

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 June 2005

Present: Councillor Walker (Chair), Councillors Davies, Goldsworthy, Parr and Perks.

05.0S.19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Case, McGowan, Mrs Walsh and Mrs Wilson.

05.0S.20 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Member disclosed any interests in relation to matters under consideration at the meeting.

05.0S.21 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 March 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

05.0S.22 BUSINESS PLANS UPDATE TO THE YEAR END (2004/05)

The Committee received the year end for 2004/05 update of the Business Plans relating to Corporate and Policy Services, Human Resources, Finance and Legal Services whose remit and area are the responsibility of the Committee.

RESOLVED - That the Business Plans and comments received be noted.

05.0S.23 INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN CHORLEY

The Committee received from the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel their draft final report on their inquiry into the provision of youth activities in the Borough.

The report identified the findings and recommendations that had come out of the Inquiry.

RESOLVED - That the report and the undermentioned recommendations be approved and forwarded to the Executive Cabinet for consideration.

1) All available services, activities, advice sources and training and vocational programmes through, for example, the Borough Council's 'Get Up and Go' Programme and the Lancashire Youth and Community Service should be advertised and promoted as extensively and vigorously as possible.

2) The Lancashire County Council be requested to provide and/or support endeavours to establish dedicated 'Youth Centres' in local areas with advice and guidance to voluntary youth groups from the Borough Council.

3) The Council lobbies and encourages more extensive use of school facilities out of school hours for young people's activities.

4) The Council supports the establishment of a link between the web sites of the Lancashire County Youth and Community Services and the Borough Council to highlight information on available services and activities.

- 5) The Council aims to develop more effective links and liaison with Parish Councils on youth activities programmes and services and explores the potential for appropriate Parish Councils taking on the role of 'Cultural Champions' for the Borough.
- 6) The Panel recognises the valuable contribution a vibrant Youth Council makes to an area and recommends the Council to request the Lancashire County Council to re-establish a vibrant Chorley Youth Forum as a matter of urgency.
- 7) The Council to continue to encourage more local Groups to compile Development Policies to encourage young people's activities and to enable them to qualify for available financial aid from a variety of sources.
- 8) The Council explores the potential for the establishment of a 'Chorley Lads and Girls Club' by setting up an Officer Working Group to assess the feasibility of the facility.
- 9) The Council recommends and promotes better and more effective co-ordination between service delivery agents/bodies and funding sources.
- 10) The Panel recognises the need for the correct balance to be achieved between the direct provision and the sustainability of young people's activities and services and recommends the Council to support all measures to achieve this goal through, for example, the encouragement of local groups to pursue volunteer training and development courses.
- 11) The Panel supports the Council's commitment to its support of youth activities (evidenced by the growth item in the 2005/06 budget) and requests the Council to sustain its commitment to the provision of facilities for young person's activities by continuing a budget provision in future years for a continued rolling programme of improvement. This will enhance, but not replace, the activities and services provided by the Lancashire County Council and local voluntary groups throughout the community.
- 12) The Panel accepts the responsibility of parents/guardians to encourage their children to participate in activities, to participate themselves (whenever practicable) and to contribute (in whatever manner) to the resources required to stage the activities; and the Panel recommends the Council to examine means of promoting this principle.

05.05.24 INQUIRY INTO THE ONE STOP SHOP

The Committee received from the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel their report on its inquiry into the One Stop Shop.

The reports identified the findings and recommendations that had come out of the Inquiry.

RESOLVED - That the report and the undermentioned recommendations be approved and forwarded to the Executive Cabinet for consideration.

- 1) That after consideration of the evidence presented to the Panel the One Stop Shop has been effective in improving customer service.
- 2) To consider further the feasibility of the planning officer on Customer Services duty, to be based from within the One Stop Shop.
- 3) To consider amendments to the arrangements for "on duty" planning officers to address the issue of customers having to wait.
- 4) To let staff know how often the panic buttons are tested.
- 5) To have Customer Services advisors, in particular the supervisors, join in on regular training sessions and new starters to have training with the

back office sections, such as Revenues and Benefits and Planning Services.

6) To train some Customer Services staff to a higher level in certain services to serve as reference points within Customer Services.

7) To establish a policy to ensure that the dialogues used by the advisors are kept up to date for all services provided by the One Stop Shop.

8) To clarify the point where the customer query requires back office attention.

9) To load the planning software on more than one computer in the One Stop Shop.

10) To promote the use of the Chorley Borough Council Internet site to access information and services.

11) To publish Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) in the One Stop Shop on the different services provided, potentially via the plasma screen.

12) To increase the advertisement of facilities available at the One Stop Shop, for example a leaflet to libraries and community centres or an article in Chorley Borough News.

13) To produce a breakdown of the range of inquiries to Customer Services between Revenues and Benefits, Planning Services etc to aid future resource provision.

14) To record the number of queries requiring back office resolution. .

15) To record the numbers of Black and Minority Ethnic customers to aid future comparisons.

16) To set up a One Stop Shop user group with management and staff from all of the Council's Service Units involved and a Member of the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

17) To use footsteps/arrows to direct customers to the Fast Track Reception.

18) To train staff in basic sign language and to liaise with deaf organisations on other ways to provide services to deaf customers, such as the provision of sign language interpreters by appointment by an external or internal identified resource.

19) To make the internal entrance and exit doors to the One Stop Shop more accessible, potentially by making the doors semi-automatic push button operated.

20) The layout of Interview Room Three to be reconsidered.

21) To provide a disabled parking space in the vicinity of the One Stop Shop.

22) To advertise the "Language Line" service.

23) To target Black and Minority Ethnic communities for open evening events in the One Stop Shop and promotion of facilities available in the community.

24) To extend the opening hours to provide additional ease of use for in-work customers

eg appointments outside opening hours and extended hours phone lines.

25) To introduce text phone facilities for people with speech and hearing difficulties.

26) To support progress on the implementation of the Lancashire Shared Services Contact Centre to publicise the services available.

05.OS.25 MONITORING OF SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Committee received and considered an update report of the Head of Human

Resources on the monitoring of sickness absence across the authority and the process of reducing absence within the authority.

The report indicated that the performance indicator for 2003/04 was 13.45 days lost per employee.

The targets set for 2005/06 was significantly challenging at 8 days sick per employee equating to a 3.4% absence rate which was comparably low compared to the national and local targets for both public and private sector companies.

The year-end (2004/05) target of 10 days was met, with a final rate of 9.69 days per employee. The reduction equating to cashable savings of £250,000, which would have had to be found from elsewhere in the budget if it had not been for such an impressive turnabout.

The report outlined the major factors of the future action plans aimed at a continuing reduction in sickness absence levels and improving the health and well being of employees. A practice approach had been taken to manage better long and short-term absence within the organisation.

RESOLVED – That the Head of Human Resources continue to monitor and manage sickness absence in consultation with the Senior Management Group to effectively reduce absenteeism within the authority and report to the Committee at 6 monthly intervals.

05.0S.26 FORWARD PLANS

The Committee received for information the latest Forward Plan showing the revised format and the financial threshold for the identification of 'key decisions' that had been the subject of consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and which had been approved by the Executive Cabinet on 7 April 2005.

RESOLVED - That the revised Forward Plan be noted.

05.0S.27 THE COUNCIL'S TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS FOR 2005/06

RESOLVED - That this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee on 7 July 2005.

05.0S.28 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

RESOLVED - That this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee on 7 July 2005

05.0S.29 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2005/06

The Committee received the Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the three panels for the Municipal Year 2005/06, which illustrated the status of current inquiry ongoing items and issues presently being monitored.

Chair