

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Transformation	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1 June 2010

ANNUAL REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2009/10 AND POTENTIAL REVIEW TOPICS FOR 2010/11

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To report on the annual review of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2009/10 and to outline potential review topics for 2010/11.
2. More detail on the work of the Committee in 2009/10 and the specific outcomes from Task Groups is contained in the Annual Report - Scrutiny Reporting Back which is elsewhere on this agenda.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

3. That the outcomes of the review of the year event held on 22 March 2010 be noted.
4. To select review topic(s) for 2010/11.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region		Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving people in their communities		Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	/

BACKGROUND

6. For the last two years the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken a review of the scrutiny year to
 - Look back at the work of the Committee in 2009/10 including the reviews undertaken, the performance role and holding the Executive to account.
 - Consider review topics for 2010/11; and
 - To help shape the 2009/10 Scrutiny Annual report

OUTCOMES FROM THE SESSION

7. The review of the years work by the Committee and Task Groups was presented by the Chair Councillors Dennis Edgerley, and Task Group Chairs, Peter Wilson and Mike Devaney. This covered Executive items where scrutiny had an input; looking at the performance role and outcomes from review topics.

8. In holding the Executive to account the Committee had considered:
 - “Get Up and Play” Rangers
 - Sustainable Communities Act, 2007 - implications for Chorley
 - Affordable Housing task group - service improvement plan
 - Updated attendance policy
 - Work undertaken by Groundwork
 - Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point – update and envisaged procedural arrangements
 - Information and Communication Technology availability for Members
 - Value for Money review of the Corporate Support Services
 - Performance of key partnerships
 - Review of free swimming scheme
9. The Committee has considered as part of its performance review role,
 - Quarterly departmental business plan monitoring statements including performance and budget information
 - Corporate Strategy project updates; and
 - Chorley Partnership performance information, including partnership projects.
10. The Committee had challenged the Executive Member (Resources) on budget principles for 2010/11 and the treasury management strategy.
11. Monitoring reports following up the implementation of previous scrutiny reviews had been received for neighbourhood working, efficiency gains, Chorley Community Housing and streetscene issues.

JOINT SCRUTINY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

12. This inquiry was conducted jointly with Preston and South Ribble Councils. The final report contained 20 recommendations about how affordable housing issues can be tackled across the three Council areas, which the Executive is currently responding to. Some recommendations have already been adopted and implemented by the Council due to the length of time the review took and some difficulties in receiving and co-ordinating information from all three Councils. Valuable lessons had been learned about undertaking joint scrutiny projects.

HIGHWAYS ISSUES

13. This topic had been selected principally because it was a service area where Members felt they received many complaints. The inquiry outcomes contained 26 recommendations across a range of objectives. The majority involve Lancashire County Council and the full response of the Executive is awaited. The key findings of the inquiry included the need for better communication between Chorley and County, quicker and better information provision to Councillors about what was happening on the streets and for a fast track' Councillor/officer enquiry and feedback system with Lancashire County Council.

TOWN CENTRE VITALITY

14. The following eight selected topic areas/themes were the basis for this review. The town centre is a priority for all Members and the Task Group considered a wide range of town centre linked issues.
 - Formulation of a comprehensive marketing action plan
 - Improvement of the evening economy
 - Develop and deliver a pavement café policy
 - Signage strategy
 - Car parking strategy
 - Town Centre living

- Vacant property policy
- Develop and deliver short term and long term action plans for the Markets

The Executive is currently considering the extensive recommendations put forward by the Task Group.

CRIME AND DISORDER

- Following on from the implementation of new scrutiny powers to scrutinise Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP), presentations were delivered by
 - Simon Clark, Head of Environment, on the Joint CDRP with South Ribble, the Safer Chorley and South Ribble Partnership
 - Heather Corson, Domestic Abuse Project Coordinator, gave a presentation outlining the issues faced and the measures put in place to assist victims of domestic abuse in Chorley
- Members noted that representatives from both Chorley and South Ribble Councils' would be meeting shortly to scrutinise the joint Partnership following its pilot status.

POTENTIAL REVIEW TOPICS IN 2010/11

Asset Management

- Gary Hall, Director of Transformation, outlined a potential area which Members could scrutinise in 2010/11 to ensure the Councils' asset base was fit for purpose, provides value for money and that the Council works effectively with partners and community groups to maximise the use of its assets.
- Members felt that the topic warranted an inquiry, as there were significant budget implications, both in maintaining existing assets and investing in those that were no longer suited to the Council's accommodation requirements.

Allotments

- The Council has received two separate requests for a scrutiny inquiry into allotments.
 - One from the Chairman of Chorley Allotments Society stating *"The number of allotments in the Borough is substantially below the level per 1000 households that is recommended. Whilst some progress has been made recently, the waiting list is still huge. We would like the organisation of the allotments team, the priority given to provision, the potential of Council and privately owned sites and the approach of other Depts - eg Planning, to be included in the review"*.
 - The other request came from a member of the public stating *"The waiting lists are so long and the increase of demand. Lack of provision in Chorley. To investigate waiting lists and management of lists. The use of farm land. Planning permission for poly tunnels, green houses or sheds on allotment sites - no evidence of council owned sites need planning permission, but planning department asking for planning permission on farm land that is now allotment sites. Disabled access to sites - within planning laws can this be improved. Wheelchair users and carers find it hard to push chairs, walking on uneven ground as there is not to be engineering works (ie hard paths)"*.

Topic suggestions from the review session

- The following topics were suggested by Members at the review session.

Internal

- Litter
- Dog fouling
- Fly tipping
- Unadopted roads
- Allotments – land availability
- Section 106 agreements
- Control of dogs in public places
- Tourism/heritage
- Development of community centres
- Neglected land
- Asset management – are buildings fit for purpose?
- Physical activities for younger people
- Waste contract

External

- Alcohol and associated problems
- Community engagement
- Bus service provision
- Community Safety Partnership
- CCH transfer promises

Other potential topics

21. At the meeting in January Members expressed an interest in constituting a task and finish group to review one key partnership which the Council has with an external contractor.
22. The Committee are asked to consider these review topics and decide on a way forward for the Committee in 2010/11.
23. Members are reminded of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Guidance information which provides a three stage framework to assist in selecting topics for review:

Topic Selection Process

Stage 1 – Good Reasons for Selecting a Topic

1. Improvements for local people are the likely result
2. Corporate priority for the Council
3. We know this is a key issue for the public with high levels of dissatisfaction
4. A poor performing service
5. Barriers exist creating inequality in service provision

Stage 2 – Reasons to Reject a Topic

1. Already addressed
2. Part of a legal process
3. Falls within Council complaints procedure
4. Subject to disciplinary/grievance procedure
5. Unlikely to result in real or tangible improvements for local people

Stage 3 – Questions to Ask

1. Why would we do this?
2. How does it link to the Council's Corporate Strategy?
3. What tangible benefits could result for the community or our customers.
4. What evidence is there to support the need for a review?
5. What would we wish to achieve and why?

In considering scrutiny topics use Stage 1 to assess the reason for topic selection, Stage 2 to confirm that there is a reason to reject and then Stage 3 to look at the rationale and desired outcomes.

If topics are competing consider:

1. their importance in terms of the Council's aims and priorities
2. the likely benefit to the widest possible sections of the community

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DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION

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