

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met twice on 10 August and 1 September 2009 since the last ordinary Council meeting in July 2009. This report summarises briefly the principal items debated and decisions reached at each meeting.

Meeting held on 10 August 2009

Executive Cabinet - 13 August 2009

2. We considered the Annual Treasury Management report 2008 / 2009 and interim review 2009 / 2010 from the Executive Cabinet agenda.
3. In response to a query officers confirmed that the current position based on the latest guidance from the Local Government Association was that a recovery of 83p in the pound was now predicated on money invested in Landsbanki.

Executive's Response to Overview And Scrutiny Inquiry into Chorley Community Housing

4. We received a copy of the report considered by the Executive Cabinet in June. The report endorsed all the recommendations made by the Chorley Community Housing inquiry and outlined how the actions will be delivered.

Updated Attendance Policy

5. The Corporate Director (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented the updated attendance policy. One of the outcomes of the Committee's 2008 inquiry into the authority's attendance management is to update this policy.
6. We noted that a Pandemic Flu Plan and a Human Resources Response Toolkit has been developed to address what the Council should do if staff fall ill, have to care for affected relatives or if schools and nurseries are forced to close during a flu pandemic. The Council will use the flexible working arrangements to support staff as much as possible.

Future Agenda Items

7. We considered the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan and the Council's Forward Plan for the four month period 1 August 2009 to 30 November 2009. We noted that under the new Overview and Scrutiny responsibilities crime and disorder was scheduled to be scrutinised at the meeting on November 30.
8. The item on the Forward Plan relating to the Approval of Central Lancashire Local Development Framework Core Strategy Delivery Supplement will be presented to this Committee when it is considered by the Executive Cabinet.

Business Plan and Performance Monitoring Statements – First Quarter 2009 / 2010

(a) Business Directorate

9. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators. We queried whether rental bonds had been issued to individuals or families and whether there was a proactive approach to issuing bonds to families. We requested clarification on the terms of reference for the Section 106 task group and if planning permission is required for allotments, including any buildings on allotments.

(b) Business Transformation Directorate

10. The Corporate Director (ICT and Chief Information Officer) and Corporate Director (Human Resources and Organisational Development) reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators. We queried aspects of the Customer Relationship Management System and noted that the customer will receive notification of the resolution of their call, for example, if their bin hasn't been collected they will receive a phone call or text message to inform them the bin has been collected.
11. We requested a report on ICT services to Members including downtime and a breakdown of undisputed invoices processed within 15 and 30 days to show whether the Council was speeding up payments given the impact the recession is having on businesses. A breakdown of the expenditure relating to the Lancastrian was also requested.

(c) Neighbourhoods Directorate

12. The Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators. We noted that £5,000 expenditure for bus shelters should be accounted for within the Business Directorate budget, this was payment for the bus shelter located outside of Booths and was to be funded via slippage from 2008/09. £3,000 expenditure attributed to burglar alarms was for improvements to the existing system at Bengal Street Depot, including additional coverage for the new workshop area and additional alarm points.
13. The ongoing condition of the economy, the increase in concessionary travel use and recent increase in fees continues to impact on income. The Directorate will be reviewing the fees/tariffs for all uses of the car parks.

(d) People Directorate

14. The Active People Manager reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators. Members have previously requested more specific information about the development of allotment provision in the borough and discussed details of work undertaken to date and activity planned in the near future.
15. Queries were raised regarding the percentage of people who accept the offer of an allotment and the status of the land by the cemetery in Adlington that has been proposed for allotments. Members queried whether the free swimming initiative has increased the usage figures for Brinscall Baths.

(e) Policy and Performance Directorate

16. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators. We noted there were 8 new projects approved by the LSP Executive for 2009/10. A Member queried who determined the allocation of Grass roots grants.

Performance Monitoring Report - First Quarter 2009 / 2010

17. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented a report setting out performance against the Corporate Strategy and the Council's National Indicators for the first quarter of 2009/10, 1 April to 30 June 2009.
18. The Corporate Strategy 2008/9 – 2010/11 identified 36 Key Projects. At the end of the first quarter 92% of the key projects (33) are on track, 8% of projects (3) are rated 'Amber' and no projects are rated 'Red'.

19. At the end of the first quarter 11 national indicators can be reported. All of these indicators have targets set and have been reported previously. Of the 11 the majority (8) had matched or exceeded target and 3 had missed the target by 5% or more.
20. In response to a query a Member advised that Age Concern had undertaken some research into volunteers, but would not release it for data protection purposes.

Chorley Partnership's Performance Report - First Quarter 2009 / 2010

21. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented a report which updated Members on the progress of the Local Strategic Partnership in the first quarter of 2009/10, including the first year's performance of the Local Area Agreement.
22. The Local Strategic Partnership have now commissioned a new programme of projects for 2009/10, designed to deliver the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy. There are plans to fund projects relating to alcohol misuse and abuse later in the year in line with the recommendations of the recent scrutiny inquiry into the Local Strategic Partnership.
23. An overview of the Sustainable Community Strategy indicators that can be monitored on a quarterly basis were included within the report. We were particularly interested in the overview of a basket of credit crunch indicators. These show that the Job Seekers Allowance claimant count figures show a fall over the last three months in claims within Chorley. There have been approximately 47 jobs created or preserved through the creation of new employment/retail premises in the first quarter.
24. We considered the performance of the Local Strategic Partnership against the first year of the Local Area Agreement 2008/9, in relation to district level targets.

Meeting held on 1 September 2009

Work Undertaken By Groundwork

25. The Chair welcomed Jacquie Mutch (Programme Manager) and Stephen Hodges - Senior Project Officer from Groundwork Lancashire West & Wigan who have been invited to deliver a presentation outlining the work undertaken within Chorley over the last year.
26. We noted that the Council provided core funding to Groundwork who then access funding pots that were not available to the Council. These additional funds increase the total by eight times the core funding.
27. We raised queries regarding the future management and maintenance of an existing recreation area on Laburnham Road, the creation of gardening projects involving schools and the over 65's, the creation of a community garden in Coppull on vacant land, the creation of a play space for a school on donated land and the reduction of the carbon footprint.

Executive Cabinet - 3 September 2009

28. We considered the Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point – Update and Envisaged Procedural Arrangements report from the Executive Cabinet agenda. We welcomed Councillor Malpas, Executive Member (Business), who attended the meeting to outline the report and answer any queries.
29. We noted that the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF2) was only accessible to Growth Point partnerships. From this £3.3 million funding has been received for Buckshaw Village railway station. The development of the LDF Core Strategy will be accelerated through Growth Point.

30. In addition to this Government Office for the North West have stated that the Council are not committed to “a level of housing growth other than that which it has signed up to deliver...no greater than that envisaged in RSS”.

Future Agenda Items

31. We noted the Overview and Scrutiny work programme and the Council’s Forward Plan for the four month period 1 September to 31 December 2009.

Information and Communication Technology availability for Members

32. The Corporate Director (Information and Communication Technology and Chief Information Officer) gave a presentation on the availability of ICT services to Members.
33. We noted the different aspects to the service, including equipment (laptop etc), server based systems (email and the intranet), third party communications (telephone lines and broadband) and support services.
34. The future plans were outlined and discussed. Following a survey of Members regarding the need for out of hours support 29 replies have been received, with 48% selecting this was “not a problem” and 52% “manageable”.
35. Regular maintenance will be required but will be carried out with minimal impact where possible.

Reports from the Task and Finish Groups

Joint Scrutiny Inquiry with Preston and South Ribble on Affordable Housing

36. A meeting will be held on 7 September to consider the draft final report with the three Chairs. It is hoped that this report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November.

Highways Issues Task and Finish Group

37. Councillor Mike Devaney reported that a great deal of information has been prepared for the inquiry which has taken longer than anticipated. The next meeting will consider this information and questions to ask the witnesses identified at future meetings.

Town Centre Vitality Task and Finish Group

38. Two meetings have taken place to scope the inquiry and set the project plan. The next meeting will be held on 24 September.

Recommendation

39. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS EDGERLEY
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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There are no background papers to this report.