

Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Monday, 16 July 2007

Present: Councillor Greg Morgan (Chair) and Councillors Nora Ball, Judith Boothman, Magda Cullens, Mike Devaney, Mrs Doreen Dickinson, Anthony Gee, Catherine Hoyle, Keith Iddon, Margaret Iddon, Kevin Joyce, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe, Marion Lowe, Rosie Russell and Shaun Smith

Also in attendance: Councillor Eric Bell (Executive Member for Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment)

07.ECS.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Michael Muncaster.

07.ECS.08 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Members declared any interests in relation to matters under consideration at the meeting.

07.ECS.09 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 7 June 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Judith Boothman in the apologies for absence.

07.ECS.10 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No member of the public requested to speak at the meeting.

07.ECS.11 BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING

At the previous meeting, the Panel requested to submit information relating to issues and queries that arose from the Business Plan Monitoring Statements for the period 1 January to 31 March 2007.

Management of Sickness Absence

The Director of Human Resources gave a short presentation on the management of sickness absence across the authority, specifically the Panel's request at the last meeting on how the figures are arrived at and the split between short term and long term sickness.

The presentation included the cost of sickness absence to the authority and the number of people currently on long term sick.

Action taken for 2007/08 included improved monitoring of absences, targeting the main reasons for absence and the monitoring of return to work interviews.

The Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel was currently carrying out an inquiry into absence management.

Processing of Invoices within the 30 working days

The Director of Finance produced a briefing note setting out an analysis of where and the reasons for the delays that were causing the fall in the performance target for the

processing of invoices within the 30 working days and whether the system was working across the authority.

Although Members welcomed the information provided in the briefing notes they specifically requested that they receive information on what had been the process changes made and their effects on the performance figures. Members questioned whether the right monitoring techniques were being used as the latest quarterly information for 30 June 07 relating to Leisure and Culture had shown that they were still not achieving the Council's corporate target of 96%.

It was **AGREED** that the Director of Finance attends the next meeting of the Panel on 13 September 2007 to answer Members questions specifically on the process changes, and their effects on the system of payment of invoices.

07.ECS.12 NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING - INQUIRY

The Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment reported on the current position with regard to the Panels ongoing inquiry into Neighbourhood Working.

The Members received a position statement prepared by the Director providing an overview of the evidence heard by the Inquiry, models for neighbourhood working including three models of Neighbourhood Management which might be appropriate for Chorley, which had been drawn from the evidence. The options were not mutually inclusive and the Panel would need to make a decision about whether and what recommendations it would make to the Executive Cabinet.

A final witness hearing was due to take place with the Chief Executive and Director of Finance invited to a meeting to answer Members questions and queries they may have on the inquiry and outcomes, with a need for a realistic view and proposals.

The Panel **AGREED** that the final witness hearing be held towards the end of August, beginning of September.

07.ECS.13 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair accepted as urgent, consideration of this item, not included on the agenda in order to bring to the Panel's attention the need for the Panel to commence consideration of future items for inclusion in the Panel's Work Programme.

Following the recent Overview and Scrutiny Member Training sessions there was a need for the Panel to consider further topics once the Neighbourhood Working Inquiry had been completed.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to consider the inclusion in the Panel's Work Programme for this Municipal Year of the following issues:

- i) The investigation into the Council's environmental carbon footprint and what the Council is currently doing to reduce its carbon emissions.**
- ii) To examine the poor public attendance at the Community Forums providing an analysis of the attendances across each Forum.**
- iii) Town Centre issues and management.**

Chair