

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND PANELS

GENERAL REPORT

1. This report briefly summarises the business transacted at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 March 2006, as well as a brief summary of the recent activities and matters discussed at meetings of the Community, Customer and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 March 2006

2. We received the third quarter updates of the Business Plans for the period October to December 2005 relating to Corporate and Policy Services, Human Resources, Legal Services and Finance Services.
3. We discussed each Business Plan in turn with the Service Head, with specific areas discussed in relation to the continuing challenge of reducing sickness absence and the need to closely monitor the situation.
4. Under the Business Plan for Legal Services we were informed of the work that had been undertaken with the implementation of the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 and that no appeals had been lodged.
5. There had been a reduction in the number of local searches being processed by the Land Charges Unit following a down turn in the property market, resulting in a fall in income for the Unit.
6. Under the Business Plan for Financial Services we noted that there had been a slight improvement in the percentage of invoices paid in 30 days, but it was not enough to make any significant progress to meet the target that would have to be met. The main reason for this was that in the early part of the year during the introduction of the new financial system performance reached little more than 61% in the first quarter and it was therefore not possible to pull back performance. Individuals are now familiar with the new system, resulting in a performance of 91% in the third quarter.

Consultation on Changes to the Strategic Health Authority, The Primary Care Trusts and The Ambulance Service NHS Trusts in Lancashire and Cumbria

7. We received a report from the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services on the proposed response to the consultation on changes to the Strategic Health Authority (SHA), Primary Care Trusts (PCT) and Ambulance Service NHS Trusts in Lancashire and Cumbria.
8. The Committee discussed each of the three areas in detail and queried several issues with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services.
9. We endorsed the comments that had been made by the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 1 March 2006 and requested that they be forwarded to the Executive Cabinet.

A Plan for all Children and Young People of Lancashire Consultation

10. We received a report of the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services inviting Members to consider a response to Lancashire County Council's draft 'Plan for all the Children and Young People in Lancashire'.

11. Lancashire City Council were keen to hear responses to the following points:
 - Do you share the issues for children and young people in Lancashire.
 - Do you agree with the priorities set out in the plan.
12. The comments recommended to the County Council indicated that we should take an active involvement in the consultation exercise so that the best outcome for the Borough's children and young people could be achieved.

Chorley Economic Regeneration Strategy

13. We received and considered the draft Economic Regeneration Strategy, submitted by the Head of Development and Regeneration.
14. Consultants had been commissioned to undertake a study of the area, in consultation with public sector stakeholders and business to produce the Strategy for the Borough. It provides a detailed evaluation of the economic strengths and challenges faced by the Borough and proposed to target action across a number of inter-linked strands to enable sustainable growth.
15. The Strategy provides a framework for action over a 10 - 15 year period and will be reviewed on a regular basis with action taken to implement the Strategy to be monitored annually against a programme of key actions.

Corporate Strategy 2006/07 - 2008/09

16. We endorsed the draft Corporate Strategy for 2006/07 - 2008/09 setting out the Council's vision, priorities and strategic objectives for the next three year period up to 2009 and identified a series of measures, targets and key proposals for delivery in 2006/07.
17. The Strategy had been developed through a series of focus meetings and consultation sessions with Council Members, Officers and community groups to highlight the relevant issues raised during the Authorities Comprehensive Performance Assessment and to reflect the adopted Community Strategy's five priorities.

Local Strategic Partnerships : Shaping their Future - A Consultation Paper

18. We received a report from the Head of Corporate and Policy Services informing us of the consultation paper produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister which raised a number of specific questions in relation to the future role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) and suggestions as to how the Council should respond to the paper. Formal responses to the consultation paper were required by 3 March 2006.

Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan

19. We received and accepted the draft Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan which had been produced following the completion of the Centre for Public Scrutiny self evaluation framework.

Delivery of the Corporate Procurement Strategy

20. We received a joint report of the Director of Legal Services and the Head of Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services on the progress to date in respect of the measures taken to meet the appropriate milestones identified in the National Local Government

Procurement Strategy and the targets set out in the corporate Procurement Strategy approved in May 2004.

21. The report confirmed that as at November 2005, 22 of the 24 national milestones had been achieved and that the total savings over the five year life of the strategy had been calculated at £1,078,044 which was far in excess of the savings target of £500,000. In addition, a number of additional areas and measures where there was potential opportunity to achieve savings as a result of the procurement exercise had also been identified.

Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel - 14 March 2006 Public Participation in the Council's Decision making Process

22. The Panel received either written or verbal reports on a number of Panel Members' visits to neighbouring Authorities' Council meetings and Planning Committee meetings to observe their adopted procedures to allow the public's participation in the meetings.
23. After assessing survey evidence and Members' experience of neighbouring Authorities' practices, the Panel agreed to support recommendations to allow the public to speak at meetings of the Council, Executive Cabinet, Development Control Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny bodies within specific parameters. These recommendations will be contained in the Panel's final report on the scrutiny inquiry due to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the new municipal year.
24. The views of the Development Control Committee on the proposed procedures will be sought prior to the production of the final report.
25. The Panel also received a presentation by the Chief Executive which summarised the extent of existing forms of community engagement in the Borough; the means of community engagement practiced by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council; and how the implications of the Government's new 'Neighbourhoods' agenda will impact on the Council's future operations.

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel - 15 March 2006 Business Plan and Performance Monitoring Reports - Third Quarter Update

26. The Panel received the third quarter updates of the Business Plans for Environmental Services and Public Space Services which fall within the remit and area of responsibility of the Panel.
27. In relation to the Business Plan for Public Space Services we received an explanation on the Best Value indicator relating to sickness absence.
28. We also received from the Head of Public Space Services the background to the work being carried out by a consultant on the management of the Council's cemeteries services and that his report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

Sustainable Resources

29. We received a document entitled 'Renewable Energy Information for Scrutiny Members' that had been compiled by the Energy Saving Trust providing answers to many frequently asked questions by Scrutiny Committees.
30. The Panel had been given the task to pursue the use of renewable energy within the Borough and the area the Council would take a lead on this issue on a cost neutral basis.
31. We agreed that at the first meeting of the Panel in the Municipal Year to receive a short presentation from one of the Planning Officers dealing with sustainable resources.

Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel 22 March 2006

“Standards for Better Health” declaration

32. The Director of Clinical Governance from Chorley and South Ribble Primary Care Trust presented their declaration on “Standards for Better Health”. We discussed the declaration and clarified several points. We welcomed the declarations and congratulated the Primary Care Trust on the result.

Discussion regarding Friday Street Car Park

33. In response to a request from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee we considered the findings presented by officers relating to problems caused by lorries on Friday Street car park. 67 of the residents in the area were written to, 31 replies had been received with 2 respondents who complained of disturbance. The issue of litter and a lack of toilet facilities had been raised by other respondents. Officers would look into these points and an update would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement Inquiry

34. We considered evidence collected throughout the Inquiry to go forward as recommendations to the Final Report. This included a discussion with the Deputy Director of Legal Services on several issues, consideration of the minutes of the Sub-Group held on 24 November 2005, a leaflet giving additional information to Blue Badge holders on why they had received a Penalty Charge Notice and comments received from applications for residents car parking permits.
35. We discussed the results of consultation with the Disability Liaison Group, Markets Liaison Group and the Town Centre Forum, the updated figures for Penalty Charge Notices issued and cancelled and a comparison of car parking charges with other local authorities.
36. The Panel discussed points raised by Councillor I Smith, who attended the meeting, and took forward the issues raised to be included in the Final Report.
37. The next meeting of the Panel would consider all the recommendations identified by the Panel in the draft Final Report. The Executive Member for Traffic and Transportation would be in attendance at the meeting to discuss the issues raised throughout the Inquiry and the recommendations to be made.

COUNCILLOR J WALKER
Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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There are no background papers to this report.