

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Customer, Democratic and Legal Services	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	03/09/07

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKSHOP SESSIONS – KEY ISSUES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To consider the key issues identified at the Overview and Scrutiny Workshop Sessions held in June 2007 for improving the delivery and effectiveness of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the Committee and the Executive Cabinet note the issues raised in the Workshop sessions and agree the content of this report to form the basis of a discussion document for submission to an early meeting of the Executive Leader, the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny bodies and the Chief Executive to consider the current Overview and Scrutiny structure and means of improving the delivery of the Overview and Scrutiny function.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

3. To improve the delivery and effectiveness of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

4. None.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the central Lancashire sub region		Improved access to public services	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chance		Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving People in their Communities	4	Ensure Chorley is a performing Organisation	4

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKSHOP SESSIONS

6. Three workshops were held in the Town Hall, facilitated by Tom Russell, Principal Consultant from the Improvement and Development Agency and Graham Smith, Member Peer.

7. All Members of the Council, Directors, Policy and Performance Officers and Democratic Services Officers were invited to the sessions and the attendance at the Workshop Sessions was as follows:
 - Effective Scrutiny (2 sessions) – 5 June 2007 – 31 Members and 18 Officers
 - Chairing Scrutiny (1 session) – 6 June 2007 – 12 Members and 6 Officer
 - Financial Scrutiny (2 sessions) – 11 June 2007 – 25 Members and 10 Officers
8. Copies of the presentation slides/information distributed at each workshop session have been circulated to the Members who were unable to be present for information
9. The overall feedback from the attendees was positive. The sessions improved the knowledge and understanding of the scrutiny process and Members/Officers were keen to move forward with the suggestions identified for improving the delivery and effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny function.

EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY

10. The key issues highlighted at the Effective Scrutiny Workshop sessions were:
 - Requirement for more formal liaison with Leader/Cabinet on Scrutiny Issues
 - Effectiveness of Forward Plan Document – Limited Content
 - Follow-up meetings and Agenda Setting Meetings for Chairs
 - Pre-Meeting for Chairs
 - Preparation of questions for witnesses in advance of meeting
 - More member involvement in content of Scrutiny Inquiry reports
 - Smaller working groups should be set up for Scrutiny Inquiries
 - Clear timetables for Scrutiny Inquiries
 - Annual Scrutiny Review by all Members
11. The following suggestions were made for holding the Executive to account:
 - Executive Members to attend O&S meetings to respond questions on Directorate performance issues and financial monitoring reports
 - Members/public to attend Executive Cabinet meetings and be encouraged to ask questions
 - Introduction of written questions at Council and Executive Cabinet Meetings
 - Review implementation of scrutiny recommendations and invite Executive Member to attend every six months
 - Increase public involvement in meetings through more effective publicity in the Chorley Borough News
 - Be more investigative – Members should be more proactive in researching and examining issues
 - Encourage more Member participation in the scrutiny process through Group meetings
 - Executive Member and Directors to attend O&S meetings – to give account of reasons for proposals in policy documents
 - Scrutinise Forward Plan – power to influence plans before they are finalised

FINANCIAL SCRUTINY

12. The key influences of Overview and Scrutiny were identified as:
 - Focus on high cost/poorly performing areas
 - Examples have been included the following scrutiny inquiries

- Grass Cutting
- Housing Maintenance
- Markets
- Scrutiny of Budget Proposals

13. It was considered that the Overview and Scrutiny function should add more value by:

- Holding Executive Member to Account
eg monitoring of Sickness Absence
- Involvement in Longer Term Financial Planning
- Beyond One Year
- Appointment of a Member Finance Specialist Sub-Group to examine the budget proposals in detail
- Reduce party politics as far as possible out of the Scrutiny process
- More/Improved Member Training on Budgets
- Introduction of budget for O&S Inquiries
- Examine Fees and Charges Policy in more detail
- Examine comparative data on income
- More information on Human Resources issues (Sickness, Recruitment and retention of staff/use of consultants)
- Comparison with similar authorities on staffing and performance on services
- Value for Money studies of all service areas

14. The key issues raised with regard to improving the monitoring of performance delivery and the Council's financial position were:

- Financial Monitoring Reports to be submitted quarterly
- Best Value Performance Indicators to be reported at same meeting
- Focus on problem area(s) – exception reports
- Request the Executive Member and Director to attend to discuss key issues
- Follow-up by a report back on any areas of concern/poor performance
Scrutiny decides when it stops to monitor
- Request the Executive Member to explain the impact of efficiency savings on the delivery of services

FUTURE SCRUTINY INQUIRY TOPICS

15. The following topics were identified as future scrutiny topics for consideration:

PROACTIVE

- Market Walk Phase 2 (car parking)
- Refresh of medium term financial strategy
- Astley Park management and maintenance
(parks in general)
5 year plan for maintenance for all parks and open space
- Waste Management Contract Renewal
- what do we want?
- Improve two-tier working
- Rural policy of the Council
(isolation/inclusion)
- Transport service from rural areas to Chorley Town Centre/Hospital
- Social Housing

REACTIVE

- Customer satisfaction – detail behind negative responses
- specific departments
- Issues arising from Community Forums
- highways juvenile nuisance
- Improvements to the Town Centre
- Community Forums and their validity
- Low performing service areas – performance management report
(format of information)
- Pubic participation at meetings/decision making process
- Effectiveness of Forward Plan – should it be restricted to key decisions?
- Capital Programme Management

CHAIRING SCRUTINY

16. One of the key issues raised at this session was the difference between chairing Scrutiny meetings and regulatory committees and the key aspects of chairing Scrutiny were identified as:

- Not Insular
- Set Own Work Programme
- Scrutinise Executive
- Call-in Power
- Challenge
- Check Performance
- Reviewing Policies
- Evidence Based

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

17. The key issues identified for improving the delivery and effectiveness of the scrutiny process should be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

18. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	4	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal			

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

19. The recommendation in this report is to consider the findings in the wider context of the future delivery options for overview and scrutiny. As such there are no immediate financial implications associated with this report.

ANDREW DOCHERTY
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER, DEMOCRATIC AND LEGAL SERVICES

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Steve Pearce/Gordon Banks	5196/5123	8 August 2007	ADMINREP/0708LM1