

Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 22 November 2007

Present: Councillor Greg Morgan (Chair) and Councillors Judith Boothman, Mike Devaney, Mrs Doreen Dickinson, Catherine Hoyle, Keith Iddon, Kevin Joyce, Adrian Lowe, Marion Lowe, Mick Muncaster, Rosie Russell and Shaun Smith

07.ECS.29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Nora Ball, Magda Cullens, Anthony Gee, Margaret Iddon and Roy Lees.

07.ECS.30 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Members declared an interest in relation to matters under consideration at the meeting.

07.ECS.31 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 18 October 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

07.ECS.32 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

07.ECS.33 BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING STATEMENTS - 1 JULY 2007 TO 31 SEPTEMBER 2007

The Panel received the second quarter Business Plan Monitoring Statement for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 September 2007 relating to the undermentioned Directorates whose services and functions all fall within the remit and area of responsibility of the Panel:

- Leisure and Culture
- Development and Regeneration
- Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment

The Corporate Director (People) informed the Panel that his Directorate had made good progress across all areas in the first six months with no significant variations to report.

As had been reported at previous meetings there was still a below performance target for the processing of invoices within 30 working days, however, performance had picked up following changes made to the process.

The Corporate Director (Business) presented the Panel with her Business Plan for her Directorate.

Following the previous published Business Plan, good progress had been made filling key vacant posts.

Reference was made to a continuing problem with Housing Allocations and the use of Bed and Breakfast. The Strategic Housing Team had been working hard with Chorley

Community Housing to put procedures in place to reduce this with the Council considering whether it would be advisable to bring the service back in-house.

It was pointed out by Members that they had not received details of the Council joining with Preston, South Ribble and Blackpool to put together a joint Growth Point bid which would be concerned with acceleration of housing growth and increase the provision of affordable housing. A report on the joint Growth Point bid would be submitted to the Executive Cabinet.

The Panel received the Business Plan Monitoring Statement relating to the Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment Directorate. The Director indicated that performance variation for the number of missed collections per 100,000 collections of household waste was still below target but had improved following additional investment.

Other areas of performance below target were percentage racist and offensive graffiti removed within two working days, percentage of graffiti removed within 28 working days and sickness absence. Action Plans had been completed to address these issues.

Members identified an item of expenditure of £10,000 for a wall and sign at the Hartwood roundabout. Members expressed concern at the lack of communication to Members that activities were taking place in their wards to which they were not aware of and there was a need to improve communication to Members.

Reference was also made to the communication to Members of the completion of alley gates schemes.

RESOLVED – 1) That the report be noted.

2) That Officers seek ways of improving the communication to Members of schemes in their Wards.

07.ECS.34 CHORLEY COUNCIL'S ACTIONS TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS AND IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Further to Minute 07.ECS.13 the Panel received a report of the Corporate Director (Business) detailing the activities and measures that the Council had either instigated or were proposing to develop to reduce its carbon emissions in order to mitigate the impact of global climate change.

The indicators initiated by the Council in its community leadership role to combat climate change included:

- the formation of the Climate Change Task Group comprising all Heads of Service with a remit to examine all the Council's activities and produce a Climate Change Strategy within the next 6 months to reduce the Council's environmental footprint;
- the Council's membership of the Local Government Information Unit Carbon Trading Pilot Project set up to assist and advise local authorities and organisations on the reduction of carbon emissions;
- the provision of a baseline survey on energy consumption within the Council's operational properties by Liberata;
- the introduction of a sustainable procurement policy; and
- the introduction of a new priority to develop local solutions to global climate change in the LSP's refreshed Community Strategy.

The current activities would form part of the wider Climate Change Strategy, which would also contain further programmed actions.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

07.ECS.35 SCRUTINY INQUIRY - TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

Further to Minute 07.ECS.28 the Panel was now in a position to commence its next inquiry into the Town Centre Strategy.

At the last meeting of the Panel, Members were conscious of the need to focus their attention on specific areas of the Strategy in view of the wide range of issues and for the potential outcome of the inquiry to be workable. They were also conscious that there should be no duplication of work that may already be carried out by other groups.

The Corporate Director (Business) informed the Panel Members that the Town Centre Strategy was too large for Members to consider in an inquiry and proposed that Members concentrate their efforts on the Town Centre Design Audit currently being carried out by consultants. The Design Audit would consider the materials for the buildings and streets as well as street furniture, signage, security, advertising and landscaping.

The Audit would give members of the Panel a good opportunity to make a difference and influence the process.

The Consultants carrying out the Audit would have their preliminary thoughts available in January 2008 and would give the Panel an opportunity to point out any omissions or make enhancements to enable the Consultants to refine the audit.

RESOLVED – That the Consultants undertaking the Town Centre Design Audit be invited to the next meeting of the Panel on 24 January 2008, to give Members an opportunity to receive their initial findings.

07.ECS.36 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08

The Panel received the current Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2007/08 Municipal Year and in particular the items relating to the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Chair