

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 8 November 2006

Present: Councillor Dennis Edgerley (Chair), Councillors Thomas McGowan, Thomas Bedford, Terry Brown, Francis Culshaw, Mrs Marie Gray, Harold Heaton, Geoffrey Russell, Mrs Iris Smith, Christopher Snow and Greg Morgan

Also in attendance: Councillor Alan Cullens Executive Member for Resources

06.OS.51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mark Perks, Executive Member for Health, Leisure and Well Being had previously submitted his apologies for absence.

06.OS.52 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

None of the Members disclosed any interests in relation to matters under consideration at the meeting.

06.OS.53 MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the previous meeting.

The Chair informed Members that a report on Concessionary Travel (Minute 06.OS.4 refers) requested at the last meeting, would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee, as all the information requested from Lancashire County Council had not been received.

The Chair also notified members that the Council's Relationship Manager (Audit Commission) would be invited, if available, to the next meeting on 4 December 2006 (Minute 06.OS 48 refers).

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 October 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

06.OS.54 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 9 NOVEMBER 2006

No other reports on the agenda for the Executive Committee on 9 November 2006 were considered for discussion.

06.OS.55 APPROVAL OF PLAY STRATEGY FOR THE BOROUGH

Further to Minute 06.OS.46 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5 September 2006, the Committee received a report from the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services on the proposed adoption of a Play Strategy for Chorley.

The Committee had indicated that it wished to examine the report in advance of its consideration by the Executive Cabinet on 9 November 2006.

A copy of the Strategy accompanied the report and indicated that the Chorley Play Partnership had been established and between January and May 2006 the Partnership drafted the Play Strategy and had taken it out for a 10-week consultation period.

The Strategy was a partnership strategy with many organisations making a contribution to its development.

The Strategy covered a wide range of initiatives and activities designed to improve access to quality play opportunities over a long-term period. Some of these were dependant upon bidding successfully for external funding, including £208,000 of lottery money. The bids would be considered by a small panel of assessors with four members, two from Chorley Council and a representatives from the Chorley Play Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership.

The approval of the Play Strategy would enable progress on actions within the strategy and enhance partnership working that will ultimately help to reduce inequalities, get people more involved, improve access to quality play opportunities and develop Chorley as a good place to live and to play.

RESOLVED - That the Executive Cabinet be advised that this Committee had supported the recommendations in the report but some members' had requested the appointment of a non-Executive Member from the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel to the small panel of assessors to consider bids to the Big Lottery.

06.OS.56 LANCASHIRE PARTNERSHIP - STRATEGY FOR AN AGEING POPULATION

The Committee received a report of the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services on the Chorley Council's response to the Lancashire Partnership – Strategy for An Ageing Population consultation exercise.

The report indicated that the Strategy had been commissioned by the Lancashire Partnership, an action identified in the County's Community Plan – Ambition Lancashire.

The need for the Strategy was explained in the document and had involved over 300 older people and staff from organisations from across the County. In addition to this working groups of older people and officers had been directly involved in developing the thinking and proposals for action that underpin the strategy.

RESOLVED - That the suggested response to the Lancashire Partnership identified in the report be endorsed and that the Executive Cabinet be requested to include an additional comment relating to the integration of older people into strategies as they provide a good resource and can make an impact and contribution to the community with their skills and experience.

06.OS.57 UPDATED CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a report highlighting the amendments to the Corporate Strategy for 2006 – 2009.

The report indicated that the Corporate Strategy was the key document for the Council in taking forward its agenda for improvement. The Council had undertaken a process of reviewing the commitments made in the Corporate Strategy to ensure that these could be delivered and that they reflected the key objections of the new administration. The report detailed the changes made to the Strategy as a platform for taking forward the Council's ambitions.

RESOLVED - 1) That the changes to the Corporate Strategy and the Vision for the Borough be noted and the following responses be submitted to the Executive Cabinet:

- **The Committee welcomed the change to the wording of the Vision Statement.**

- Some members expressed concern at the proposed change from 'Reduce Pockets of Inequalities' to 'Improving Equalities of Opportunity and Life Chances', as there is a need for resources for improvement in this area. Concern that resources would be lost and that this change was more of an inclusive view.
- Some disappointment expressed with the deletion of 'Develop and deliver a strategy and action plan to increase voter turnout at Borough Council elections'.
- Some members requested that the Key Project 'Develop a Strategy to deliver 0% Council Tax increase in 2007/09' should be revised to read 'Develop a Strategy to maximise resources and reduce costs through the pursuance of efficiencies to enable service improvements and the development of new services'.
- The Committee requested that the Key Project of 'Prepare a Business Case to support a new Local Government Structures' should be revised to read 'Explore the maximisation of opportunities given by the Government White Paper'.
- The Committee welcomed the Key Project of 'Strengthen Links with Parish Councils, Faith and Community and Voluntary Agencies'.

06.OS.58 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Council's Forward Plan setting out details of the key executive decisions expected to be taken between 1 November 2006 to 28 February 2007.

The Plan identified several matters for potential decisions by the Executive and the Committee were requested to indicate those items that it wished to examine in advance of consideration by the Executive.

Members commented on the accuracy of the decision dates for when the decisions were to be taken. A more realistic assessment of the decision date was requested.

RESOLVED - That the Directors' Group be requested to examine the proposed dates for when Executive decisions are to be taken and to make realistic assessment of the decision dates.

06.OS.59 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INQUIRY

The Committee received a presentation by the Director of Policy and Performance on the Corporate Assessment. This was in relation to the Committees' ongoing inquiry into the Council's performance against the key lines of inquiry to be assessed by the Audit Commission during the CPA and Direction of Travel.

Members received the following documentation, which had previously been identified by the Committee:

- CPA Inspection report from 2003
- Director of Travel Self Assessment October 2006
- CPA – District Council Framework from 2006

The Committee received a background to the Council's CPA inspection in 2003 and received informed that significant improvement has been made in the way the Council delivered its services.

However, specific areas of weakness had been identified which required action and it would be these areas that the Committee would be examining in its enquiry.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

06.OS.60 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2006/07. The programme included the envisaged timescales for the ongoing scrutiny enquiries and the planned details for the periodic inventory of past inquiries.

RESOLVED - That the work programme be noted.

06.OS.61 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

06.OS.62 PROPERTY SERVICES - OUTSOURCING

Further to Minute 06.OS.46 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5 September 2006, the Committee received from the Executive Director for Corporate and Customer a report on the appointment of a service provider to deliver a full range of property related services to the Council.

The Committee had indicated that it wished to examine the report in advance of its consideration by the Executive Cabinet of 9 November 2006.

A separate report relating to the selection of a service provider for the Markets function would be submitted to a future meeting.

The report indicated that the procurement exercise had been conducted by a project team, guided by an external consultant, evaluating the bids received set against a criteria, resulting in a preferred bidder accepting the transfer of property services.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

Chair