

# **REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND PANELS**

## **GENERAL REPORT**

1. This report summarises the business transacted at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 November 2006 and 4 December 2006, as well as a brief summary of the recent activities and matters discussed at meetings of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8 NOVEMBER 2006**

### **Approval of the Play Strategy for the Borough**

2. The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services submitted a report on the proposed adoption of a Play Strategy for Chorley.
3. We had previously indicated our wish to have sight of this report and discuss with the Director before the Executive Cabinet took any firm decisions.
4. Attached to the report was a copy of the Strategy which indicated that the Chorley Play Partnership had been established and between January and May 2006 the Partnership drafted the Play Partnership and had taken it out for a 10 week consultation period.
5. The Strategy was a partnership document with many organisations making a contribution to its development.
6. 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 dependent 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 representative from the Chorley Play Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership.
7. The approval of the Play Strategy would enable progress on action 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.
8. The Committee supported the recommendations contained in the report but some Members 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 and this was reported to the Executive Cabinet.

### **Lancashire Partnership – Strategy for an Ageing Population**

9. We received a report of the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services on Chorley Council's response to the Lancashire Partnership – Strategy for an Ageing Population consultation exercise.
10. The report contained the suggested response and indicated that the Strategy had been commissioned by the Lancashire Partnership, an action identified in the County's Community Plan – Ambitious Lancashire.
11. We received an explanation for the Strategy, which had involved over 300 older people and staff from organisations 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.

12. The Committee endorsed the suggested response to the Lancashire Partnership, and requested that the Executive Cabinet 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.

### **Updated Corporate Strategy**

13. We received from the Director of Policy and Performance a report which highlighted the amendments that had been made to the Corporate Strategy for 2006 – 2009.
14. 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 objectives of the new administration. The report detailed the changes made to the Strategy as a platform for taking forward the Council's ambitions.
15. We noted the changes to the Corporate Strategy and the vision for the Borough and requested that several responses be submitted to the Executive Cabinet.

### **Forward Plan**

16. We received the Council's Forward Plan, which set out details of the key executive decisions expected to be taken between 1 November 2006 to 28 February 2007.
17. The Plan identified several matters for potential decisions by the Executive and the Committee was requested to identify the items it wished to examine in advance of consideration by the Executive.
18. In response we indicated that there were no reports which we would wish to have sight of, however we requested that the Directors Group examine the proposed dates for when Executive decisions are to be taken and to make realistic assessments of the decision dates.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry**

19. We received a presentation from the Director of Policy and Performance on the Corporate Assessment. This was in relation to the Committee's 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.
20. We received the following documentation, which had previously been identified by the Committee:
  - CPA Inspection Report from 2003
  - Direction of Travel Self Assessment October 2006
  - CPA – District Council Framework from 2006
21. The Committee received a background to the Council's CPA inspection in 2003 and received information that significant improvement had been made in the way the Council delivered its services.
22. 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 inquiry.

## **Property Services – Outsourcing**

23. We received from the Executive Director for Corporate and Customer a confidential report on the appointment of a service provider to deliver a full range of property related services to the Council.
24. We had previously indicated our wish to have sight of this report and consider the report before the Executive Cabinet took any firm decision.
25. The report indicated that the procedure 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.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8 DECEMBER 2006**

### **Performance Management – Second Quarter**

26. We received the second quarter performance management report indicating the Authority's performance in relating to both the Best Value Performance Indicators and the Council's Corporate Key Performance Indicators.
27. The report indicated the full list of Best Value Performance Indicators that are relevant to this Council and which are collected in accordance with definitions issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government.
28. The 44 key projects that contribute to the achievement of the Council's six strategic objectives had shown an overall performance in the first two quarters to be excellent with 79% of projects either completed, progressing ahead of plan or on plan.
29. Out of the 44 key projects only one was rated 'red' which was behind plan due to an issue out of our control.
30. In the area of Best Value Performance Indicators collected, the performance was positive. In those areas where targets had been missed by more than 5% at this stage in the financial year, action plans had been introduced to bring more improvement.
31. The report indicated that the organisation continued to perform well with service performance levels remaining high and the Council maintained in a good quartile position.
32. Members raised issues on the performance indicators relating to percentage of major planning applications and the sickness absence as the performance had deteriorated slightly compared to the same period last year. These issues would be currently being addressed by the Panel. The Strategy Group was currently looking at sickness absence on a weekly basis and the Committee requested that a report on managing sickness absence to go to the Corporate and Customer Panel.

### **Capital Programme 2006/07 – Monitoring**

33. We considered the report of the Director of Finance on the committed Capital Programme for 2007/08 to 2009/10 which listed the Category C bids for inclusion in the programme, together with the assessment of the bids by the Capital and Efficiency Programme Board.
34. The report generated a debate on several issues in particular in relation to the Chapel Street Enhancement Phase 3 where Members considered the scheme to be poorly managed by the Contractor with poor quality material and a likelihood of the scheme being overspent. We requested a report on this to be submitted to the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

## **Revenue Budget, 2006/07 – Monitoring**

35. We also considered a report of the Director of Finance setting out the current financial position of the Council compared against the budgets and efficiency savings targets it set itself for 2006/07 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.
36. The report confirm an improving position in respect of the General Fund with the projected outturn forecast an overspend of £170,000 had since been changed and the current projection was now for an overspend of £67,000. The report showed the areas of significant movements since the last monitoring report.
37. Progress continued to be made towards the Corporate Savings Targets of £278,000 for the year with further savings to be made as the year progresses, however a number of areas required to be monitored closely in particular the area of Job Evaluation.
38. Included in the Revenue Budget monitoring report was a report on Concessionary Travel which the Committee had requested, as this area would have an effect on the Revenue Budget as the level of potential overspend could not be predicted. Data had now been received regarding actual costs incurred in the first part of the year and it was now expected to have an overspend in the region of £35,000.

## **Budget Scrutiny Process for 2007/08**

39. We received a report of the Director of Finance on the progress that had been made on the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels during the 2006/07 budget consultation and proposals on how the budget scrutiny for 2007/08 could be undertaken.
40. The background to the 2006/07 budget scrutiny was made, with a series of recommendations made by the Panels to the Executive Cabinet and the responses by the Executive and the actions taken.
41. The budget scrutiny process had been more effective than had previously been undertaken and that the Overview and Scrutiny process had been able to influence the thinking of the Executive.
42. A suggested way forward for budget scrutiny of the 2007/08 budget was agreed based on the Director of Finance's suggestions and reports will be submitted on the relevant issues to the two Panels in January 2007:
  - An update on the high cost areas identified during the 2006/07 scrutiny.
  - A review of the 2006 cost profiles prepared by the Audit Commission as compared to those in 2005.
  - A review of the likely impact of the efficiencies and savings on the Council's ability to deliver the promises in the Corporate Plan and the mitigation being put in place.
  - A review of the low cost areas where small costs may bring about big improvements.

## **Policy and Performance Second Quarter Business Plan Monitoring Statement**

43. We received a report from the Director of Policy and Performance relating to her Directorate identifying the progress made against the key actions and performance indicators for the period 1 July 2006 and 30 September 2006.
44. The report indicated the activities of the Directorate and reported on the good progress that had been made towards integration of the previously diverse section since the Directorate was established in April 2006.

45. Performance management and reporting had been a key focus during this period, in particular the Directorate had been involved in providing a Data Quality Self-Assessment a new requirement by the Audit Commission which sets out the Council's approach to the collection, monitoring and reporting of Best Value Performance Indicators.
46. The report was positive with performance improving for 56% of indicators, 59% of targets had been exceeded and 72% of indicators currently in the upper quartile compared with other Councils.
47. Action Plans had been developed proposing ways to improve the areas of percentage of invoices processed in 30 days, sickness absence and the percentage of projects using the project management toolkit.

### **Chorley Draft Equality Scheme**

48. The Committee received a report of the Director of Policy and Performance outlining the purpose and background to the draft equality scheme.
49. The report indicated that the Council must produce an Equality Scheme to meet the statutory Race Equality Duty, Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act. Failure to meet these duties could potentially have a negative impact upon the reputation and standing of the authority, particularly with hard to reach groups. Actions set out in the scheme to ensure the Councils effectively progresses the equalities agenda would be carried out by individual Directorates within the authority.
50. The Equality Scheme outlined a commitment to achieving Level Three of the Equality Standing by March 2009. Currently the authority meets Level One. The Committee discussed the Council's commitment and this was accepted.

### **Area Forum Pilot Scheme**

51. We received a report of the Chief Executive providing Members with an overview of the Area Form Pilot Scheme following the round of meetings in the three pilot areas of Clayton-le-Woods North Ward, Coppull Parish and Lostock Ward during the period February to October 2006.
52. We were informed of the objectives of the pilot scheme as well as the objectives of the proposed borough-wide Community Forums, based on the strong evidence from the public and other stakeholders that the original objectives of the pilot had been achieved and the pilot was a success.
53. Attached to the report was the proposed footprint for the Community Forum including 4 areas – Central, West, East and South.
54. The Committee expressed reservations about the size of the Community Forum footprint and the Parish Council split and linkages particular reference was made to the linking of Coppull with Adlington and Anderton etc and, there was concern about sizes and linkages in general.
55. The Committee also asked the Executive Cabinet to explore whether less frequent meetings in line with the expressed preference in the Surveys would allow smaller footprints and different linkages. The Committee was also concerned about the level and quality of engagement with the Parish Councils and that Area Forums should not undermine their role.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Panel Inquiry**

56. As part of the ongoing scrutiny inquiry we received a report of the Director of Policy and Performance setting out the five areas of focus, current and planned activity within the areas in the new CPA key lines of enquiry where the Council needs to focus attention to achieve excellent status at a future assessment.
57. A limited number of sub-groups would be established to examine over the next few months each area and report back findings and recommendations to this Committee.
58. It was agreed that the first sub-group would focus on Equality and Diversity and in line with the suggested way forward would meet approximately 3 times between beginning of January and mid-February 2007.
59. The second sub-group would take on the two areas of Capacity and Achievement. Capacity would look at the issue of being more explicit re non-priorities and Achievement would consider how we can further strengthen the scrutiny function, taking on board the areas outlined in the recent Government White Paper in particular, how we can achieve better and more meaningful community involvement in the scrutiny process. Again the sub-group will meet three times between the beginning of January and mid-February. The Environmental and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel was currently carrying out an Inquiry into Neighbourhood Working, the other area that required the Council to focus upon.
60. I accepted as urgent an item not on the agenda in order to receive information on the current situation regarding the selection of a service provider for the markets function as a report had been requested by this Committee.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 19 OCTOBER 2006**

61. The Panel received the first quarter Business Plan Monitoring Statements for the undermentioned Directorates whose service and function all fell within the remit and area of responsibility of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel:
  - Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment
  - Development and Regeneration
  - Leisure and Culture
  - Housing Services
62. The Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment indicated the performance variations and as a result of several initiatives from the Council and some extra investment from the Contractor there had been a considerable improvement over the previous quarter on the number of missed collections per 100,000 collections of household waste.
63. The Panel also received the Business Plan for Development and Regeneration with the Director present to answer Members queries regarding the percentage of major planning applications processed on time which had resulted in the targets dates not being achieved. This had been caused because of the several complex applications. An action plan had been produced to address this but it was anticipated that the year end target would be met.
64. The Panel received the Business Plan for Leisure and Cultural Services Directorate with Members raising in particular the development of a Play Strategy for the Borough with the Council working with the Chorley Play Partnership.
65. The Business Plan for the Housing Services Directorate was also received with Members requesting if there would be any performance information available to Members once the

transfer of the housing stock had been concluded. An assurance was given that as part of the transfer agreement the performance indicators would be submitted for scrutiny.

### **Neighbourhood Working – Inquiry**

66. The Panel welcomed to the meeting the consultant who had been appointed to guide and advise the inquiry into neighbourhood management.
67. The Consultant would be required to complete a number of tasks as well as presenting and supplying the Council with a number of outputs.
68. A number of interviews had already taken place between the Consultant and Officers and this would be extended to include Members of the Panel. A number of Members expressed an interest in meeting the Consultant.

### **ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 30 NOVEMBER 2006**

#### **Business Plan Monitoring Statement – Second Quarter**

69. The Panel received the second quarter Business Plan Monitoring Statements for the under mentioned Directorates whose services and functions all fall within the remit and area of responsibility of the Panel:

Leisure and Culture  
Housing Services  
Development and Regeneration  
Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment

70. Each Director present reported on their particular area of responsibility outlining those areas of the service that had not reached the performance targets. Action Plans had been formulated with corrective action to be undertaken to improve performance.

#### **Neighbourhood Working Inquiry**

71. The Panel received the initial report entitled “The Scope and Prospects for Neighbourhood Working in Chorley” by the Consultants commissioned to the inquiry.
72. The report aimed to brief the inquiry on the scope of “Neighbourhood Working”, the various models and some practical examples, the potential costs and benefits and the elements of neighbourhood working that exist in Chorley.
73. A series of meetings will be established early in the New Year for Members to meet witnesses that will provide evidence for the Inquiry.

#### **Lancashire Care NHS Trust – NHS Foundation Trust Consultation**

74. The Panel received from Mr David Tomlinson from the Lancashire Care NHS Trust on their wish to become an NHS Foundation Trust. We noted the Trust’s plans and the improvement that was required to deliver an even better mental health and substance misuse service to the people of Lancashire.
75. The Panel welcomed the proposals for the Lancashire Care NHS Trust on their wish to become a Foundation Trust however the Panel requested that this Council receives a fair share of representation on the Council of Governors.

## **CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 28 NOVEMBER 2006**

### **Business Plan and Performance Monitoring Reports**

76. The Panel received the Business Plan Monitoring Statements for the period July 2006 to September 2006 for:
- Human Resources
  - Information, Communication Technology Services
  - Customer, Democratic and Legal Services
  - Financial Services
77. The Panel clarified aspects of the Business Plans and Performance Indicators with the Directors who were all present at the meeting and noted the service developments in each area as outlined in the reports.
78. It was agreed that the sickness absence policy be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

### **Lancashire Shared Services Contact Centre Inquiry – Collecting Evidence**

79. The Panel received the minutes of the Efficiency Sub-Group held on 24 October and the Partnership Sub-Group held on 26 October.
80. The Efficiency Sub-Group had visited Chorley's Contact Centre on 24 November and would be meeting on 13 December to consider Chorley's current and future efficiency plans and those of Partners within Lancashire.
81. The Partnership Sub-Group would be meeting on 5 December to consider the webcast of the Lancashire County Council Executive Cabinet meeting that considered the Scrutiny Inquiry report into the Contact Centre and to consider questions to be asked of Officers and Councillors at the site visit to the Hub at Lancashire County Council on 8 December.
82. The Partnership Sub-Group would be interviewing representatives from Pendle and Ribble Valley Borough Council's on 19 January 2007 and Councillor John Walker (Executive Member for Customer, Democratic and Legal) and Councillor Dennis Edgerley (previous Executive Member for Customers, Policy and Performance) on a date to be determined in January.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

83. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR D EDGERLEY  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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There are no background papers to this report.