

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

1. This report summarises the business transacted at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 October and 7 November 2011 as well as a brief summary of the recent activities and matters discussed at meetings that have taken place of the Task and Finish Groups.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3 OCTOBER 2011

Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy service

2. Having chosen the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service as a crime and disorder scrutiny topic at a previous meeting, the Committee received a presentation delivered by Heather Corson, Community Safety Officer and Paul Lowe, Joint Community Safety Manager for Chorley and South Ribble Councils on the service in preparation for the scrutiny meeting in November.
3. Members were asked to consider the types of questions that they would like to put forward to the partner representatives of the Safer Chorley and South Ribble Partnership – Responsible Authorities Group who would be invited to the next meeting. Questions would relate to the benefits of the service and in particular future funding arrangements.
4. The Committee was advised that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny at South Ribble Borough Council would be attending to observe the crime and disorder scrutiny meeting and agreed that the representatives from the following partners should be invited:
 - Police
 - South Ribble Borough Council
 - Lancashire County Council
 - Primary Care Trust
 - Registered Social Landlords
5. Questions would be prepared in advance of the next meeting in consultation with Members and then forwarded to the invited representatives prior to the meeting.

First monitoring of Inquiry recommendations – Review of Allotments

9. The Committee received a report of the Director of People and Places which provided an update on the implementation of agreed actions by the Executive Cabinet following the Overview and Scrutiny's inquiry into allotments.
10. Good progress had been made and any outstanding actions were expected to be implemented during 2011/12 following the required integrated impact assessments and consultation.

Second monitoring of Inquiry recommendations – Review of Town Centre Vitality

11. The Committee received a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy updating Members on progress made against the actions following the general endorsement of the recommendations agreed by the Executive Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny's Task Group Inquiry on Town Centre Vitality.
12. This was the second monitoring report that the Committee had received and on the whole, delivery against each of the recommendations was positive.
13. However, the Committee was disappointed that the application to the Highways Agency for the erection of a brown tourist sign on the motorway had been turned down and asked if more could be done to pursue this.

First quarter Chorley Partnership Performance Report 2011/12

14. The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive providing an update on the performance of Chorley Partnership during the first quarter of 2011/12.
15. The report highlighted the performance of Chorley Partnership in achieving the key performance targets and the progress made in the delivery of the key projects. Performance was excellent, with four of the five projects currently rated 'green'.

First quarter Performance Report 2011/12

16. The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive setting out the performance against the Corporate Strategy and the key performance indicators during the first quarter of 2011/12, 1 April to 30 June 2011.
17. Overall performance of the key projects remained good, with the vast majority of the projects either completed, on track or not scheduled to start until later in the year. Five projects had been rated amber and an explanation of the action taken to get these projects back on target was provided.
18. Performance on the key measures and performance indicators was strong, with 92% performing above target or within the 5% tolerance.
19. Members were pleased to see that the action taken around the key service delivery measures relating to planning applications were now performing better than target.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7 NOVEMBER 2011

Review of the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy IDVA Service

20. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to scrutinise the work of the Community Safety Partnership through at least one meeting a year and the Committee had chosen to scrutinise the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy

(IDVA) service – to understand the value of the service to residents of Chorley and South Ribble and to look at future delivery of the service.

21. The Committee heard from a number of partners from the Community Safety Partnership around three key themes:

- What did they put on the IDVA service in the context of their organisation?
- How would they plug the gap in provision if the IDVA service ceased when the area based grant ended?
- Would their organisation be prepared to contribute to funding, if other partners did?

22. Acting Chief Superintendent Coulston-Herrmann attended to give the Lancashire Constabulary response:

The value of the IDVA service for the police was in the signposting it gave to victims of domestic violence to ensure they received the necessary help and support – in particular housing; childcare, money etc. where they had left the family home. If IDVA didn't provide this it was unlikely that another service would and it would therefore be down to the victim to find support. Inevitably this may mean the most vulnerable individuals and their families suffered.

In terms of future funding, the police were undertaking a review of the public protection unit with the aim of making savings. Because of the level of support the police provided to the MARACs (multi agency risk assessment conferences undertaken for all victims) then it was unlikely they would be able to contribute towards the IDVA service. Whilst loss of the IDVA service may ultimately increase the work of the public protection unit, it was felt that an approach to LCC was appropriate in terms of the benefits for adult social care and children's services.

It was also explained that all police officers are trained to a certain level in this type of work and that they had invested heavily in safeguarding issues and child abuse. The service also had a number of specialised trained officers that could also fulfil an investigative role.

23. Councillor Eric Bell – Executive Member for Places and Simon Clark, Head of Health, Environment and Neighbourhoods attended to give Chorley Council's response:

The value of IDVA was in the specialist help available to victims of domestic violence. In Chorley there were 490 incidents of domestic violence for the period April to July 2011 – an average of 4 cases a day. Whilst not all would be IDVA referrals, there was clearly a need for the service and it was an integral part of community safety support providing Specialist Domestic Violence Court services for victims. The service was oversubscribed and the loss of the service would inevitably put more people at risk. There was a clear link between repeat cases and the high incidence of murder or suicide.

In terms of contributing to future funding, this would be a Council budget decision as part of the annual budget process, however if all key partners looked to contribute towards funding the service it becomes an affordable amount and ultimately creates savings for all those partners. The service should have been mainstreamed rather than subject to annual funding and there was now an opportunity for partners to demonstrate their commitment to helping the victims of domestic violence in the borough.

Members raised whether the Council would be willing to put more resources forward so that they could take the lead on a campaign programme around preventative measures by raising more awareness that in turn would help prevent domestic violence.

24. Councillor Peter Mullineaux – Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Streetscene and Mark Gaffney, Director of Neighbourhoods attended to give South Ribble Council's response:

The value of IDVA was in the support provided to victims and their families and the improved confidence victims felt having received that support. If each case costs an estimated £14,000 to deal with (approximate total of each agency's input) then the financial benefits of preventing repeat cases are clear. The service contributes to the whole safeguarding agenda and has particular benefits for adult social care and children's services.

The cost of the service is £47,000 a year which would be a manageable amount if divided amongst partners – but not just between Chorley and South Ribble Councils. Budgets are extremely tight at the moment. The Community Safety Partnership needs to seek financial support from a range of partners for the service to continue..

25. Mel Ormesher, Community Safety and Criminal Justice Manager attended to give Lancashire County Council's response:

The value of the IDVA service is hard to quantify as it is part of a whole system approach. Lancashire County Council is a major contributor to supporting victims of domestic violence and has worked with the police on seeking funding. The difficulty in mainstreaming the funding of IDVA is that it works across so many organisations. LCC are undertaking a major piece of work to look at how they deliver support for victims of domestic violence in different areas. IDVA's position isn't sustainable and LCC are looking at how they can provide support for victims in a more sustainable way. The County Council cannot just consider funding for one part of the county but must look at the wider implications for the whole of their area. The review being undertaken will report to the next Community Safety Partnership meeting in January 2011.

26. Mary Kiddy, Consultant Nurse and Associate Director, attended to give NHS Central Lancashire's response:

The NHS supports victims of domestic abuse in many ways and whilst IDVA provides part of the care and support network – it isn't valued more than any other support service. Significant health resources go into helping victims – A & E, GP and hospital services, mental health services etc. and all these form part of safeguarding provision. In terms of financial support, all requests for funding need to be considered centrally and all projects/services requiring funding need to have been formally evaluated. There was an opportunity for IDVA to be evaluated through the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.

27. Written responses were received from representatives of the registered social landlords:

Comments about the IDVA service were sought from social landlords as the concentration of domestic violence cases in Chorley were in areas with large areas of social housing. Written comments from both CCH and New Progress Housing Associations detailed the provisions they make for victims of domestic abuse. Both housing associations said they would consider a request for a contribution to the future funding of the IDVA service although they gave no firm commitment.

28. The Joint Community Safety Manager outlined a number of key additional points for Members to consider, that included:

- The IDVA service was already oversubscribed against an artificial bar as the risk level had been raised.
- The main risk for victims is death.
- Domestic violence is a high priority in the Partnerships Strategic Assessment.
- Early intervention is evidenced to have saved the partner organisations significant amounts of money.
- Currently the IDVA service was not a statutory requirement and it was strongly felt that this was an area that needed to be addressed for the sustainability of the service.

29. Having listened to the comments of each of the partners, Members of the Committee agreed that the IDVA service was highly valued not only in supporting victims of domestic abuse but also in preventing repeat cases. In doing so it was of benefit to all partners and would, in the long term, mean savings within each organisation.

30. There was no clear commitment on funding from partners but Members felt that one organisation should take the lead by making a financial commitment and then work with the other partners through the Community Safety Partnership to urge them to contribute and ensure the continuation of the IDVA service. The Committee felt Chorley Council should take that lead.

31. Members of the Committee agreed that the Executive Cabinet be asked to consider making provision for funding for the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service for Chorley and South Ribble in the 2012/13 budget and that Chorley lead the way in seeking funding from the other key partners who benefit from the service,

namely the Police, South Ribble Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, the Primary Care Trust and Chorley Community Housing and other social landlords

32. That the Executive Cabinet be asked to consider a three year commitment to fund the service from March 2012 to March 2015 (with annual review) during the budget process, and that a similar commitment be sought from other partners through the Community Safety Partnership.
33. The Committee intend to write to the Home Secretary to ask them to consider making the IDVA service a statutory provision and to be copied to the partner representatives to ask them to consider doing the same.
34. The Committee also requested that the Executive Member (Places) feedback the minutes of the meeting to the next meeting of the Joint Community Safety Partnership meeting on 18 January 2012.

Reports from the Task and Finish Groups

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Lancastrian Suite

35. The Chair of the Group, Councillor Debra Platt reported that at the Task Groups last meeting they had received information about external interest and options for improvement that looked at the separate elements of the review and Members discussed the option available:
 - External marketing
 - Involvement of South Ribble
 - Other interested hirers
 - Pricing structure
 - Usage Policy
 - Current potential users and improving the Lancastrian facilities.

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Tourism and Promoting Chorley

36. The Chair of the Group, Councillor Peter Wilson reported that the Group had now met twice and that a draft scoping document would be brought to the Committee for approval at its meeting in December.
37. The Group had reviewed a list of key tourism assets and events in Chorley that were managed both internally and externally and had invited internal officers to talk about what assets and events they were involved with that contributed to the promotion of tourism within Chorley.
38. At its next meeting the Group would be inviting a number of representatives from external organisations to enable Members to understand more about what they do in this area and how we can work together.

Recommendation

39. That Council be recommended to note the information within the report.

COUNCILLOR ADRIAN LOWE
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

There are no background papers to this report.

DS