

Scrutiny Reporting Back

Chorley Council's Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny in 2010 / 11



CONTENTS

1. Foreword by the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2. The Year Ahead
3. Key messages from Scrutiny Reviews in 2010/11
 - Allotments
 - Asset Management
 - Lancastrian
 - Joint Scrutiny Committee – Councils Liberating the NHS Task Group
4. Crime and Disorder
5. Challenging the Executive
6. Challenging Performance
7. Financial Scrutiny
8. Conclusion

1. FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2010/11



Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2010/11

At the beginning of the year the Committee were asked to consider a change to the current overview and scrutiny arrangements in Chorley.

In the past the Committee has been very focused on the Council's performance receiving quarterly reports. It was now felt that although the monitoring reports would still continue to be produced quarterly for the Cabinet agenda, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would only receive them six monthly, allowing the Committee to focus on the Scrutiny of Executive decisions. This has now been in operation for a number of meetings and in 2011/12 meetings will take place 2 weeks after Executive Cabinet rather than a few days beforehand.

As Chorley operates a very open style of Executive Cabinet, whereby any Councillor can go along to any Cabinet meeting, speak on any item and try to influence the decision. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is now scrutinising the decisions of the previous Executive Cabinet instead of the forthcoming agenda and reports.

This year the Committee has undertaken three reviews, one that was requested by two members of the public on Allotment provision and one at the request of the Executive, who asked that Scrutiny looked into the Council's Asset Management, focusing on a key number of operational assets. This Review then led onto an extra piece of work to consider how to make best use of the Lancastrian suite. The Committee also scrutinised anti social behaviour under its requirement to scrutinise crime and disorder.

2. THE YEAR AHEAD

Although the Committee has not yet formally decided the Task Group topics for 2011/12, the review currently taking place on the Lancastrian will continue into the new year and Members had previously requested a review around Tourism. All Members of the Council have been invited to put forward any suggestions for the Committee to consider at its first meeting of the new municipal year when the Committee will draw up its Work Programme.

3. KEY MESSAGES FROM SCRUTINY REVIEWS IN 2010/11

3.1 Allotments

At the request of two members of the public, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of Allotments in Chorley. The Task Group was chaired by Councillor Julia Berry.

The purpose of the review was to maximise space within existing provision of allotments, through improved management controls to enforce higher standards on allotment plots, ensure that charges are fair and reflective of other authorities and encourage community growing and self management of allotment sites.

The 25 recommendations made had the capacity to increase revenue and minimise running costs with no major budget implications to the Council, some were organisational and established best practice under the following headings:

- Provision and demand for allotments
- Tenancy Agreements and monitoring and inspection procedures
- Allotment charges
- Community Growing
- Community Management of Allotments

The Executive Cabinet accepted the majority of recommendations, as they felt they would make improvements to the Allotments services as they were cost neutral and some actions would in fact, recover expenditure that the Council currently incurred.

3.2 Asset Management

Chaired by Councillor Alan Cullens, the aim of this review was the streamlining of the Council's assets to reduce expenditure and maximise income for the Authority, therefore influencing both the Council's priorities and budget position.

Having looked at the Council's wider asset portfolio, it was agreed to focus on the following sites and premise, to consider their current function suitability, available space, operation costs and redevelopment potential;

- Bengal Street Depot and offices
- Gillibrand Street Offices
- Union Street Offices
- Town Hall including Lancastrian Room and White Hart premises
- Yarrow Bridge site (former depot site)

The Task Group did not produce detailed recommendations but a set of principles from which the Executive could develop a strategy and commission feasibility studies to establish detailed proposals.

3.3 Lancastrian Suite

A direct outcome of the Asset Management Scrutiny Review had been options for the future development of the Lancastrian; however these were rejected because of the high costs of redevelopment. It was agreed that a further review would take place to consider how to make best use of the Lancastrian Suite and the Task Group was again chaired by Councillor Alan Cullens.

The Committee have agreed the scoping of the review which will look at:

- The current function, suitability, space and operational costs of the Lancastrian Suite
- Current and future working arrangements and alternative methods of service delivery.
- Assessing the need for the type of facilities offered by the Lancastrian Suite – both commercially and for community facilities
- Looking at other options for the future management of the Lancastrian Suite
- Considering whether there needs to be investment in the facility in order for it to be used more effectively.

The work of the Group is continuing into 2011/12.

3.4 Joint Scrutiny Committee – Councils Liberating the NHS Task Group

Chorley has been working with Members from South Ribble on a Joint Scrutiny project that will enable Scrutiny Councillors to carry out engagement, research and learning on NHS reform around GP Consortia, to improve the health and well-being of communities.

The Councillors representing Chorley were as follows:

- Councillor Alan Cullens
- Councillor Rosemary Russell
- Councillor Peter Wilson

The Task Group has met twice and agreed a scoping document, however it has been anticipated that the majority of the work will be carried out in 2011/12 and the Chorley Members will continue to provide regular updates as the review progresses.

4. CRIME AND DISORDER

Under our requirement to scrutinise local crime and disorder matters under the Police and Justice Act 2006, as amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Committee had requested the delivery of two Member Learning Sessions to increase Members awareness of crime and disorder matters, these sessions were held jointly with South Ribble Councillors at the beginning of 2010/11 and were on:

- Understanding the Safer Chorley and South Ribble Partnership
- Drug and Alcohol abuse

Following the session on the Joint Community Safety Partnership, the Committee asked for further information on the Police and Community Together, the MATAC's and mini MATAC process and Member Communication. Chief Inspector Richard Robertshaw from the Partnership attended a meeting to present an overview of the particular areas of concern and a number of recommendations were made to improve Members engagement in the process.

In addition the Committee took the decision to scrutinise one particular aspect of the work of the Community Safety Partnership. Anti social behaviour was identified as a suitable area, as it impacted on everybody with strong links to the Neighbourhood Working agenda.

Members attended Chorley Police Station to visit the Council's CCTV unit ahead of the meeting and two Members reported back on their participation in two of the initiatives currently taking place to combat alcohol related crime and anti social behaviour amongst young people:- Operation Cherub and Smart Response.

The Committee also received a report of the Chair of the Chorley and South Ribble Safety Partnership providing information on the work of the Partnership containing additional information about anti social behaviour issues that included:

- Defining identifiable categories of anti social behaviour
- Threats relating to anti social behaviour and signal crime in Chorley
- Past performance relating to anti social behaviour including confidence and perception
- Structures and arrangements in place to prevent and tackle anti social behaviour
- Support in place for residents
- Links to anti social behaviour and neighbourhood working; and
- How members can engage in this work including the reporting and receipt of information relating to anti social behaviour in their area.

The Joint Community Safety Partnership Manager, Paul Lowe and Chief Inspector Geoff Hurst took a variety of questions from Members that included how information is disseminated, how the Council measures the outcomes of the various operations and initiatives to ensure value for money.

5. CHALLENGING THE EXECUTIVE

The following areas are Executive Cabinet items that we have considered at scrutiny and made recommendations in 2010/11

- Community Safety and Crime and Disorder
- Overview of PACT meetings; the MATAC and mini MATAC process, including Member communication

- Alleygate Schemes
- Chorley Council Performance Monitoring Reports
- Core Funding 2011/12 – Review of process

The Executive Members for Places and Transformation have both attended Overview and Scrutiny Committees to answer Members questions.

6. CHALLENGING PERFORMANCE

Scrutiny continues to challenge directorate and service performance, through the reporting of monitoring information on a six monthly basis. Members receive:

- Business plan monitoring and performance information for each of the three directorates:
 - Partnerships, Planning and Policy
 - People and Places
 - Transformation
- Project updates under the Corporate Strategy; and
- Monitoring information from Chorley Partnership, including projects being run by the Partnership.

Previous concerns relating to performance under NI 195, environmental cleanliness and the collection of debts older than 90 days had now been satisfied following the implementation of more robust improvement plans around grounds maintenance and the collection of Section 106 monies.

7. FINANCIAL SCRUTINY

The Executive Member for Transformation attended Committee to answer Members questions about the Executives budget principles for 2011/12.

8. CONCLUSION

2010/11 has been an interesting year for scrutiny with the change in focus on how the Committee scrutinises the decisions made by the Executive Cabinet and our duty to scrutinise crime and disorder matters. It has also been a productive year resulting in some key recommendations on topics of concern to Members and the public – allotments and asset management issues. Challenges ahead are to continue to scrutinise areas of interest and concern to Councillors and their constituents; to follow up on the implementation of scrutiny recommendations; to work more effectively with our partners on scrutiny and to continue to challenge our Executive Members in a constructive way with recommendations that result in positive outcomes for the residents in Chorley.