

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 4 December 2006

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

06.OS.63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Greg Morgan.

06.OS.64 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

06.OS.65 MINUTES

The Committee considered the Minutes of the previous meeting.

The Chair informed Members that the Council's Relationship Manager (Audit Commission) will be attending the next meeting on 10 January 2007 (Minute 06.OS.48 refers).

The Chair also notified Members that a report on Concessionary Travel (Minute 06.OS.4 refers) requested by the Committee was on the agenda for this meeting and would be considered as part of the Revenue Budget, 2006/07 – Monitoring.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 November 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

06.OS.66 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 7 DECEMBER 2006

No other reports on the agenda for the Executive Cabinet meeting on 7 December 2006 were considered for discussion.

06.OS.67 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - SECOND QUARTER

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a monitoring report on the Authority's performance in relation to both the Best Value Performance Indicators and the Council's Corporate Key Performance Indicators during the second quarter period from April 2006 to September 2006.

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 for Communities and Local Government.

The report indicated that the 44 key projects which 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.

Out of the 44 key projects only one was rated 'red' which was behind plan, due to an issue out of the Council's control.

Overall the performance of key projects at the end of the second quarter appeared to be good with the majority of projects performing as planned.

In the area of the BVPI, information collected in the second quarter of 2006/07 indicated the performance to be 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.

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.

Members raised the issue of the percentage of major applications determined within timescale. There had been a number of complex applications which had impacted upon the capacity of the Development and Regeneration Directorate to process applications and had resulted in target dates not being achieved. The performance of this Best Value Performance Indicator (109a) had fallen below the national average of 57.24 but was still significantly above the fourth quartile threshold of 46.88. Members expressed a view that the targets affect the decision taken on planning applications.

Members also noted that the Customer and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be receiving a report on sickness absence as the performance had deteriorated slightly in comparison to the same period last year.

RESOLVED – 1) That the second quarter performance report 2006/07 be noted.

2) That the Director of Development and Regeneration submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee on whether the Best Value Performance Indicators affect the decisions taken on planning applications, in particular those which are of a complex nature.

06.OS.68 CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2006/07 - MONITORING

The Committee received and considered a joint report of the Executive Director – Corporate and Customer and the Director of Finance on the progress of the 2006/07 Capital Programme through the monitoring and performance control mechanism in place.

The latest Capital Programme forecast for 2006/07 showed an increase in the programme of £2,601,070 to £16,682,490 and the report recommended the received Capital Programme for 2006/07.

The report contained a number of recommendations of the Capital Programme Board to revise the capital budget allocation for a number of projects and to include new Category B and Category C scheme on the programme's reserve list.

The report generated a debate on several issues arising from the report, particularly in relation to the Chapel Street Enhancement – Phase 3, with Members expressing concern that the scheme had been poorly managed by the contractor with the use of poor quality materials. There was also a likelihood of the scheme being overspent.

RESOLVED – 1) That the report be noted.

2) That the Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment submit a report to a meeting of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the Chapel Street Enhancement Scheme detailing the quality materials used by the contractor, quality checks made on the workmanship and the overall management of the scheme.

06.OS.69 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2007/08 TO 2009/10

The Committee received and considered a report of the Director of Finance on the committed Capital Programme for 2007/08 to 2009/10, the list of Category C bids submitted for inclusion in the programme, together with the assessment of the bids by the Capital and Efficiency Programme Board.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

06.OS.70 REVENUE BUDGET, 2006/07 - MONITORING

The Committee received and considered a report of the Director of Finance setting out the current financial position of the Council compared against the budget and efficiency savings targets it set itself for 2006/07 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

The report confirmed an improving position in respect of the General Fund with the projected outturn forecast an overspend of £170,000 had since changed and the current projection was now for an overspend of £67,000. The report indicated the areas of significant movements since the last monitoring report.

Progress continued to be made towards the Corporate Savings Target 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. The area of Job Evaluation would also require close monitoring.

In relation to the monitoring of the 2006/07 revenue budget Members considered a report of the Director of Finance on Concessionary Travel and how it may affect the Revenue Budget, as it could not predict the level of potential overspend on this budget. 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.

The report indicated that the Housing Revenue Account balances were expected to be in the region of £592,000 at the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and that this Committee receives a report on current situation regarding Job Evaluation.

06.OS.71 BUDGET SCRUTINY PROCESS FOR 2007/08

The Director of Finance submitted a report on the progress made on the recommendation made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels during the 2006/07 budget consultation and proposals on how the budget scrutiny for 2007/08 may be undertaken.

The report indicated the background to the scrutiny of the 2006/07 budget with a series of recommendations made by the Panels to the Executive Cabinet and the responses by the Executive and the actions taken.

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.

The report set out a suggested scrutiny of the 2007/08 budget.

RESOLVED – 1) That the progress made on the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the 2006/07 budget cycle, be noted.

2) That the following be the approach to the Scrutiny of the 2007/08 budget:
i) An update on the high cost areas identified during the 2006/07 scrutiny.

- ii) **A review of the 2006 cost profiles prepared by the Audit Commission as compared to those in 2005.**
- iii) **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.**
- iv) **A review of the low cost areas where small costs may bring about big improvements.**

06.OS.72 POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SECOND QUARTER BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING STATEMENT

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted the Business Plan Monitoring Statement relating to her Directorate which identified the progress made against the key actions and performance indicators for the period 1 July 2006 to 30 September 2006.

The report indicated the activities of the Directorate over the last quarter and the good progress made towards integration of the previously diverse section since the Directorate was established in April 2006.

Performance management and reporting had been a key focus during this period, in particular the Directorate had been involved in producing 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.

The Statement had been produced in a new format, with further work underway to develop the presentation of the report.

The report was positive, with performance improving for 56% of the indicators, 59% of targets had been exceeded and 72% of indicators currently in the upper quartile compared with other Councils.

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.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

06.OS.73 CHORLEY COUNCIL DRAFT EQUALITY SCHEME

The Director of Policy and Performance submitted a report outlining the purpose of and background to the draft equality scheme and presented the scheme to Members for consideration.

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 progress the equalities agenda would be carried out by individual Directorates within the authority.

The Committee discussed and accepted the Council's commitment to achieving Level Three of the Equality Standing by 20 March. Currently the authority meets Level One.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

06.OS.74 AREA FORUM PILOT SCHEME

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive providing Members with an overview of the Area Forum Pilot Scheme following three rounds 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.

The report set out the objectives of the pilot scheme as the objectives of the projected 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.

Attached to the report was the proposed footprint for the Community Forums included 4 areas – Central, West, East and South. Some Members expressed concern at the size of the Community Forum footprint on the Borough split and linkages, in particular linking Coppull with Adlington and Anderton rather than Coppull with Chisnall.

RESOLVED – 1) that the report be noted.

2) That the following responses be submitted to the Executive Cabinet:

- **The Committee expressed reservations about the size of the Community Forum footprint and the Parish Council split and linkage (particular reference was made to the linkage of Coppull with Adlington and Anderton etc). There was concern about sizes and linkages in general.**
- **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 Community Forums should not undermine their role.**

06.OS.75 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL INQUIRY

Further to Minute 06.OS.59, 8 November 2006 the Committee 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 Chorley Borough Council needs to focus attention if it is to achieve excellent status at a future assessment.

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 the main Committee.

Attached to the report were tables setting out the information for the five areas of focus.

It was proposed 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 July and mid-February.

The second sub-group would take on the two areas of Capacity and Achievement. The 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 proposed group to meet three times between the beginning of January and mid-February.

RESOLVED – That the members of the following Sub-Groups be as follows:

- **Equality and Diversity Sub-Group**
Councillors Ball, Brown, Mrs Smith and Snow.
- **Capacity/Achievement Sub-Group**
Councillors Culshaw, Edgerley and Mrs Gray.

06.OS.76 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Council's Forward Plan setting out details of the key executive decisions expected to be taken between 1 December 2006 to 31 March 2007.

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

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

06.OS.77 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee were presented with the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2006/07.

The programme included the envisaged timescales for the ongoing scrutiny inquiries and the planned details of the periodic inventory of past inquiries.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

06.OS.78 SELECTION OF SERVICE PROVIDER FOR THE MARKET FUNCTION

The Chair accepted as urgent, consideration of this item, not included on the agenda in order to inform Members of the current situation regarding the selection of a service provider for the markets function as a report had been requested by this Committee before any firm decisions are taken by the Executive.

Members were notified that the original proposal to proceed with a Company to run the Council's market function would not now proceed and that alternative arrangements would be examined in the next couple of months.

A suggestion was made that the recommendations that came from the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel into Chorley Markets should be examined in relation to a service provider.

Chair