in a timely fashion. Members of the Committee went on to discuss the role of management companies.

It was suggested that a Member Learning Session be held on the adoption of estates.

AGREED –

- 1. That the report be noted,**
- 2. The Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community to investigate how the quick adoption of some parts of Buckshaw Village that fell within the South Ribble borough boundary had been achieved, and seek a speedy adoption for the rest of Buckshaw Village.**
- 3. The Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community to meet with Councillor Beaver to discuss issues related to an un-adopted estate in his ward**
- 4. A Member Learning Session on the Adoption of Estates be programmed in to the Member Development Programme for 2016/17.**

16.OS.30 Final Report - Overview and Scrutiny Task Group (Single Front Office)

Members of the Committee considered the final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Single Front Office. Councillor Alistair Morwood presented the groups findings and drew members' attention to the recommendation for the Council to look at ways to improve the process of customer call backs by officers, outside of the Contact Centre, across the authority.

The Task Group was impressed by the work that the Council was currently undertaking to promote greater efficiencies against the backdrop of ever decreasing resources and commended the implementation of the Single Front Office. All councillors who took part in the review had learned a great deal about the work of the service and fully supported the aims that the Council were trying to achieve.

Members of the Committee discussed the finale report and concern was raised about officers not taking ownership of call backs. The Director of Customer and Advice Services that a system was in place to address this issue and that heads of services were being tasked to make sure it happened.

AGREED – That the finale report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Single Front Office be submitted to the next meeting Executive Cabinet for consideration in March.

16.OS.31 Overview and Scrutiny Task Group: Public Transport Issues in Chorley - Response of Executive Cabinet

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive that provided the Executive Cabinet's response to the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group review in to Public Transport Issues in Chorley.

Given the responsibility of overseeing local transport matters at present rested with Lancashire County Council, the majority of the recommendations put forward by the Task Group were not within the remit of Chorley Council to take forward. However, the Executive Cabinet was supportive of all the recommendations made and would use a variety of mechanisms to influence partners and operators directly involved in public transport provision.

Members of the Committee discussed various aspects of the report including the impact on local communities should the proposed removal of subsidised services of Lancashire County Council provision be approved, in light of bus companies saying they would not continue the subsidised services. The Director of Advice and Customer Services understood that when Cumbria County Council removed their subsidised bus services, bus companies initially said that they would not be able to replace them. However, a few months in to the removal of Cumbria County Council's bus subsidies, bus companies did take some of them back on. It was expected that the same scenario would happen at Chorley.

AGREED – That the topic be reviewed in six months-time to evaluate the current position of public transport provision in Chorley.

16.OS.32 Reports from the Task and Finish Groups

Staff Sickness Absence Scrutiny Task Group

Councillor Walker, Chair of the Task Group gave a verbal update on the inquiry in to staff sickness absence.

It had been noted that there had been an increase in staff sickness absence and the purpose of the Task Group was to conduct a mini review to find out if there was a underlying cause for the increase in staff sickness absence that needed to be addressed.

A meeting took place on the 27 January. The Acting Head of HR and OD, and the HR & OD Advisor were in attendance at the meeting to support the Council's position.

The Task Group was pleased with the Council's policies and procedures in place and it was felt that there was no one particular issue causing the increase in sickness absence. The Chair also commented on the range of health and wellbeing opportunities available to staff.

However, in order to get a balanced view, it had been agreed that a further meeting take place with representatives from Unison and the Staff Matters group to find out staff's opinion on the current policy and procedures on 3 February and the final report will be presented to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 31 March.

16.OS.33 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/16

Members of the Committee considered the Work Programme for 2015/16.

Amendments to the Work Programme included –

- The date of the next Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel detailed as the 10 March had been brought forward to 3 March
- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a Section 106 update at the meeting on the 6 October 2016
- That the PCSO deployment in the neighbourhood policing area item had been deferred to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 31 March
- Councillor Khan to present a short overview report at the next meeting on 31 March meeting for Health Scrutiny.

AGREED – that the Work Programme and the above amendments be noted.

Chair

Date