

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. This report summarises the business transacted at the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 October 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel on 17 September and the work of the Task Group on the Adoption of Estates Review.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1 OCTOBER 2012

Update on the Implementation of actions agreed following the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Inquiry into Highways Issues.

2. We received a report of the Director of People and Places providing an update on the implementation of the actions agreed following the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group inquiry into highway issues.
3. The first six monthly update received by the Committee on 12 March 2012 had reported that all of the agreed recommendations had been actioned and this report provided further update on those actions that included:
 - That street cleaning schedules and other highways information continued to appear in 'intheknow'.
 - Discussions regarding a longer term five year arrangement were currently taking place to continue the Council undertaking the highway verge cutting, previously done by LCC, in the outer Chorley area
 - Arrangements for the Council to undertake the initial stages of overhanging vegetation onto the highway are also now in place.
 - The gritting of the Council's car parks had now been incorporated into a Severe Winter Weather Action Plan (SWWAP) that had been produced to outline the operational arrangements during the winter period.
4. Members asked if the County Council could replenish the gritting bins more frequently around the Borough in the winter months, particularly after a hard frost and if their criteria on the allocation of grit bins could be looked into. It was also thought that more publicity was needed on the appropriate use of grit for residents to deter them from using it on their footpaths and driveways.

Police and Crime Commissioners

5. The Monitoring Officer, Chris Moister delivered a presentation that gave some information on the role and responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner ahead of the forthcoming elections on 15 November 2012.
6. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 had introduced (amongst other things), the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel.
7. The Committee were informed that there were currently three confirmed candidates for the Election that was being co-ordinated by Blackburn with Darwen Borough

Council. The Election would be using a Supplementary Vote system whereby the elector can chose first and second preferences, the candidate who receives more than 50% of the vote or the most after the second preference count will be elected as the Police and Crime Commissioner.

8. The constitution and appointment of the Police and Crime Panel will consist of the following:
 - each authority in the police authority area of Lancashire will appoint one member to the Panel
 - to achieve political balance, additional members (up to a maximum of three) can be co-opted.
 - Two independent co-opted members (non-political) will be appointed.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL – 17 September 2012

Business Plan Monitoring – Partnership, Planning and Policy Directorate

9. The Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators for the Partnerships, Planning and Policy Directorate. Of the 28 actions/projects contained within the directorates plan, only three were rated as amber and Members fully discussed the issues as follows:
 - The delayed delivery of the second year of the Section 106 play and recreation fund due to insufficient funding at the present time.
 - Further work had been required on an agreed service model on the introduction of supported accommodation for 16/17 year olds. It was important that the model met the Supporting People model regarding the number of hours/proposed contract and the intention was to strengthen the support to meet the needs of vulnerable 16/17 year olds.
 - The trial of the new car parking options would be implemented from 1 October 2012. Revised pricing options had been proposed in line with feedback received from Town Team representatives and were part of the authority's new commitment to boost the local economy and revitalise the town centre.
10. Of the 18 performance indicators that were reported for the directorate, seven had been below target and outside the 5% target threshold at the time of the most recent reporting period as at 30 June 2012. An explanation and updated information was given against each one. The indicators relating to the processing planning applications was discussed further down the agenda and other queries related to the new businesses that had been established, the number of homelessness preventions and reliefs and the percentage of planned departures at Cotswold.
11. Members agreed that more needed to be done to encourage residents to seek housing and homelessness service advice prior to reaching housing crisis and the Committee were informed that the Council were currently exploring the introduction of a court desk service at Preston's Magistrate's Court.

Performance Focus – Planning Context

12. The Panel received a report of the Chief Executive that provided contextual information and some questions that were asked of Councillor Dennis Edgerley, Executive Member for Planning and LDF and Councillor Paul Walmsley, Chair of the Development Control Committee in relation to planning performance. Planning processing information for minor and other applications had dropped in 2012/13 following excellent performance in 2011/12. Both indicators had been off target at the end of quarter one, with performance dropping again in July.
13. It was explained to the Panel that the service had experienced a significant increase in the volume of minor applications in April and significant printing demands from safeguarded land applications. To compound the situation, there had been a number of printing and indexing issues that had impacted on the service's ability to effectively process the applications that had been received.
14. A number of measures had been put into place, including additional staffing, workflow modifications, management controls and temporary ICT fixes and it was expected that performance would improve for the next quarter.
15. The service was continuing to monitor and closely manage performance to determination and following issues in January and February there had been an increase in the number determined each month despite the increasing volumes in a number of different areas. Therefore, cases on hand were reducing but still high and it was demonstrated that it would be highly unlikely that the processing of 'minor' applications would get back on target for the remainder of the year.

Business Plan Monitoring – People and Places Directorate

16. The Director of People and Places reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators for his directorate. Only three actions had been rated amber, and the Committee were provided with an explanation about the issues and action taken to address them:
 - The improvements to the promotion of the Pest Control Service had been delayed due to other priorities and had been scheduled to begin later in the year to coincide with the re-launch of the Council's new website.
 - The Neighbourhood Review would now take account of other initiatives which would impact on the design of the neighbourhood working model.
 - The Common Bank – Big Wood Reservoir was dependent on Section 106 funding payments from developers and was linked to the Gillibrand Estate adoption.
17. Only two performance indicators had not been on target and action had subsequently been taken to get these back on track:
 - Percentage of streets meeting graffiti standards
 - Number of proactive dog patrols

Business Plan Monitoring – Transformation Directorate

18. The Panel received a report of the Chief Executive that presented the directorate's business improvement plan for 2012/13. The Performance Improvement Manager reported progress against the key actions and performance indicators for the directorate.
19. The report contained those key actions that were rated amber and gave an explanation about the issue and the action taken to address them, these included:
 - Implementation of changes to the management accountancy function
 - Complete Bank tender
 - Implementation of a Virtual Post Room
 - Complete review of Information Management
 - Develop and deliver a new Intranet
20. Some of the key actions related to IT difficulties and delays and the ICT Plan that had been reported at the last meeting continued to be regularly updated in line with the progress being made against each task and Members requested if they could have access to the updated ICT programme.
21. The report also included a full list of the directorate's performance indicators, with only five being reported as being below target and outside the 5% threshold. An explanation of the reasons and action being taken to address the issues was given.
22. Although the percentage of customers satisfied with the way they were treated by the Council was considerably down, the customer satisfaction indicator had been changed in recent months to one that was more realistic and could identify and address specific issues. The Panel were interested to know the full details of the customer satisfaction results asked to be kept updated on progress.

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Adoption of Estates

23. The Group, chaired by Councillor Matthew Crow has now met on five occasions to review the problems that many residents across the Borough face when trying to get their estates adopted.
24. The review aims to recommend ways to improve the process of adopting new housing estates across the Borough and to improve relations and communication with existing developers and other partner organisations.
25. The Group has identified a mix of small and large existing estates as case studies (Kittiwake, Heapey; Fairview Farm in Adlington, Gillibrand in Chorley and Buckshaw Village) and Members have been provided with a wide range of information about each one, giving them a clear understanding of the issues identified and the progress of adoption on each estate. They have also listened to the views and concerns of residents in those areas and intend to ask questions of the main house building companies for those developments.

26. Mr Chris Bond, the Development Control and Road Adoptions Manager at Northamptonshire County Council came to one of the meetings to talk about a scrutiny review that his authority had undertaken on the adoption of new roads in his county area.
27. Members were also informed that in response to House of Commons debates, the Department of Transport (DfT) and Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had met with Local Highway and Planning Authorities to discuss options and opportunities to improve the existing systems associated with the adoption of new streets in developments and any legislative amendments that would assist.

Recommendation

28. That Council is recommended to note the report.

COUNCILLOR STEVE HOLGATE
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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There are no background papers to this report.