

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 5 September 2006

Present: Councillor Dennis Edgerley (Chair), Councillors Thomas McGowan, Thomas Bedford, Terence Brown, Alan Cullens, Francis Culshaw, Harold Heaton and Geoffrey Russell.

06.OS.40 DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

The Chief Executive introduced Ms Lesley-Ann Fenton, the newly appointed Director of Policy and Performance.

06.OS.41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor K Ball, Mrs M Gray, Mrs I Smith and C Snow.

06.OS.42 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by any of the Members in any of the agenda items.

06.OS.43 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 June 2006, as circulated at the meeting, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

06.OS.44 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2006/07 - MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received and considered a joint report of the Executive Director - Corporate and Customer and the Director of Finance on the progress of the 2006/07 Capital Programme through the monitoring and performance control mechanisms in place.

The report recommended an increase of the 2006/07 programme by £1,921,100 to £14,081,420 and contained a number of recommendations of the Capital Programme Board to revise the capital budget allocation for a number of projects and to include a new Category 'C' scheme on the programme's reserve list. The report had been presented to the Executive Cabinet on 24 August, which had accepted the recommendations for approval by the Council on 19 September 2006.

The report generated a debate on several issues arising from the report, particularly in relation to the dependency of the delivery of the capital programme on the receipt of expected capital receipts.

RESOLVED - (1) That the Executive Cabinet be requested to clarify any action it proposes to take to mitigate the potential risks to the delivery of the Capital Programme should the expected capital receipts not be realised as anticipated.

(2) That the Director of Finance be requested to indicate in future Capital Programme monitoring reports likely variances in addition to target and performance statistics.

(3) That a review of the strategic relevance of the Capital Programme and its reflection of the Council's corporate and community strategies be included in the list of potential new overview and scrutiny topics for further examination.

06.OS.45 REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07 - MONITORING REPORT NO. 2

The Committee received a report of the Director of Finance monitoring the current financial position of the Council in relation to both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

The report confirmed an improving position in respect of the General Fund, with the forecast overspend having been reduced from £82,000 to £66,000 over the monitoring period. Further savings would be pursued and a number of areas (eg agency staff costs, income streams from the Development and Regeneration Directorate; increased refuse collection; concessionary travel and benefits costs) would need to be monitored closely over the remainder of the year.

The Housing Revenue Account balances were expected to be in the region of £683,000 at the end of the financial year.

The Executive Cabinet had considered and accepted the report at its meeting on 24 August 2006.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted and that the Executive Cabinet be recommended to support the abandonment of the use of smart cards in relation to concessionary travel passes.

06.OS.46 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Council's Forward Plan which set out details of the key executive decisions expected to be taken between 1 August and 30 November 2006.

The Plan identified several matters for potential decisions by the Executive in October 2006 and the Committee were requested to indicate those items that it wished to examine in advance of consideration by the Executive.

RESOLVED - That the Executive Cabinet be notified that this Committee wishes to examine reports on the following matters with the appropriate Executive Members and Directors, before firm decisions are taken by the Executive:

- **Chorley Town Centre Strategy;**
- **Play Strategy for the Borough;**
- **Terms for acquisition of property required to construct the Gillibrand Link Road;**
- **Selection of service provider for the Property Services and Market functions.**

06.OS.47 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee received the revised and updated Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan which listed the actions required to ensure that scrutiny improvement plans were kept on track in order to assist the delivery of the Council's performance agreement and Corporate Strategy.

The Assistant Head of Democratic Services highlighted a number of measures which had been, or were to be, taken to improve the overview and scrutiny function, including:

- an approach to a number of external local government bodies to ascertain their likely interest in undertaking a review of the current Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit and taking forward Member training and development on the overview and scrutiny function;
- scrutiny inquiries were now more aligned to the Corporate Strategy;

- regular meetings took place between the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the Chairs of the two associate Panels.

RESOLVED - That the Improvement Plan be noted.

06.OS.48 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

(a) Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Committee's instructions were sought on the Project Outline (Scoping Document) compiled and presented by the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel in respect of its impending scrutiny inquiry into the 'Contact Centre Efficiencies and Partnership with the Lancashire County Council'.

RESOLVED:

- (1) **That the Scoping Document, as now presented, be endorsed.**
- (2) **That a copy of the Lancashire County Council report on the review of the Shared Services Contact Centre be submitted to the Panel for consideration during its scrutiny inquiry.**

(b) Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel presented for the Committee's approval the Project Outline (Scoping Document) in respect of the Panel's impending scrutiny inquiry into 'Neighbourhood Working'.

RESOLVED - That the Scoping Document, as now presented, be endorsed.

06.OS.49 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2006/07

The Committee were presented with the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2006/07.

The programme included the envisaged timescales for the on-going scrutiny inquiries and the planned dates for the periodic monitoring of past inquiries.

RESOLVED - That the work programme be noted.

06.OS.50 CHORLEY COUNCIL LOGO

The Chair agreed to the consideration of this item not included on the meeting's agenda in order to discuss a matter of current public interest.

The Chair requested an explanation of the reasons for and the circumstances under which the Council's logo had been altered from 'Chorley Borough Council' to 'Chorley Council'.

In response, the Chief Executive clarified that the decision to alter the logo, which would not affect the Authority's formal Borough status, had been taken in consultation with the Executive Leader during the Council's summer recess.

The principal aim of the exercise had been to modernise the brand name of the Authority and to create a logo that would become more conspicuous and instantly recognisable by local residents.

The Chief Executive also emphasised that the transition would not incur any additional costs. All existing vehicles, equipment and stationary would continue to be used and would only be replaced with items containing the new logo as and when necessary.

06.OS.51 REVIEW OF SINGLE PERSON DISCOUNT

The Chair agreed to the consideration of this item not included on the meeting's agenda in the light of the public concern at a recent communication.

The Chair referred to a letter sent recently to a large proportion of properties within the Borough requesting information from claimants of the 25% single persons' discount on Council Tax payments, which had caused much local controversy and anxiety.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the letter had been sent as a partnership exercise to households in Chorley, Lancaster, Preston and South Ribble, in conjunction with an external agency. The letter aimed to target only those people who were claiming unlawfully the single person discount. It was, however, accepted that reference in the letter to the external agency had been inappropriate.

The Chief Executive also confirmed that the exercise would be followed up by a cost/benefit analysis to ascertain the extent of the ultimate cost savings achieved.

06.OS.52 FUTURE MEETING DATES

The Chair agreed to the urgent consideration of this item not included on the meeting's agenda in order to agree necessary revisions to the meetings calendar before the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the fact that the next four scheduled meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee between October 2006 and January 2007 would conflict with meetings of the Chorley Community Housing Shadow Board and requested the Members' agreement to the alteration of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting dates.

RESOLVED - That the Chair be requested to liaise with the Assistant Head of Democratic Services to identify suitable alternative dates for the next four meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for notification to Members.

Chair