

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

## **GENERAL REPORT**

1. This report summarises the business transacted at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 21 May 2007 and 25 June 2007, 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 – 21 MAY 2007**

### **Corporate Fourth Quarter Performance Report 2006/07 – Monitoring Report for the Period ending 31 March 2007**

2. We received from the Director of Policy and Performance (Assistant Chief Executive) the fourth quarter performance monitoring report including the authority's performance in relation to the Corporate Strategy and the Council's Best Value Performance Indicators for 2006/07.
3. The report indicated the full list of Best Value Performance Indicators that were relevant to this Council and which are collected in accordance with definitions issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The report impacted on all of the Corporate Priorities as the areas of performance covered by the report related to all four of the Council's priorities.
4. Overall the performance of key projects year-end was excellent, with the majority of projects performing as planned. The report indicated that good progress had been made within the last quarter, with a number of projects completed and delivering real outcomes. In all 73% of those corporate strategy indicators, which can be measured at this stage in delivery of the Corporate Strategy, were achieving target.
5. The report showed that the organisation was continuing to deliver excellent performance in terms of outcomes and with the authority moving into the next municipal year the Council would be focusing on target setting and continued effective performance management to ensure that it continued to improve and excellence continued.
6. During consideration of the report Members raised several queries and requested further information from the Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment, Director of Development and Regeneration and Returning Officer.

### **Business Plan Monitoring Statement – Policy and Performance Directorate**

7. We received a report of the Director of Policy and Performance (Assistant Chief Executive) on the Business Plan Monitoring Statement relating to her Directorate, identifying progress made against the key actions and performance indicators for the period 1 January to 31 March 2007.
8. The report indicated the activities of the Directorate and in particular the key messages such as the success of taking forward a number of key projects contained within the Corporate Strategy. Good progress had been made with the further strengthening of the Directorates approach to performance management with the aim of driving forward real improvements.
9. The Directorate played a key role in relation to improving community cohesion within the Borough as well as the work relating to preparation for a future CPA re-inspection and raising the profile of the Council.
10. Other key areas of work in this final quarter of the year related to communications and marketing.

11. Overall the Directorate had made significant progress on developing and strengthening the approach to data quality, business planning and equality diversity, and all areas, which will have a positive impact on any future CPA assessment.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

12. We received the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for the ensuing Municipal Year, which include the envisaged timescale for the ongoing scrutiny inquiries and the planned details of the period monitoring of past inquiries.
13. We requested a report on the progress made to date on job evaluation outlining the tasks completed, the outstanding issues to be addressed and the potential risks such as equal pay claims, salary reduction and other costs.

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2007**

#### **Job Evaluation**

14. We received a report of the Director of Human Resources as requested at the previous meeting. The Quality Assurance process is completed and the rank order of all posts was been signed off by both Management and Trade Unions at the Project Steering Group on 13 April 2007. Following this management prepared options for the pay modelling and which terms and conditions of employment would form part of the negotiations.
15. Four successful meetings have been held with the negotiations progressing well. The target is to take recommendations to Council on 10 July 2007 for approval. It is likely that the union will need to have sign off at a national level, but it is hoped that this can be a “rubber stamping” exercise only due to the high level of regional involvement there has been in the negotiations.
16. The Director of Human Resources advised that there was an issue that due to the high number of restructures in the Council a significant number of new posts have been created. It is hoped these will be evaluated following further Job Evaluation training later this month.
17. There are two potential risks: equal pay claims and salary reduction. Steps had been put in place to manage these risks, including the completion of a detailed equal pay audit to assess the risks and the consideration of protection options for staff whose salary is reduced.
18. Ongoing work included the training of at least 12 members of staff and to combine both management and trade union representatives on joint panels for the ongoing process. There would be communication with staff on points, pay information and the appeals procedure, to implement the new pay and grading structure and embed job evaluation as part of the Authorities normal practices.
19. We agreed that the Committee should give further consideration to Job Evaluation with the view to a high level Inquiry being undertaken by the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel in due course. Issues to be considered would include the cost and impact on the organisation and the percentage of posts that went up, down and stayed the same. In addition, the impact on recruitment and retention and the current situation with other local authorities in Lancashire.

#### **Corporate Fourth Quarter Performance – Receipt of information requested**

20. At the previous meeting we requested Directors to submit information relating to issues and queries that arose from the Corporate Fourth Quarter Performance Monitoring Report.

## **Refuse and Recycling Collection**

21. The Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment reported that there had been a reduction in satisfaction with missed collections. We discussed the difficulties for the collection crews in identifying a missed bin and non-presentation and collecting the data in an accurate way.
22. A small number of complaints were made directly to the contractor but the Chorley Contact Centre officially dealt with complaint, comments and complements. The majority of complaints to the Contact Centre regarding refuse and recycling related to missed collections. It was estimated that 108 per 100,000 collections had a justified reason for being missed.
23. There are around 800 assisted collections undertaken requested by members of the public. There is a higher rate of missed collections in this area. This was affected negatively when local knowledge and arrangements were lost with crew rotation and the use of agency staff.
24. The handling of complaints would be more manageable with the introduction of the Customer Relationship Management System in the Contact Centre as customer advisors would be able to see the complete history of complaints for any property.
25. We heard that going forward the Council is holding a listening day on 14 July looking at waste and recycling and that an options report would be presented to Executive Cabinet on the renewal of the waste management contract.
26. We agreed that the results of the listening day be fed back to the Committee as there was a need for specific details as to why the satisfaction with the service had reduced and whether there was a need for one of the Panels to undertake an Inquiry into this issue.

## **Pollution Control Improvements**

27. The Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment advised that there are licenses to control levels of pollution. The responsibility for some of these lay with the Environment Agency and other with the Local Authority.
28. Technical standards were improved and there was a responsibility to ensure these were adhered to by a deadline. We were assured that the work was being undertaken, but the deadlines had not all been met.
29. We agreed that the Committee were satisfied by the assurances given.

## **Alley gate schemes**

30. We were advised that there are 20 schemes on the list for the current year. These had been measured up and awaiting the results of a tender process. All the schemes would go through a data refining exercise against the crime and disorder benefits.
31. We noted that there was a great deal of interest in the alley gate schemes and that there were other benefits achieved in addition to crime and disorder issues.

## **Re-tendering the graffiti Removal and Public Toilet Cleaning and Maintenance Contracts.**

32. Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 the Council has the responsibility to remove graffiti. The contract went through the tender process and the Council was taking action under contract terms.

33. The Public Toilet Cleaning and Maintenance Contract went through the tender process, resulting in a cost saving in the provision of the service.

### **Percentage of people satisfied with opportunities to participate in local decision-making**

34. The Chief Executive and Principal Corporate Support Officer reported that in the previous year the work required during the annual canvass for the electoral register had increased. Three forms were delivered to properties. On the third occasion if there was still no response the canvasser would knock on the door on two occasions to try and receive details of the occupants. From the door knocking stage there had been approximately 4,000 responses. The rate of return had increased from 87.5% in 2005 to 92% in 2006.
35. For five years the Council has offered electoral registration using the telephone and internet. The section worked with Council Tax who were now able to give details of properties where people have moved out. Electoral registration forms were sent out to these properties. The number of complaints from the public of not being on the register at election time had reduced since this collaborative working had been introduced.
36. There would be publicity in Chorley Borough News in August highlighting the need to be on the electoral roll to get credit. Additional information would be sent out to areas where there was a low rate of return. We requested that information about the rate of return per ward to be emailed to the Committee.
37. Integration with the Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) was being investigated to match information about properties. The register did not start from scratch each year and rolling registration meant that electors no longer had to wait until the annual canvass to go on the register. It was key that the public understand and value the process, working with schools was a positive way of getting information and awareness out there.

### **Communications and Marketing Strategy**

38. The Committee considered the draft Communications and Marketing Strategy to be considered by the Executive Cabinet the following day.
39. The Chief Executive reported that the document set out the details of this important area of work for the Council. The "You Said, We Did" marketing thread is a successful method of showing what the Council is doing to address issues raised by the public. It is a key challenge to find out who our customers are, to use this to shape information about our services and to ensure customers can easily recognise the Council and its services.
40. Communications and marketing has been bringing resource and expertise into the centre and creating a saving. The way forward is to know more about our audiences so we can break down messages and communicate in the way that suits them, to position ourselves nationally to raise the profile of the Council and the borough as a whole and what we do to look professional and be easy to understand.

### **Provisional Revenue Budget, 2006/07 – Outturn**

41. We received a report from the Director of Finance containing the provisional outturn figures for the Council's revenue budget for the financial year 2006/07. The Council has performed well throughout the year and the cash targets have been met. There has been a slight underspend but this is within acceptable tolerances.
42. We heard that the final Compensation payment for the Gillibrand Link Road, as yet not determined by the courts, would have an impact on the revenue budget. A report outlining the Compensation payment would be presented both to Executive Cabinet and this Committee in due course.

43. The final negotiated position in relation to the transfer of Housing Stock to Chorley Community Housing will have a significant impact on the final position. The Housing Revenue Account would close in 2007/2008.
44. Significant variations since the last report were noted, including concessionary fares at £88,000.00.

#### **Capital Programme – Outturn for 2006/07 and Monitoring of 2007/08 Programme**

45. We received from the Director of Finance the provisional outturn for the Council's Capital Programme for 2006/07 and a progress update for the 2007/08 Capital Programme. The provisional outturn of £13,269,246.
46. The Council is proceeding well in the delivery of the Capital Programme. The most significant change was the addition of the Eaves Green Link Road to the 2006/07 programme. This scheme had slipped from 2005/06. We discussed the proposed financing of the Gillibrand Link Road land assembly expenditure and noted the use of Section 106 resources.
47. Three new projects to be considered by the Executive Cabinet for approval were noted as Astley Park – Woodland Management, Coppull PlayZone and Charnock Richard Football Club – Pitch Improvements.

#### **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report**

48. We received the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report outlining the achievements and activities of the Overview and Scrutiny function for 2006 2007.
49. This included various Inquiries, involvement in the budget process and monitoring of the budget, consideration of Best Value Performance Indicators and Business Plan Monitoring Reports.

#### **Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan – Update**

50. We received the updated Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan.
51. The recent Overview and Scrutiny training delivered by the IDeA had been well attended and received. It was important that Members and officers now took the issues raised forward.
52. There are plans in place to improve the publicity surrounding the work of Overview and Scrutiny and to revise the structure of the function following the deliberations in Parliament on issues in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, which include Community Call for Action

#### **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

53. We received the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for the ensuing Municipal Year, which include the envisaged timescale for the ongoing scrutiny inquiries and the planned details of the period monitoring of past inquiries.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 7 JUNE 2007**

### **Business Plan Monitoring Statement – Period 1 January to 31 March 2007**

54. The Panel received the fourth quarter Business Plan Monitoring Statement for the period December 2006 to April 2007 for the undermentioned Directorates whose services and functions, which fall within the remit and area of responsibility of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel:
- Leisure and Culture
  - Development and Regeneration
  - Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment
55. The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services notified the Panel that the only area of his service that had not reached the performance target was the processing of invoices within 30 working days. It was pointed out that every directorate was currently coming to terms with this and action was being taken to improve the service.
56. However the Panel expressed concern that this issue had been at this level of performance for several months and that immediate action was now required to improve performance as it was considered to be an important indicator reflecting on the Council's payments to suppliers etc.
57. The Panel requested the Director of Finance to submit a report to the next Panel meeting on the processing of invoices within 30 working days, providing an analysis of where and reasons for the delays, which are causing the current fall in the performance target and whether the system is working across the authority.
58. The Panel also received from the Director of Development and Regeneration the Business Plan for her Directorate. Members congratulated the Director on the tremendous improvements that had been made to service delivery to customers, reflected in an increase in customer satisfaction from 61% to 76%. The Planning Services Team was keen to build on this success and was prepared to implement a 3-year action plan to help to continue the success.
59. In relation to the Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment Directorate, the Director indicated that the performance variation for the number of missed collections per 100,000 collections of household waste had improved but was still slightly below target. Various initiatives had been taken up with the contractor to drive up collection performance and reduce missed collections.
60. Other areas of poor performance related to racist and offensive graffiti removal within 2 working days and management of sickness absence.
61. The Panel requested a report from the Director of Human Resources on the management of sickness absence across the authority, indicating how the figures are arrived at and the split in the figures between short-term and long-term sickness.

### **Neighbourhood Working – Inquiry**

62. The Panel received a progress report on the Panel's ongoing inquiry into neighbourhood working from the Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment indicating that a visit was planned provisionally for 27 June 2007 to Bolton where neighbourhood working was being conducted in the Great Lever area of the authority.

63. A final witness hearing was due to take place with the Chair of the Panel and the Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Executive Leader and Executive Member for Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment.
64. A draft report of the Inquiry's findings had been completed but required input from the findings from the above meetings.

## **CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 12 JUNE 2007**

### **Year End Business Plan Monitoring Statements**

65. The Panel received the Year End Business Plan Monitoring Statements for Human Resources, Information, Communication Technology Services, Customer, Democratic and Legal Services and Financial Services.
66. Members clarified aspects of the Business Plans and Performance Indicators with the Directors who were present at the meeting. The Panel noted the key messages and service developments in each Directorate as outlined in the reports.
67. Members noted that the indicator for invoices processed within 30 days was either a red triangle or a blue circle for each Directorate. These figures were improving, but it was acknowledged that further was needed on this.
68. The Members congratulated the Directors on the year-end reports. In particular, Human Resources on the Investors in People (IiP) accreditation and the organisational changes and Finance on the Value for Money (VFM) score of 4 from the Audit Commission. Only two other District Councils in the country had achieved a score of 4.
69. Members discussed methods to consider the Business Plan Monitoring Statements in other ways, such as one or two Members leading the discussion on a particular Directorate or inviting an Executive Member to attend where there is an area of concern or commendation. This would be given further consideration at a future meeting of the Panel.

### **Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel Inquiry**

70. The Panel noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 March 2007 set out the Inquiry topics for the Panel for the forthcoming Municipal Year as being Gershon Efficiencies and Absence Management.
71. The Director of Human Resources and the Business Improvement Manager each delivered a brief, high-level presentation as an introduction to the topics.
72. The Panel agreed to undertake both Inquiries by means of two Sub-Groups and members then determined the membership of the Sub-Groups.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

73. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR D EDGERLEY  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

GKB

There are no background papers to this report.