

MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE **Wednesday, 2 March 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillor Hasina Khan (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Aaron Beaver, Margaret France, Mark Jarnell, Margaret Lees, Matthew Lynch, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood and Kim Snape

OFFICERS: Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Customer and Advice Services), Simon Clark (Head of Health, Environment and Neighbourhoods) and Cathryn Filbin (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Eric Bell, Paul Clark, Greg Morgan and Debra Platt

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillor Alistair Bradley, Beverley Murray, Mark Perks, Steve Murfitt, Alan Whittaker and Paul Leadbetter

16.OS.34 Declarations of Any Interests

Councillor Lynch and Councillor Morwood both declared an interest in the consideration of the Call-in request for Community Action Plans in that they were Chairs of the Clayton Brook and Chorley East Ward respectively.

Both Councillor Lynch and Councillor Morwood took part in the debate and the subsequent vote.

16.OS.35 Consideration of Call-in Request: Community Action Plans

The Chair agreed to a request from Councillor Alistair Bradley, the Executive Leader of the Council to table a copy of an email that he had submitted to the Chair of the Committee prior to the commencement of the meeting. The content of the email questioned the validity of the application for the Call-in request submitted by Councillor Perks in relation to Community Action Plans.

Both Councillor Bradley and Councillor Perks put forward arguments to the validity of the call-in. However, the Chair reminded the Committee that the validity of the call-in request was not open for debate, and that it was in his gift to decide whether or not a call-in request was valid. It was the role of the Committee to decide if the decision made by the Executive Cabinet on Community Action Plans should be referred back to the next Executive Cabinet meeting for further consideration.

The Chair summarised the background of the call-in request for a decision made by the Executive Cabinet at its meeting on 18 February 2016. The application was made on the

grounds that the Community Action Plans, overall, failed to be consistent in its approach or fairness. It was also stated that the Community Action Plan for Astley Village had missed an opportunity to make a serious impact on the community and the lives of individuals in the area. The proposed Action Plan/Proposals for resources was not good enough or had/would make a real impact on long standing issues.

The decision taken by the Executive Cabinet had been to

- note the progress made in the development of Community Action Plans for each of the pilot areas (Chorley East Ward, Clayton Brook, Astley Village and Rural).
- approve the budget allocation to the Community Action Plan projects identified and described in the report.

The Chair invited Councillor Perks to put forward his reasons for calling-in the decision. Councillor Perk raised concern about the lack of consultation with councillors, residents and community groups, in respect of the Action Plan for Astley Village, which was contrary to how the other three Action Plans had been developed.

It was felt that opportunities to make effective changes to the lives of residents in Astley Village had been missed, and that the data used to identify community priorities would not have been reflective of the whole demographic of Astley Village, but instead would be the opinion of a minority of residents.

The Community Action Plan identified the five main differences between Astley Village and the rest of Chorley -

- Housing
- Unemployment
- Deprivation
- Health
- Crime

Councillor Perks agreed that the priority for Astley Village was housing. The report for Astley and Buckshaw Ward identified that the population density was more than double that of all Chorley at 11.9 persons per hectare (Chorley 5.3 persons per hectare). The percentage of flats, maisonettes or apartments in Astley and Buckshaw was more than double that of Chorley at 23.0% (Chorley 9.2%). It was also had a much lower percentage of semi-detached and terraced houses/bungalows, the figures for which were comparable to Chorley. Overcrowding was also higher at 7.7% (Chorley 3.8%).

In the report, the first bullet point for Astley Village stated that 'community cohesion due to high numbers of rented properties' was a key priority. Councillor Perks agreed that this was a high priority as there had been a lot of issues related to poor and substandard housing in Astley Village, many of which were properties owned by Places for People. As part of the Action Plan it had been hoped that the Council would develop strong links with Places for People so that residents could complain to the Council if they felt that the housing association was not responding quickly to rectify issues. The Council would then be able to put pressure on Places for People to ensure complaints were dealt with swiftly and to a satisfactory outcome. It was also felt that a lot of the recommendations in the Action Plan had already been included in the Council's Corporate Strategy.

When challenged about his need to call-in the decision, rather than attending the Executive Cabinet and airing his views there or raising his concern of the Community Action Plans when first approved, Councillor Perks explained that he had been unable to attend the last meeting of the Executive Cabinet on the 18 February, and when the initial recommendation was approved, he had been in poor health. Councillor Perks added that he had approached officers on four occasions seeking information, to which he received no response. He therefore felt no option, but to submit a Freedom of Information request, and to call-in the decision.

In response to the Chair's question of how the four areas were identified to take part in the pilot, Councillor Murray, Executive Member (Community Services) explained that the concept for the Action Plans came from neighbourhood working. Suggestions had been made for improvements for which the Council had little or no influence over. The four areas had been chosen for the pilot because they all had similar issues, some of which were hidden.

The four community action plans had each developed a unique approach to developing their action plan, and in each case they were led by a lead member and senior officer –

CAP area	Lead Member	Lead Officer
Astley Village	Councillor Steve Murfitt	Gary Hall
Chorley East Ward	Councillor Alistair Morwood	Simon Clark
Clayton Brook	Councillor Matthew Lynch	Jamie Carson
Rural Areas	Councillor Alan Whittaker	Lesley-Ann Fenton

In the case of Astley Village it was decided not to consult ward councillors, residents and community groups at an early stage, but instead, rely on data that was already available. It was considered that this approach would drive forward and deliver some key improvements that had been needed and discussed for a long time with little or no progress being made. It was felt that by delivering smaller projects/improvements quickly it would increase residents' confidence and trust in the Council, and would have residents support for delivering larger more significant improvements.

There had been some criticism that the lead member for each action plan was not also the ward councillor for that area. However, it was reported that the lead members chosen were able to identify with their Action Plan area as it faced similar issues to their own ward. It was felt that to make the Action Plans a success there needed to be a fresh approach, with members who were not familiar with the history or individuals involved and so were not influenced by them.

In response to questions raised by members of the Committee, the Executive Leader explained the work that was taking place to improve relationships with housing providers.

Councillor Murfitt, Chair and Lead Member for Astley Village explained some of the work that had been carried out in the area, advising that part of the process was to win over the community. It was felt this way, residents would be more willing to get involved in future projects and take ownership of their community.

The other three Chairs responsible for the Community Action Plans in Clayton Brook, Chorley North West and Rural detailed the findings of their groups and explained how those decisions were made.

The Executive Member (Community Services) reminded the Committee that this was the first year that the Action Plans had been piloted and it had been important that each area went about developing them in different ways to see which was best. The process will be reviewed to find out what went well and what did not. Once the findings were known, changes to the process would be implemented for the future.

The Executive Leader reminded the committee that this was a project of the administration, and therefore it was felt there was not a need to consult all ward councillors, but the concerns raised had been noted.

In response to a question posed by the Chair, Councillor Perks advised that he had felt that he had finally been given the opportunity to raise his concerns on the Action Plans which he had unable to do so previously.

The Chair invited members of the Committee to put forward their views, in which some of them admitted to having their own reservation about the Action Plans, and had challenged this project previously. However, it was accepted that there was a real need to progress improvements, and consultation in respect of Astley Village's Action Plan could have delayed progress.

AGREED – That the call-in in respect of the Community Action Plans be dismissed.

Chair

Date