

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

GENERAL REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met twice on 28 September and 9 November since the last ordinary Council meeting in September 2009. This report summarises briefly the principal items debated and decisions reached at each meeting.

Meeting held on 28 September 2009

Monitoring of inquiry recommendations – Neighbourhood Working

I welcomed Councillor Eric Bell Executive Member (Neighbourhoods) to the meeting. Councillor Bell presented a report updating Committee on the actions taken following recommendations made by the Committee on 12 November 2007 on the implementation of Neighbourhood Working.

Neighbourhood Working should be considered a journey, not a destination and the progress made so far is bearing results. The staff are now in place and projects with community groups and volunteers have been able to access match funding.

In response to a query officers confirmed that the £150,000 pump priming fund earmarked to support Neighbourhood Action Plan projects is for 2009-2010 only and that Neighbourhood Working is subject to the Council's Project Management system with current status set at "green".

We requested a mechanism for information from mini matac meetings to be forwarded to Councillors be explored and that the total money accessed through pump priming be forwarded to Members at an appropriate time. A further update report will be presented in the spring.

New scrutiny powers

We considered the report of the Corporate Director (Governance) advising of new powers available as result of the Local Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees) (England) Regulations 2009 coming into force.

These regulations give the Council power to allow its Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make and publish reports and recommendations to the County Council on Local Area Agreement matters where the Borough Council have a role in delivering a target.

The Committee may also send a copy to any other partner to which the target relates and require it to have regard to the report or recommendation in the exercise of its functions. Health bodies are excluded from this provision.

There is a need to avoid duplication of work between Councils on issues that affected Lancashire as a whole.

Reports from the task and finish groups

Highways Issues Task and Finish Group

Councillor Mike Devaney reported that Jo Turton, Executive Director for the Environment from Lancashire County Council, attended the last meeting. There had been very useful discussions and a list of recommendations will be considered at the next meeting in October.

Town Centre Vitality Task and Finish Group

Councillor Peter Wilson outlined the progress of the inquiry and advised the Group will be undertaking a site visit to Burnley and another comparable town to consider best practice.

We agreed to accept the scoping documents for Highways issues and Town Centre vitality task groups and made several amendments to the membership of those groups.

The Willows, Coppull

I accepted this urgent item under the special circumstance that there was a need to advise Members of a situation that had arisen since agenda publication and was of particular public interest.

The Chief Executive reported she met with Chorley Community Housing and has come to an agreement that the Willows will not close imminently. The properties will be marketed to people on the Housing Register and a number of open days are being organised.

Meeting held on 9 Nov 2009

Overview and scrutiny inquiries - affordable housing

I welcomed Councillor Peter Malpas (Executive Member (Business)) to the meeting. We received and considered the final report, recommendations and action plan in respect of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Task Group inquiry with Preston and South Ribble into Affordable Housing.

I advised there were useful recommendations within the report that, in some cases, the Executive Cabinet had already implemented as part of the Affordable Housing action plan. Councillor Malpas supported the recommendations, in particular, those made to the Homes and Communities Agency.

The inquiry had been a learning experience with regards to joint scrutiny. The report will be presented to Executive Cabinet for consideration in December 2009.

Business Plan and Performance Monitoring Statements - Second Quarter 2009 / 2010

The Committee received the Business Plan and Performance Monitoring Statements.

(a) Business Directorate

The new ASDA development will aim to employ 440 staff, with 40% of these being full time equivalents. In response to a query it was clarified that a total of 43 Disabled Facilities Grants have been received, with only 5 awaiting approval. Of the £354,000 budget £315,000 has been committed.

With regards to the Abbey Village and Brindle Conservation Area Reviews this will include the history, boundaries of the area, full consultation and an exhibition held in the area.

(b) Neighbourhoods Directorate

38 families have been involved with the Families First project so far, with 25 active families currently. The route to the project is primarily Registered Social Landlords because of antisocial behaviour in children, drug and alcohol misuse, parenting / educational issues and financial issues.

At the Withnell Fold Memorial garden project Groundwork have successfully applied to the Chorley Partnership for a grant of £2,300 and the Council contributed a further £700. In addition to providing the plants for the volunteer day the Groundwork Green Team have undertaken some work in the garden to repair damaged footpaths, improve drainage and landscape features. Hillside Methodist Youth Club volunteers also worked with Withnell Fold Residents Association on the planting up of the garden for autumn and there were over 20 volunteers involved.

(c) People Directorate

It was recognised that there have been delays for customers contacting the contact centre at the beginning of the year. An action plan has been prepared to turn the situation around and in recent weeks performance had been brought to an acceptable level. 20% of enquiries are dealt with at the first point of contact on the telephone with 85% dealt at the first point of contact when visiting the One Stop Shop.

Positive feedback has been received by Members regarding the newly reopened Pets Corner in Astley Park.

We requested an allotments action plan to be produced by the next quarter, including community growing schemes and that an update report on free swimming be presented to a future meeting.

(d) Business Transformation Directorate

There has been a dip in performance for the revenues and benefits section due to an increased demand. This will be addressed by an additional member of staff. The number of claims outstanding has reduced.

It was noted that some of the outstanding debtors were other Local Authorities.

(e) Policy and Performance Directorate

The third edition of the Chorley Smile magazine has been produced. In addition, the first on-line version of the Chorley Smile magazine has been produced which was now available through the Council's website. In the first two weeks of October there had been 1500 hits on the magazine page and 150 people had downloaded the magazine.

Working with LCC the second Locality Plan for Chorley has been finalised which was approved by both the District Council and County Council Cabinets in September. Over the next 12 months the Directorate, working with LCC's District Partnership Officer, will monitor the delivery of the joint action plan. In addition, work has commenced with the PCT and LCC to develop a Health Locality Plan with joint actions to improve health outcomes in by identifying opportunities to work together to address key health issues such as alcohol related harm.

Performance monitoring report - second quarter 2009 / 2010

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented the report setting out performance against the Corporate Strategy and the Council's National Indicators for the second quarter of 2009/10.

The Corporate Strategy 2008/9 identifies 36 key projects. The overall performance of the key projects is excellent with 34 (94%) being either completed or rated 'green' and progressing ahead of or according to plan by the end of September 2009. This exceeds the Council's target of 90%.

20 of the key projects have been completed, while fourteen projects are rated as 'green', meaning that they are on track. Two projects are rated 'amber', and no projects are rated 'red'.

At the end of the 2nd quarter, 15 national indicators can be reported. All of these indicators have targets set and have been reported previously. Of the 15 the majority (13) have matched or exceeded target and 2 have missed target by 5% or more. Action plans have been put in place for those indicators where performance is lower than anticipated.

Chorley Partnership's performance report - second quarter 2009 / 2010

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented the report on the progress of the Local Strategic Partnership in the second quarter of 2009/10.

Crime is up, on average, by 5.4% on this time last year, despite performing well against the LAA targets. There has been an overall increase in fraud and acquisitive crime compared to this time last year. Numbers of primary fires in Chorley have fallen.

All of the Chorley Partnership's projects for 2009/10 are now underway and on track.

We requested an article be prepared for intheknow outlining figures for unemployment and job seekers allowance for each ward.

Performance of key partnerships - 2008/09 year end progress report

We received a report that has previously been presented to the Executive Cabinet in June 2009. One of the topics raised at the "review of the year" event in March was "Outsourcing and the effectiveness of subcontractors". The purpose of this item is to determine how the Committee would like to go forward on this issue.

We discussed the presentation of the report and identified several additional areas we would like to receive information, including customer satisfaction and performance indicator information.

Executive's response to Overview and Scrutiny inquiry into Chorley Local Strategic Partnership

We noted the Executive's response to the Overview and Scrutiny inquiry into the Chorley Local Strategic Partnership.

Of the nine LSP projects funded for 2009/10, two are funding diversionary activity for young people at risk of alcohol abuse or Anti Social Behaviour and seeking to raise the self-esteem and aspirations of these young people.

The Safer Chorley and South Ribble Partnership has formally supported progress to be made on the establishment of a Designated Public Place Order for the Town Centre, Chorley and Astley Park. A report will be presented to Executive Cabinet outlining the process and seek approval to go forward.

Future agenda items

We noted that the date of the next meeting would be Tuesday, 1 December 2009, with the main item on the agenda being the first introductory meeting on the scrutiny of crime and disorder through the Safer Chorley and South Ribble Partnership.

Reports from the task and finish groups

Highways Issues Task and Finish Group

The Democratic and Member Services Officer reported that the Group will be considering the draft final report at their next meeting. The final report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January.

Town Centre Vitality Task and Finish Group

Councillor Peter Wilson reported that the group has considered issues relating to leisure and culture and signage into the town centre, including car parks. The following meeting will discuss vacant floor space and the markets.

Recommendation

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.