

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

1. This report summarises the business considered at the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel on 22 June and the work to date on the Task Group relating to Public Transport Issues in Chorley.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 APRIL 2015

Scrutiny of the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership

2. We received a report on the scrutiny of the Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership to enable the Committee to undertake its statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 to determine if local community safety issues were being dealt with effectively.
3. Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership consists of a number of key agencies that form a statutorily determined Responsible Authorities Group (RAG). In previous years this Group met on a quarterly basis to oversee the delivery of the partnerships strategic assessment. However, the decision was taken in 2014, that in an effort to increase partner's capacity, the number of meetings would be reduced to one single meeting per year with the ability to call an extraordinary meeting as necessary.
4. An annual open meeting and conference was held in October 2014 and many members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended to experience at first hand the new arrangements and actively participate in the process. The conference was well attended by over 40 people who represented a wide and varied cross section of partner agencies, Ward Members, County Councillors and the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector and resulted in the production of the Partnership Plan for 2015/16, identifying the five main strategic priorities that would be delivered by the Officer Working Group (OWG) over the forthcoming year.
5. Prior to the annual conference taking place a web based public consultation was undertaken seeking public views on what broad areas of community safety the Partnership should be addressing that provided limited responses from 12 people across both Chorley and South Ribble areas and their responses were provided within the report for information. Although this was a small number it was still an increase on involvement by the public in previous years with extremely poor attendances at specially arranged public meetings.
6. A number of representatives were in attendance at the scrutiny meeting to offer their views and experiences of the new arrangements that included:
 - Mark Gaffney – South Ribble Council (Chair of the Chorley and South Ribble Partnership)
 - Chief Inspector Tracie O'Gara – Lancashire Constabulary
 - Phil O'Donnell – Lancashire Probation Service
 - Bridget Cheyne – Voluntary, Community and Faith SectorCouncillor Paul Walmsley – Executive Member for Public Protection (Chorley Council) had been unable to attend but provided a written response on his view of the new arrangements.
7. It was the general consensus of the Partnership that the new arrangements were an improvement on the previous regime, although it was recognised that further improvements could be made around public engagement. The web based consultation used to engage the public in the process had been more successful than previous years where the public had been invited to an open meeting. The public consultation and conference provided an opportunity for representatives, partners and the

public to identify more local issues which appeared to fit with the overall strategic themes that the Partnership were seeking to address which are, Domestic Abuse, Road Safety, Child Sexual Exploitation, Counter Terrorism and Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime.

8. The delivery of the Partnership's Plan is driven by the Officer Working Group and the representatives present explained what is happening across a range of organisations to address these issues. There was good partnership working arrangements that existed across the partners and projects were undertaken in a programmed way agreed by all. We also discussed the importance of improving the sharing of intelligence based information. Work was needed to overcome barriers to data sharing and better use of intelligence that different organisations hold about vulnerable people in order to target support where is most needed.

Select Move – First Monitoring Report

9. The Committee received the first monitoring report informing them of progress made against the recommendations of the Task Group review into the Select Move Choice Based Lettings scheme, of which the Council is a member along with nine Registered Providers of social housing.
10. The number of Chorley households on the Housing Register has fallen over the last two years and whilst the fall in number was mainly due to changes in the Allocations Policy, the increased number of lets in Chorley has also helped. The task group had identified some areas of Select Move that could be improved upon and with the implementation of the refreshed Allocations Policy and software system upgrade, there have been, and will be ongoing improvements for the customer interface and experience.

Private Rented Sector Housing Inspection Programme Review – Second Monitoring Report

11. The Committee received the second monitoring report informing them of progress made against the recommendations of the Task Group review into Private Rented Sector Housing Standards Inspections. The levels of complaints directly from tenants is historically low and as a result the Council had identified that in order to improve housing standards in the private rented sector, a different approach was required to engage with both tenants and landlords.
12. A protocol for data sharing has been drawn up with the housing benefits team and procedures are being finalised. This will greatly improve the existing property database and enhance the team's ability to target this particular housing sector. It is anticipated that the new arrangements with Housing Benefits will ensure that targets are achieved.
13. The proactive housing inspection scheme has also recently been re-branded as the Council's 'Healthy Homes Scheme' and the Council launched a media campaign to target the link between health and housing standards and information will be placed in GP surgeries, Health centres and pharmacies across the borough. Social media and traditional press releases will also support the campaign to raise awareness for tenants and landlords.

Adoption of Estates Review – Second Monitoring Report

14. The Committee received the second monitoring report informing them of progress made against the recommendations of the Task Group review into the Adoption of Estates in Chorley. The final report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group considering the Adoption of Estates was presented to Executive Cabinet on 20 June 2013, and detailed fourteen recommendations, all of which were agreed by the Executive Cabinet in their response in October 2013.

15. The report set out each of the recommendations made and gave an update on progress made against each one. It was generally accepted by the Committee that Chorley could expect to see rewards for current efforts being made in the next five years. Many of the existing schemes now have agreed schedules and gradually areas are starting to be adopted across the borough, especially on the Gillibrand and Buckshaw Village estates.
16. The culture of partnership working has been one of the biggest development areas and massive improvements have been achieved, working together more effectively even amid personnel changes at Lancashire County Council. The Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community commented that he had been disappointed at the level of information that had been provided at the recent Neighbourhood Working meetings and promised that this would be improved upon at future meetings. It was also agreed that a further monitoring report be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six months' time.

Chorley BIG Grant Funding Scheme

17. At my request, the Committee received a report informing us of funding allocated to businesses under the Chorley Business Investment Growth (BIG) scheme. Chorley Council currently provides a diverse range of support services to local businesses to deliver its key commitment of 'Developing a Strong Local economy'. The Chorley Investment for Growth (BIG) capital grant scheme assists local companies to expand and create jobs. This compliments existing Council and partners grant schemes in providing financial support for capital expenditure to businesses with growth ambitions.
18. The funds support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who are planning to invest in the range of activities detailed above. An SME is a company which employs fewer than 250 persons (full time equivalent), and has a turnover of less than 50 million Euros and/or has an annual balance sheet of less than 43 million Euros. No more than 25% of the company's capital or voting rights may be held by a parent company which is not itself an SME. Businesses can apply for 50% of total eligible project costs up to a maximum of £10,000. Grants are based on £2,000 per job created but ultimately the grant scheme aspires to achieve far greater job creation than this level.
19. The Chorley BIG grant payments are phased, with all payments being paid to businesses once the works have been completed or equipment purchased and grant assistance is conditional on receiving business advice and support from the Council's Business Advisor whose remit is to support existing businesses.
20. The 'Community Repayment' requires applicants to provide payback to the value of 50% of the grant received to local community registered charities or social enterprises. This can be offered in either goods or services provided by the applicant or as a time value to allow businesses to share their expertise with local organisations.
21. Since the start of the grant scheme nine Chorley BIG grants have been approved to a total of £72,302. 15,016 square feet of floor space will be improved or developed and 51 jobs forecasted to be created. The Chorley BIG grant scheme will continue into 2015/16 with additional funding agreed through the budget allocation process.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL

Performance Focus: Time Credits

22. The Committee welcomed Councillor Beverley Murray, Executive Member for Community Services to the meeting who was attending to answer questions on the performance focus topics. We also received a report on the Time Credit project and the progress made against the delivery of the Play, Open Spaces and Playing Pitch Strategy.
23. Councillor Murray gave an overview of the Time Credits scheme which is a three year programme funded by the Council and is a positive and proactive means of encouraging and developing volunteering effort to benefit local communities. Work undertaken in year one had focussed on existing groups to build up the service and encourage already established organisations to sign up, year two was concentrating on embedding the process into service delivery and encouraging new organisations and volunteers to engage. The programme has generated positive outcomes for users and although growth has slowed in the second year performance has been consistently good and exceeded targets, particularly in comparison to the national scheme with Chorley being notably higher, with 72% of Chorley Time Credit volunteers giving their time at least once a week.
24. Time Credits has opened many opportunities for people to get involved in new activities and people now regularly do things that they didn't do before. The scheme has incentivised its members to start new community groups and it helps people to adopt healthier lifestyles and improves physical and mental wellbeing. The Time Credits Facilitator, Angela Barrago spends most of her time out in the community promoting the scheme and encouraging people to get involved and the Panel felt that all Elected Members of the Council should be encouraged to be actively involved with the scheme, to help promote engagement within their neighbourhoods.

Performance Focus: Play, Open Spaces and Playing Pitch Strategy:

25. The Play, Open Space and Playing Pitch strategy 2013 – 2018 had been approved and formally adopted by the Executive Cabinet in September 2014. The Strategy provides a five year action plan to protect, manage, enhance and secure sites and identifies deficiencies and future priorities.
26. The first year of delivery was now complete and it was considered appropriate to review the progress of actions and outcomes to date. The Panel were provided with a list of actions that had commenced in October 2014 and were updated on the details and progress made. Some works, for example the Westway playing pitches had been identified within the strategy but were planned to commence later and some timescales for delivery had been revised compared to the dates originally identified in the strategy.
27. It was reported that Section 106 money that had already been identified to support the Strategy was nearer to £1M but that the majority of this funded was allocated to specific projects. The strategy highlighted sites which were low quality and low value. Housing developers are asked to allocate S106 to the nearest lowest scoring site to the development. Much of the strategy will be funded via future development in the Borough as well as Council funds and external funding. Around £170K of current funding was money that would have previously funded the play and recreation fund that parish councils could bid for, however, as the planning laws on how this money was to be received and spent in the future had changed, the Council were exploring how best to allocate this money against the remainder of works that had been prioritised in the Strategy. A report outlining the options would be considered at a future Executive Cabinet meeting.

28. Members felt that the absence of bowling green provision was a major oversight in the Strategy and asked if the Council had assessed the need for demand across the borough. Some of the existing provision had either closed or was under threat of closure and members felt that this could be something that the Council could help to support. Bowling greens had not been included within the strategy as they are mainly privately owned but there was an acceptance that the Council could do more and it was agreed that the Council would undertake a register of bowling facilities and work with existing clubs to prevent closure. The Councils neighbourhoods teams and PCSO's were working together to combat vandalism issues on the Tatton and Coronation Recreational grounds bowling greens.
29. The Panel also discussed allotment provision across the borough. A lot of work had been undertaken to try to address demand and Chorley is one of the top performing providers in Lancashire. The waiting list has been refreshed to ensure it is up to date and the terms and conditions of the leases are more strenuously enforced. Some sites that had been identified have been found to be unsuitable; however two new sites, Ranglett's Recreational Ground in Chorley and St. Oswald's in Coppull have recently been developed. Councillor Murray explained that the Council are willing to undertake any investigatory grounds work to assess suitability on any suggested sites.

Organisational Plan 2015/16

30. We received the single organisational business plan for 2015/16 that reviewed the programme of projects that would be delivered over the coming year. The Plan pulled all the Council's key activity into a single programme that focused on the administrations strategic priorities, encouraging ownership and accountability, increasing viability and promoting cross cutting working.
31. All the projects within the 2013/14 organisational plan had been reviewed and were either complete or a revised completion date had been identified. A small number of projects had been carried forward into 2015/16 due to the scale or complexity of work that included:
 - Single Front Office
 - Astley 20:20
 - Friday Street Health Centre
 - Youth Zone
 - Play, Open Space and Playing Pitch Strategy (specific actions)
32. There are a total of 58 projects in the organisational plan for 2015/16, 18 are corporate strategy projects, of which 10 have attached budget investment, 23 are budget investment work streams and 15 business improvement projects. A brief overview of each project was provided within the plan.
33. The SharePoint based MyProjects system has now been adopted across the organisation as the primary tool for the day to day management and monitoring of all actions and projects and Members were urged to log into the system to monitor the detailed milestones and timescales. A revised list of local performance measures have also been developed to support the delivery of the plan and indicators selected to give an accurate picture of the organisations performance whilst ensuring ease of reporting.

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Public Transport Issues

34. The Group has met on several occasions and considered a wide range of issues that has included exploring community and rural transport schemes and the new criteria for subsidised bus services. The group recently met with representatives from Transport for Greater Manchester who came to talk about the work being undertaken on transport through the Combined Authority. It is expected that the final report on the review will come to Committee in October.

Recommendation

35. To note the report.

COUNCILLOR JOHN WALKER
CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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