

Scrutiny Reporting Back

Chorley Council's Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny in 2013/14



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1. MEMBERSHIP OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Councillor Steve Holgate
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2013/14



Councillor Mark Perks
Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2013/14

Councillors Julia Berry, Doreen Dickinson, Graham Dunn, Robert Finnamore, Keith Iddon, Hasina Khan, Roy Lees, Marion Lowe, Mick Muncaster, Geoff Russell, Rosemary Russell and Kim Snape

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2013/14 was a busy year for Overview and Scrutiny with the Committee undertaking a varied and extensive Work Programme. We welcomed back Members of the Conservative Group and Councillor Mark Perks was appointed as the Vice Chair of the Committee.

Our dedicated Performance Monitoring Panel, consisting of six Councillors met quarterly to look at the Council and Local Strategic Partnership performance, along with a focus on a number of different service issues that included, shared services, customer dis-satisfaction and domestic violence detections.

We still continue to receive six monthly monitoring reports following the Executive's response on the implementation of outcomes and measured success from past scrutiny reviews that have included:

- **Allotments** – The creation of an additional 43 allotment units across the Borough.
- **Adoptions of Estates** – We received the responses from both the Executive's of Chorley and Lancashire County Council's. The responses were positive but will take some time to have an effective, however the establishment of a new role at Chorley Council, Development Implementation Co-ordinator to manage matters pertaining to Community Infrastructure Levy, Planning Obligations and Adoptions would help to monitor this.
- **Lancastrian** – Continued improved usage of the Lancastrian facilities with income exceeding predicted targets.
- **Private Rented Housing** – The implementation of a Housing Standards Enforcement Policy that's sets out the process for inspection and enforcement.
- **Tourism and Promoting Chorley** – The development of a successful traffic management plan for events taking place at Astley Park

This year the Committee has undertaken three reviews:

The Select Move Allocation process was requested by Members after concerns were raised about the accessibility and user- friendliness of Select Move and also the perception that people from outside the sub region and without local connection were accessing properties in Chorley.

A review of the Playing Pitches, Play Areas and Open Spaces Strategy was undertaken to assess the value of the Health Section of the Council's current Intergrated Impact Assessment to ascertain if it robust enough to maximise its health and wellbeing outcomes.

Chorley's CCTV provision and infrastructure was identified through crime and disorder scrutiny after the Committee was informed that its current contractual arrangements were due for renewal.

2. CHALLENGING PERFORMANCE

Our dedicated Performance Panel focused on the performance elements of scrutiny and considered all monitoring information. Scrutinising performance is a key role for scrutiny and one of the benefits to the dedicated resource is that a smaller number of Members are able to drill down to the detail in key areas and adopt some consistency in approach.

The Performance Panel for 2013/14 consisted of the following Membership:

Councillor Steve Holgate – Chair
Councillor Mark Perks – Vice Chair
Councillor Julia Berry
Councillor Keith Iddon
Councillor Marion Lowe
Councillor Kim Snape

The Panel has met four times in the last 12 months and has considered the Councils Corporate Strategy key projects and monitoring; Chorley Partnership monitoring information and the Council's Organisational Improvement Plan that captured all the directorate and service level business improvement plans.

We were given a demonstration of the My Projects feature on the new intranet which has enabled us to view progress and key milestones for all corporate strategy and business improvement projects across the Council. Each meeting also considered an additional performance focus, outlined below, where we looked at particular areas of concern or poor performance and the relevant Executive Member was invited to attend. The areas of focus are summarised below:

3. SCRUTINY REVIEWS IN 2013/14

3.1 SHARED SERVICES

(Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance attended)

We were presented with a report which provided the financial and organisational benefits to the establishment of shared financial and assurance services with South Ribble Council. In terms of performance in the last quarter of 2012/13, there had been an improvement on the previous year with 80% of financial service indicators and 46% of assurance indicators being green. Since its establishment, the shared financial and assurance services had been predicted to save £290,000 but had in fact saved £550,000. Both Councils had benefitted equally from the savings made.

In some areas, services had been improved with full integration and greater efficiency/delivery. However this hadn't been achieved in all areas and management accounting would be the focus over the next 12 months. Shared services was not the solution for all services and areas like IT and revenues and benefits had been investigated but discounted on the basis that the Council could make more savings by delivering the services alone, however this did not discount looking at these options in the future. Experience had shown that standardisation across authorities was a good basis for shared services.

3.2 CUSTOMER DISSATISFACTION

(Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Leader attended)

The authority's performance target was a maximum of 20% of customers dissatisfied with the service they receive from the Council and whilst this had been a challenging target, it had been set to reflect the Council's ambitions. An email survey of customers had replaced the previous phone and face to face survey in May 2012.

We received a report that detailed the performance in 2012/13 and to date in 2013/14, showing that the target was not being met and was consistently well above the 20% level. The reasons for dissatisfaction had been investigated and it showed that the major cause was customers not receiving a response or not receiving a response in a timely manner. This could be further drilled down by service area and individual officers.

The Executive Leader explained that drilling down into the detail of why customers were not happy with the Council, enabled the Council to instigate changes in staff behaviours or approach. The highest number of complaints related to waste/bin collection but this was reflective of the high volume of customers for this service and is in proportion with the performance of other services across the Council. Responses to customers regarding missed bin collection for example, should be realistic so as not to create false expectations and generate further complaints.

3.3 TRIAL RE-OPENING OF MARKET STREET

(Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Leader attended)

We considered a report of the Chief Executive on the key corporate project of the trial reopening of Market Street which was one of two areas of performance focus for the meeting. The project aim was to revitalise the top end of Market Street to attract more shoppers and to boost trade in the area. The allocated budget for the project was £47,000.

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Leader provided an outline of the challenges experienced earlier in the year in progressing the project alongside Lancashire County Council (LCC) as the highway authority. Progress had proved slow and in order to reduce delay, the Council had sought the services of Pendle Engineering Services as a third party contractor to draw up a design for the scheme. LCC had recommended changes to the design and a new scheme had to be drawn up resulting in both a delay and additional costs to this Council. The project was now back on track and completion expected by December. Delivery of the project had resulted in a number of lessons learned to ensure effective joint working, including the need for much greater forward planning and understanding the priorities of both Councils.

3.4 THE COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Public Health Observatories under Public Health England publish local health profiles which show how health in Chorley compares with the rest of England across a number of indicators. The profile indicates that the health of the people of Chorley is varied compared with the England average. Deprivation is lower than average and all-cause mortality rates had fallen over the last ten years, as have deaths from cancer and heart disease. The rate of adult physical activity is also better than the England average.

However, Chorley performs lower than the England average for a number of indicators that include, smoking in pregnancy, starting breast feeding, hospital stays for self-harm, people diagnoseD with diabetes and hip fractures in the over 65's. This type of information (including the Chorley and South

Ribble Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) had been used to inform Chorley and South Ribble Health and Wellbeing Plans which take a holistic approach to issues through early intervention and prevention measures.

The Chorley and South Ribble Health and Wellbeing Partnership had been operational for over 18 months and formed a key mechanism to communicate and convey local health priorities to the Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board who take overall responsibility for improving health outcomes across the county under the new public health arrangements. The Chorley and South Ribble Health and Wellbeing Plan identifies three core priorities of, accessibility, independence and activity. A number of actions support these priorities with progress regularly reported at meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. Performance of the plan was monitored by the Chorley Partnership on a quarterly basis with the most recent reports showing excellent performance and all priorities rated green.

The indicative commissioning budget for Chorley and South Ribble CCG for 2012/13 was £224,416,000. An estimated baseline for the public health grant had been published by the Department of Health and had been based on public health spending during 2010/11. The estimated baseline for Lancashire is £45,891,000 which equates to £37 per person, based on historic need. We were informed that to be able to create a number of early intervention initiatives, an analysis of the ward and Lancashire public health indicator averages needed to be undertaken to produce the relevant targets in the required areas. It was sometimes difficult to assess where the intervention need was required as the relevant statistics were presently not measured, for example, what the main causes of people over 65 needing a hip replacement. It was also intended that the Board would piggy back on a number of Lancashire based programmes to try to extend services with limited resources.

3.5 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DETECTIONS

(Detective Inspector, Geoff Hurst, Lancashire Constabulary attended the meeting)

The new Corporate Strategy had been approved in November 2012 and identified the percentage of domestic violence detections as a key measure for success against the priority of 'clean, safe and healthy communities'. The measure was selected in order to focus attention on this issue and ensure a coordinated effort.

A target of 70% detection rate was set, which reflected the current police target for this indicator. The indicator is measured using data by the Police and reported to the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership. Detective Inspector Hurst explained that the police no longer use this target as a way of measuring its detection success, for a variety of differing reasons. The recording of Domestic Violence incidents has changed over time with many parameters being altered. The age limit for recording has been lowered to 16 year olds, sibling to sibling incidents and other familial incidents are now included and the implementation of a wide range of interventions and alternative disposals other than prosecution and caution, have reduced the number reaching 'detection' stage. With this in mind the police are now focusing more on reducing risk through interventions and managing outcomes.

The MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference), chaired by the police, meets monthly and focusses on the safety of victims of domestic abuse identified as being at high risk. The MARAC combines up to date risk information with a timely assessment of a victim's needs and links those directly to the provision of appropriate services for all those involved in a domestic abuse case: victim, children and perpetrator. Information is shared and joint decisions made on the most appropriate way to reduce or manage the identified risks.

Officers also work with other services in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), currently based in Leyland, with each agency - including Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council's Children's and Adult's Services, Lancashire Probation Trust, the NHS (including mental health services) and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) - based in one building, allowing the efficient sharing of information. Once a person at risk is referred into the MASH, the different services undertake a joint risk assessment, arranging for appropriate interventions to reduce the threat of harm to the individual. There does not have to be a prosecution for a person to be referred to the MASH.

It was also explained how the police treat cases and presented some useful statistics on the difference between serious and less serious incidents.

Chorley, South Ribble, West Lancashire and Preston Community Safety Partnerships were in the process of commissioning a pilot domestic abuse perpetrator project. An external organisation would be commissioned to deliver interventions to perpetrators who have been deemed high risk but not subject to statutory supervision. The Pilot had been funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner and would look to support five perpetrators across the borough of Chorley with the aim of reducing their reoffending behaviour.

The police have also started to see greater reporting of domestic violence by members of the public. Media campaigns, such as the new Clare's Law, have helped to raise awareness of the issue and people are not afraid to come forward to report incidences they have witnessed. The IDVA service can also be accessed by victims of domestic abuse, by being present at the courts and doctors surgeries across the borough.

4 KEY MESSAGES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

4.1 PLAYING AREAS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

Chorley had never previously had an overall Strategy that pulled together all the existing management and location plans of sites across the borough. The Council has very high and ambitious standards that are above those of our neighbouring authorities. The new strategy was required to pull together the three key areas of play areas, playing pitches and open spaces. It would also provide detailed actions and assist with section 106 agreements in the future.

Consultation was undertaken on the draft Play, Open Spaces and Playing Pitch Strategy 2013 - 2018 with partners, local residents, sports clubs/organisations, community groups and neighbourhood partnerships. The Strategy set out how Chorley Council planned to protect, manage, enhance and secure its open spaces over the next five years and beyond. It focused on sites that needed to be improved upon and sustained to mitigate against negative trends and recommended how any identified deficiencies in provision of open space should be addressed through a five year action plan.

The tool used to assess the impact of new policies, strategies and areas of service is the Councils approved Integrated Impact Assessment that included an element focusing on health impact. Using the draft Strategy as an example, the Task Group sought to test the Health Impact Section of Integrated Impact Assessment on a number of sites from the lists that covered the three areas of play areas, open spaces and playing pitches, to ascertain whether the Integrated Impact Assessment was robust enough to maximise its health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Group came to the conclusion that overall there needed to be more emphasis placed on the importance of using the Integrated Impact Assessments on any new policies and procedures that are implemented by the Council, particularly in relation to the impact of health and wellbeing. It was also considered that a better understanding about the importance of using this tool would greatly influence decisions made in the future in relation to health and wellbeing and therefore training in this area was a key issue that needed addressing for both officers and Elected Members of the Council.

4.2 SELECT MOVE ALLOCATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The Scrutiny inquiry into the Select Move Choice Based Lettings scheme was requested by Members of Chorley Council after concerns were raised about the accessibility and user- friendliness of Select Move and also the perception that people from outside the sub region, and without local connection, were accessing properties in Chorley.

The Task Group examined in detail how the scheme operated, exploring the profile of customers who use it. This included looking at how often customers used Select Move and obtaining their views, the

work of the Registered Providers who participate in the scheme and whether or not there was a consistency of approach.

Members engaged with both partners and customers to ensure that all perspectives were considered and to ensure the scrutiny was balanced. The findings were mainly positive and Select Move was demonstrated to be a fit-for-purpose, effective way for a number of partners over a sub-regional footprint, to work collaboratively to allocate social housing.

Select Move does largely meet our customers' needs, as satisfaction is good, allocations are being made within a period considered to be reasonable and also the majority of customers when asked if we should revert back to the old system, said that we should not. Choice and personal preference are key elements of the scheme and so these were found to have a bearing on how long a customer may wait until they secure a property.

With the refreshed Allocations Policy and also the forthcoming system upgrade, which promises to improve the customer interface and experience, Select Move will increasingly meet need. Furthermore, the introduction of a smartphone friendly version of the website will further enhance access for customers.

The new local connection provisions within the Partnerships' revised policy will ensure those with a local connection to Chorley are given priority for all available homes in Chorley, minimising the levels of inward migration. This is important particularly given the volume of new affordable housing developments in Chorley.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER: CCTV PROVISION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Under the requirement to undertake scrutiny of crime and disorder matters, the Committee considered a detailed report of the Director of People and Places on the current Chorley CCTV service and existing infrastructure and also information about CCTV systems in other authorities where the systems have been reduced or decommissioned.

Members raised the public perception of safety provided by CCTV; how far cameras acted as a deterrent, the camera's role in preventing the escalation of crime or the prosecution of offenders including those involved in serious crime.

As the subject was complex, the Committee decided to undertake a review of the service to be Chair by Councillor Robert Fynamore.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked the Task Group to undertake a scrutiny inquiry to look at CCTV Provision and Infrastructure in Chorley.

Chorley Council's closed circuit television system (CCTV) is solely owned and operated by the Council and comprises a number of overt cameras located across the Chorley borough area. The infrastructure has been in place for 18 years with some upgrades and improvements to equipment during that time but is essentially analogue based whereas current technology has moved to a digital format.

There are three main areas to the system:

- CCTV suite with monitored screens
- Recording capability for images
- Image capturing hardware – cameras

Improvements over recent years have been to partially digitise recording capacity which is now at full capacity; upgrading of monitoring screens; and the replacement of some cameras when irreparable or requiring excessive maintenance.

Present monitoring operating times meet current periods of high demand and are regularly reviewed based on crime and other intelligence data. This element of the service has been the subject of a recent internal audit and several management actions arising out of the review are being implemented.

Overall there is significant support for the provision a CCTV service from key partners such as police; from public response to a consultation; from local town centre businesses and Parish Councils and the Group were satisfied that they had received the appropriate data that was required to evidence the continued need for CCTV in Chorley.

After considering the information obtained during the review of Chorley Council's CCTV service, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has concluded that the provision of CCTV plays an integral role in the tackling of Crime and Antisocial Behaviour. Evidence suggests that Chorley Council's CCTV is a key tool which supports the reporting, detection and prosecution of crime and antisocial behaviour which occurs across the Borough. Additionally the results of a resident survey commissioned as part of the CCTV review, show that for the majority of residents, the presence of CCTV makes them feel safe. Furthermore it is evident that CCTV proves useful in helping to safeguard vulnerable residents, including those who go missing from home.

As Chorley Council has made long term commitments in helping to ensure that Chorley has clean, safe and healthy communities and a strong local economy, it is recommended that the Council continues to support the provision of CCTV which aids the realisation of these commitments.

6. CHALLENGING THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee has continued to work together positively with the Executive Leader and his Cabinet in scrutinising the delivery of their proposals.

The following areas are Executive Cabinet items that Overview and Scrutiny has considered and made recommendations in 2013/14

- How Chorley Council impacts on the health of our citizens
- Economic Development Strategy
- Budget Principles
- Call-in procedures

7. CALL-IN

The Committee considered the outcomes of a mini scrutiny review that had taken place looking into the current call in procedure. The Committee had agreed that the call in process needed to be revised following Members concerns about hearing call in requests as part of a wider Committee agenda.

A small task group of four members met to look at the key aspects of call in, including comparative information from other Councils across Lancashire. The main recommendations from that review were, to reduce the call in period from 10 days to 5 days, to allow speedier implementation of executive decisions and that a Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be convened to hear all call in requests, rather than hearing them as part of a wider Committee agenda. All the changes were approved at full Council as they form part of the Council's Constitution.

Since the changes, there has been one request to call in a decision made by the Executive Member for Planning and LDF regarding the cessation of notification letters to contributors (Those who comment on planning applications).

We received a report that included the reasons behind the decision to make information available on the Council's website and that neighbour notification letters would make reference to this facility. Some Members however remained of the view that it was important that all contributors were informed of the decision individually rather than being directed to the Council's website and asked that the Executive Member reconsider the decision in light of the discussions made.

Procedural lessons have been learnt in considering Call in requests. It was pleasing to see that the call-in process can generate public attendance and participation at scrutiny meetings.

7. FINANCIAL SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the agenda papers being submitted to the Executive Cabinet on 16 January 2014 setting out the 2014/15 budget and summary budget position over the medium term. The Council's budgetary and policy framework required that any views submitted by the Committee should be taken into account in the final approval of the budget at Budget Council on 25 February 2014.

The proposals aimed to provide a budget that was more sustainable and took a longer term view to take into account the uncertainty facing local government finance settlements. The proposals also delivered projects to achieve the priorities of the administration, in the Town Centre, within neighbourhoods and relating to jobs and investment.

The Chief Executive gave an overview of the Council's position that included information on how the Council was generating funding streams independently of grants from the Government such as the purchase of the Market Walk shopping Centre that would generate a surplus of £400,000 in 2014/15.

8. CONCLUSION AND THE YEAR AHEAD

2012/13 has been an interesting year for scrutiny, resulting in some key changes to approach with the creation of the Performance Panel. Challenges ahead are to continue to scrutinise areas of interest and concern to Councillors and their constituents; to follow up on the implementation of scrutiny recommendations; to work more effectively with our partners on scrutiny and to continue to challenge our Executive Members in a constructive way with recommendations that result in positive outcomes for the residents in Chorley.

The Council will hold a total of eight scrutiny meetings in 2014/15, with four main Overview and Scrutiny Committee and four Performance Panel meetings. Councillor Mark Perks will take the Chair of the Committee, with Councillor June Molyneaux taking Vice Chair and we welcome several new Members to the Committee. In addition, at its first meeting, Members will agree a number of scrutiny review topics for inclusion in the Work Programme for 2014/15.

The Committee will also be undertaking some valuable scrutiny training at the start of the year on 3 July. It's a while since we undertook any scrutiny training so this session is a refresher for all Councillors and will cover:

- how to prepare for scrutiny committees or short-life task and finish groups

- the relationships between scrutiny chairs and scrutiny officers
- how to choose a small number of topics for scrutiny investigations
- how to plan and develop questions
- how to get what you want from those who come to answer questions
- innovative ways of collecting evidence
- how to make recommendations effective
- the nature of scrutiny leadership
- the party political dimension