

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. This report summarise the business transacted at the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 September 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel on 23 July 2012 and the work of the Task Groups.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Executive Response to Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry on Tourism and Promoting Chorley

2. The Committee considered the response of the Executive Cabinet to the findings and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry into Tourism and Promoting Chorley.
3. The Committee were pleased to note that the Executive Cabinet had accepted all the recommendations and the report provided details demonstrating the progress made to date.
4. Members asked if the provision of a permanent hard standing overflow car park could be given further consideration for the larger events held in Astley Park. Many visitors to the events use the grass verges along Chancery Road in Astley Village to park along and this was a particularly sensitive issue for local residents.
5. The Council had developed a new traffic management plan for major events that had been tested at this year's picnic in the park. The new plan had received positive feedback from residents in Astley Village and local ward and parish councillors. Officers recognised that the plan needed to be developed further to ensure that it worked for all events and weather conditions and should be completed by the end of the financial year.
6. The Committee queried why there had been no response to the recommendation regarding working with partners to improve public transport links to the Rivington area to ease traffic problems. The Rivington Heritage Trust and Groundwork have recently made a £5million lottery bid for funding to improve facilities at Rivington so this piece of work would be more important if visitor numbers to the area increased. The Committee noted the report and requested that the Executive Member (Places) be asked to provide a response to the recommendation regarding working with partners to improve public transport links to the Rivington area.
7. The Committee also requested that progress on the Executive's response to the Private Rented Housing Inspection Task Group Final Report be sought.

Asset Management Scrutiny Task Group – Monitoring Report

8. The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive updating Members on the progress made in the implementation of the strategic principles proposed by the Asset Management Scrutiny Task Group.
9. The Final Report of the Group had proposed 13 Strategic Principles to the Executive Cabinet for consideration. These were not recommendations on specific works but had been intended as a guide to the Councils future approach to asset management and a progress update against each of the proposals was included in the report.
10. Members enquired as to the present status of the Gillibrand Street offices which had been leased to the probation service and asked the Council to consider looking at the longer term usage of the site.
11. The Council were also in the process of completing some works to the retaining wall of the car park of the White Hart Public House and some works to the exterior of the building. The new lease holder would be responsible for the refitting of the interior.

Allotments Scrutiny Task Group – Monitoring Report

12. 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.
13. Good progress had been made and the majority of actions had been implemented. On 29 March 2012, the Executive Cabinet had agreed amended responses to some of the actions that included:
 - That the Council would not proceed with the phased removal of concessionary rates for allotments plots.
 - That the cost of provision of mains water at the Crosse Hall and Windsor Road sites be allocated within existing allotment budget.
14. Some of the Councils larger plots had been carved up into two or sometimes three plots and twenty new plots had just been allocated on the Manor Road site in Clayton-Le-Woods, with the potential for another additional 33 plots to be sited at the Rangletts Recreational Ground in Chorley. Although the Waiting List for Allotments was still high, evidence showed that most preferred to wait for a plot to become vacant on a site that was located near to where they lived.

15. Some Members reported concerns about the state of some privately owned allotment sites and asked if the Councils planning enforcement team could investigate further.
16. Councillor Julia Berry requested that an item be submitted on the agenda at the next meeting of the Borough/Parish Liaison meeting on Allotments and Community Growing Schemes, referring to the Todmorden model as an area of best practice.

Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group – Monitoring Report

17. The Committee received a report that reviewed the implementation of the recommendations of the Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group since their acceptance by the Executive earlier this year.
18. The Council had recently secured a regular weekly booking and under the new flexible pricing policy were able to offer incentives to make the booking sufficiently attractive to the organisers and increase the chances of this becoming a long term booking.
19. A number of improvement works had already been undertaken with some additional improvements to the bar area still continuing, so that there was the potential to maximise this area for use for informal meetings and training events for around 12 people.
20. The income target had been increased for 2012/13 and currently appeared to be on target to achieve the required income level at this stage.
21. The Chair commented that he had seen the improvements to date and suggested the possibility of an open day with an invitation to all local groups to view the enhance facility once all the work had been completed.

Work Programme 2012/13

22. The Committee received a copy of the updated Work Programme for 2012/13. The Chair thought that it would be beneficial for the Committee to wait for the outcome of the Neighbourhood Working review that was currently being undertaken by the Executive Member (Places) before starting a review of Citizen Engagement, one of the potential topics for review.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL

Role of the Performance Panel

23. The Chair welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel. A discussion paper was circulated regarding the role of the Performance Panel in scrutinising performance monitoring information.

Following consideration of the report, the following areas were agreed as general principles:

1. That the Panel would meet four times a year as agreed at Overview and Scrutiny Committee. – the remaining dates for the year being 17 September 2012; 10 December 2012; and 11 March 2013.
2. On alternate meetings the Panel would consider both Corporate Strategy performance information for the Council and Chorley Partnership's performance information. On the remaining alternate meetings the Panel would look at Directorate Business Plan monitoring information. These reports would provide an opportunity to consider areas of good performance as well as highlighting areas of under performance.
3. At each meeting, the Panel would also focus on one area of underperformance, to be agreed in advance of the meeting. This would allow sufficient notice to ensure that the relevant senior officers and/or Executive Members could attend Performance Panel meetings and allow relevant questions to be drawn up for appropriate challenge.
4. How the Panel was operating would be reviewed during the year.

Forth Quarter Performance Report 2011/12: Council Projects

24. The Panel considered the fourth quarter performance monitoring information for the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and key projects.
25. Members raised questions regarding the performance indicator for the number of families in temporary accommodation, where performance had dropped due to the recession and the increase in the number of people presenting as homeless.
26. Queries related to:
- the selection criteria used by Selectmove, the choice based lettings scheme;
 - vulnerable families and elderly people's lack of access to the internet to enable best use of the Selectmove scheme; and
 - how single people/couples in larger social rented properties could be encouraged to relocate to smaller rented properties.

27. It was agreed that there was an issue regarding access to Selectmove and the fact that Chorley residents didn't appear to be bidding for properties – potentially because they were unaware of the scheme. There was a review of the Selectmove scheme currently underway. The issue of moving to smaller properties was for registered social landlords to tackle, but would be impacted by forthcoming welfare reforms changes.

ICT Programme Plan

28. The Panel considered a report of the Chief Executive providing an overview of the ICT transformation projects currently being delivered with an update on their progress to date; scheduled dates for completion; and project dependencies.
29. Asim Khan, Head of ICT, Customer and Transactional Services gave an overview of the Council's investment in ICT systems; the need for change; the information revolution; becoming more efficient and increasing productivity; and meeting customer expectations. He explained the direction the Council was moving in, in terms of ICT and service delivery: and the inter connection between projects and the impact on timescales for delivery.
30. Members raised questions regarding the delivery of the Council's ambitious ICT programme and in particular:
 - the significant delay in delivering a new website;
 - whether past management restructuring or insufficient funding had impacted on the delivery of ICT projects; and
 - whether there was the required skills within the ICT team to deliver all the projects.
31. Asim Khan responded that there were two aspects to implementing the new website – the technical side and the look and feel. Other systems had to be implemented before achieving the technical side and that was now completed. The look and feel of the new website was now being considered and the completed project should be delivered later in 2012.
32. Gary Hall reported that the senior management restructure in 2009/10 included a different approach to ICT implementation. There had been a move away from a directorate approach to a more corporate solution which included the creation of a transactional team. A lot of work had gone into ICT support for customer contact. Financial resources had not created any delay but acquiring the necessary skills within the ICT team had. Outsourcing all aspects of ICT development could have speeded up the processes but not provided the necessary in house skills for the future.

LSP Performance: Chorley Partnership Annual Report 2011/12

33. Members of the Panel considered the Chorley Partnership Annual Report for 2011/12. The Panel noted the report and asked for some further information to be provided on Local Enterprise Partnerships.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP – ADOPTION OF ESTATES

34. A Member Learning Session had taken place on 13 August that had provide the Members with some information to help them understand the processes, and the various agencies and responsibilities involved in adopting new developments, ahead of their next meeting on 19 September where they would scope the review.
35. It was agreed that following their requests, Councillors Jean Cronshaw and Dave Rogerson would join the Group and Members were informed that an interest had been shown by Lancashire County Council Members in joining the review.

Recommendation

36. That Council note the report.

Councillor Steve Holgate
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

There are no background papers to this report.