

# **REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **GENERAL REPORT**

1. This report summarises the business transacted at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 November 2007 and 3 December 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 – 12 NOVEMBER 2007**

### **Revenue Budget 2007/08 Monitoring**

2. We received a monitoring report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) setting out the current financial position of the Council as compared against the budget and efficiency savings targets it set itself for 2007/08 for the General Fund. The report contained details of the Council's expected spending for 2007/08 and summarised the main variations from the original budget.
3. Excellent progress had been made in achieving the Corporate Savings Targets of £278,000 for the year and it was likely that further savings could be made as the year progresses. The report identified the areas that would be monitored closely as the year progressed.

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

4. We received from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) the Business Improvement Plan Monitoring Statement relating to her Directorate, identifying the progress made against the key actions and performance indicators for the period 1 July 2007 to 31 September 2007.
5. The report indicated the activities of the Directorate and reported that with the exception of a couple of actions around Equality and Diversity, the Directorate had delivered all the actions set out in the Business Improvement Plan scheduled for completion during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007/08.
6. Considerable activities had been undertaken to work with partners to develop and agree the Sustainable Community Strategy as well as undertaking the Council's own assessment review of the Corporate Strategy.
7. Work had been developed in the Council's approach to consultation and participation through the development of a Consultation and Participation Strategy Action Plan and supporting toolkit.
8. The Directorate had also developed and submitted the Council's application for CPA reassessment which will be considered by the Regional Panel and if successful will be eligible for a Corporate Assessment sometime from Mid May 2008.
9. All risks have been managed and were on track to deliver planned cashable and non-cashable efficiencies.

## **Corporate 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Performance Report 2007/08 – Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 30 September 2007**

10. We received from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) the second quarter performance management report indicating the Authority's performance in relation to both the Best Value Performance Indicators and the Council's Corporate Key Performance Indicators.
11. The report indicated that overall the performance in key projects was very positive and of the 44 key projects approved in December 2006, 30 had been completed. The remaining 14 were progressing on or ahead of plan and 75% of Corporate Strategy indicators had met or exceeded their target.
12. Overall BVPI performance was good and the Council's quartile position remained positive with 58% of BVPI's showing consistent or improved performance and 18 (55%) in the quartile nationally 66% of BVPI's were on course to meet the year end target. BVPI performance generally matched or improved upon last year's performance. However, because the organisation was relatively small and very susceptible to small fluctuations some indicators had seen a slight deterioration in terms of improving PI's for the first quarter of 2007/08.
13. Our attention was drawn to the action plan that had been drawn up to address deteriorating performance and to drive up the number of BVPI's showing improving performance in the year. The report detailed the analysis of those BVPI's, which showed deterioration.
14. Explanations were given on each of these areas with specific attention made to indicator BVPI 183a relating to the average length of stay in Bed and Breakfast accommodation and the contributing factors impacting on the poor performance as well as outlining the corrective action to be undertaken.

### **Introduction of Neighbourhood Working in Chorley**

15. The Chair of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel presented the Committee with a report on the Panel's completed inquiry into Neighbourhood Working and putting forward recommendations for the adoption and implementation of a system of neighbourhood working for Chorley.
16. The system would provide for:
  - The establishment of neighbourhood teams.
  - Support for working within existing neighbourhood based groups.
  - The funding mechanisms to support local initiatives.
  - The reinforcement of the role of the Ward Councillors in neighbourhoods.
  - Support for relatively deprived and poorly organised neighbourhoods.
17. The Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel had held a number of inquiry hearings, interviews and questions on a number of interests from Partners such as the Police, registered social landlords, community organisations, Parish Councils, Active Citizens, local sector organisations and private individuals.
18. The report set out the evidence that had been heard by the Panel and drawing on the evidence the Panel considered three models of Neighbourhood Working for Chorley.
19. The Panel proposed that one model should be adopted in Chorley and that would be the Area Teams approach but would also include an element of capacity building using community development techniques, which were established in Chorley in the Target Area Partnerships (TAPS).

- 20 The Committee was asked to finalise a recommendation from the two potential footprints based on the existing eight boundaries of Neighbourhood Policing Area and the Lancashire County Council seven electoral divisions.
21. The Committee agreed that there be eight neighbourhood areas based on the Neighbourhood Policing Area, that the Executive Cabinet gives consideration to Parishing the non-parished areas of Chorley and also to the future of Target Area Partnerships (TAPS).

### **Forward Plan**

22. We received the Council's Forward Plan setting out details of the key executive decisions expected to be taken between 1 November 2007 to 29 February 2008.
23. The Plan identified several matters for potential decisions to be taken by the Executive and the Committee was requested to indicate those items that it wanted to examine in advance of consideration by the Executive.
24. We had already requested at a previous meeting to see the report on Pay and Workforce Strategy and the Committee requested to examine the report on Joint District and LCC Locality Plan for Chorley before the Executive takes a decision.

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – 3 DECEMBER 2007**

#### **Capital Programme, 2007/08 - Monitoring**

25. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received and noted a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) updating Members on the progress of the 2007/08 Capital Programme.
26. The report contained a scheme-by-scheme analysis of the programme and identified the proposed changes and slippage to 2008/09, which accounted for the proposed increase of the current capital budget from £8,798,300 to £10,175,240.
27. A few Members commented on a number of identified projects, with particular reference being made to the design, quality of material and maintenance costs associated with the Market Street paving scheme. In response to those comments, the Committee was assured that the Officers are currently re-examining the Market Street environmental improvement scheme and will be submitted a further report to a future Executive Cabinet meeting.

#### **Joint District and Lancashire County Council Locality Plan for Chorley**

28. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented a report introducing the Joint Locality Plan for Chorley, which has been produced by the Lancashire County Council, and Chorley Council.
29. The Plan has emerged from the enhanced two-tier working arrangements with the aim of identifying a number of the main objectives and projects linked to both Councils' corporate priorities to be pursued over the next 12 months by both Authorities either separately or jointly. The Officer emphasised that the Plan represents an indicative illustration of the principal schemes for which both Authorities will be responsible to assist the community's understanding of their distinct functions.
30. I was requested to advise the Executive Committee that, while the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers that there are areas of the Joint Locality Plan, which might be improved or made more specific, the Committee generally welcomes the production of the Plan.

## **Forward Plan**

31. We were presented with the Council's Forward Plan setting out the details of the key executive decisions expected to be taken between 1 December 2007 and 31 March 2008.
32. The Committee expressed a wish to examine, with the appropriate Director, the draft Streetscene Strategy document in advance of its consideration by the Executive Cabinet.

## **Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy**

33. The Committee considered a report of the Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment reviewing the delivery of the Community Safety Strategy.
34. The Chorley Community Safety Strategy, launched in March 2005, is due to expire in March 2008. This Strategy and the associated Chorley Community Safety Partnership has been successful in reducing crime levels in the Borough through the implementation of a range of actions, initiatives and interventions. The number of recorded crimes in Chorley has fallen by 18% since last year and the Police and Officers are confident that the Strategy's overall target will be achieved by a further reduction of crime levels by 1.8% before the end of March 2008. Our continuing high performance has, in fact, been commended by the Home Office.
35. We welcomed the report and agreed to undertake a review of the past achievements of the current Community Safety Strategy, in April 2008, and consider the arrangements to replace both the Strategy and potentially, the Chorley Community Safety Partnership from April 2008, for community engagement in crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 18 OCTOBER 2007**

### **Scrutiny Inquiries**

36. The Panel noted from the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2007/08 that it had two topics to consider for a full scrutiny inquiry, Town Centre Strategy and Inequalities in the Borough.
37. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Cabinet agreed last year that the Panel should carry out the inquiry in the order of priority and should therefore commence work on the Town Centre Strategy Inquiry.
38. Following completion of the Neighbourhood Inquiry the Panel was now in a position to commence an inquiry into the Town Centre Strategy.
39. The Panel received for information copies of the Chorley Town Centre Strategy, which the Council had adopted in October 2006.
40. Members of the Panel 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 worthwhile. They were also conscious that there should be no duplication of work that may already be carried out by other groups.
41. The Panel agreed to receive from the Corporate Director (Business) a guide as to how the inquiry should progress and the areas it should focus its attention on.
42. The Panel suggested the following areas it would focus its attention on:
  - Are there any areas of clarification and improvements to the Strategy?
  - Are the actions on target?
  - Consider the current strengths and weaknesses of the Town Centre Strategy.

- Examine the planned process for reviewing the existing Strategy and look at the likely issues and factors that would affect future Town Centre Strategies.
- Focus on examining the implementation process of the Strategy so far and the funding resource implications.
- Are the funding sources on track?
- What action is being done to drive up occupancy levels of Town Centre shops?

## **ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 22 NOVEMBER 2007**

### **Business Plan Monitoring Statements – 1 July 2007 to 31 September 2007**

43. The Panel received the second quarter Business Plan Monitoring Statement for the period 1 July 2007 to 31 September 2007 relating to the undermentioned Directorates whose service and functions fall within the remit and responsibility of the Panel:
- Leisure and Culture
  - Development and Regeneration
  - Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment
44. The Panel received from the Corporate Director (People) the Business Plan Monitoring Statement for the Leisure and Culture service. The report indicated that the Directorate had made good progress across all areas in the first six months with no significant variations to report.
45. 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 process changes to the system of payment of invoices.
46. The Corporate Director (Business) presented the Panel with her Business Plan for her Directorate, indicating that since the previous published Business Plan, good progress had been made filling key vacant posts.
47. Members made reference to a continuing problem with Housing Allocation 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.
48. Members pointed out 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 bid would be submitted to the Executive Cabinet.
49. The Panel received the Business Plan Monitoring Statement relating to the Streetscene, Neighbourhood and Environment Directorate. The Director indicated that the 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.
50. Other areas 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 Plan had been completed to address these issues.
51. Reference was made by Members of the apparent lack of communication to them of activities that were taking place in their Wards to which they were not aware. It was agreed that Officers seek ways of improving communication to Members.

## **Chorley Council's Action to Reduce Carbon Emissions and Impact on Climate Change**

52. The Panel had requested this report at a previous meeting which detailed 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.
53. 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.
54. The current activities would form part of the wider Climate Change Strategy, which would also contain further programmed actions.
55. The Panel agreed to note the report.

## **Scrutiny Inquiry – Town Centre Strategy**

56. The Corporate Director (Business) notified 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.
57. The Audit would give members of the Panel a good opportunity to make a difference and influence the process.
58. The Panel invited the Consultants undertaking the Town Centre Design Audit to attend the next meeting of the Panel on 24 January 2008 to give Members an opportunity to receive their initial findings. It would give the Panel an opportunity to point out any omissions or make enhancements to enable the Consultants to refine the audit.

## **CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 20 NOVEMBER 2007**

### **Retirement of Deputy Chief Executive**

59. The Panel noted that the Deputy Chief Executive, Paul Morris, would be retiring before Christmas. The Chair expressed his thanks to Paul for his support and help to the Panel over the years.

### **Quarterly Business Plan Monitoring Statement**

60. The Panel received the Business Plan Monitoring Statements for the period July 2007 to September 2007 for Human Resources, Information, Communication Technology Services, Customer, Democratic and Legal Services and Financial Services.

## **Monitoring of Inquiry Recommendations – Contact Centre Efficiencies and Partnership with Lancashire County Council**

- 61 The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director (People) updating Members on the progress made on the recommendations of the inquiry into the Contact Centre Efficiencies and Partnership with Lancashire County Council.
62. Members noted that excellent progress had been made and raised several points with Councillor John Walker, the Executive Member for Customer, Democratic and Legal Services.

## **Scrutiny Inquiries – Efficiency Gains and Absence Management**

63. The Panel received an update on the two ongoing Inquiries into Efficiency Gains and Absence Management.
64. We noted that the evidence gathered would be presented to the next meeting of the Absence Management Sub-Group in January 2008 to enable recommendations, if any, to be made and the final report to be drawn up.
65. The Efficiency Gains Sub-Group would be receiving feedback from the Directors before Christmas and would be meeting in January 2008 to draft their findings and recommendations into a final report.

## **Recommendation**

66. That the Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR D EDGERLEY  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

GKB/LM

There are no background papers to this report.