

Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday, 22 January 2008

08.CCS.05 BUDGET SCRUTINY FOR 2008/2009

The Panel considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on budget scrutiny. The report set out the spending and performance context for key spending areas at the Council, details of the rationale between the Executives draft budget proposals and details of the key budget proposals for 2008/09.

Members noted that the budget proposals aimed to achieve the objectives set out in the refreshed corporate strategy. It was noted that the updated Corporate Strategy includes new targets, particularly in relation to climate change and older and younger peoples activities.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) outlined the spending and performance context for key spending areas at the Council and answered a number of queries raised by Members. The Panel congratulated the Council on the achievement of maximum scores for both the use of its resources and value for money in the annual use of resources assessment. Improvements in satisfaction have been seen alongside improvements in performance and this score demonstrates that the Council continues to offer good value for money.

Members made several general suggestions for the Executive Cabinet to consider:

- 1. To increase the number of Environmental Wardens.**
- 2. To provide another vehicle for the Environmental Wardens.**
- 3. To improve the process to request the cleaning of footpaths, clearing of hedgerows and ditches outside the urban core. Currently there can be confusion as to where the responsibility for this lies and how best to deal with Lancashire County Council when the responsibility lies with them.**
- 4. To increase the use of the machine that removes chewing gum throughout the Borough.**
- 5. To distribute to Members the schedule of work for street cleaning and grass cutting for their information and comments.**
- 6. To identify areas where there is a lack of recreational facilities and either provide additional facilities or improve transport links to existing facilities nearby.**
- 7. To explore concessionary arrangements with South Ribble where residents would be entitled to concessions within Chorley but South Ribble recreational facilities are closer.**

The Panel made observations on the following:

1. The customer service received when a missed bin was reported was excellent and the bin had then been collected promptly.
2. The conditions of the new waste and recycling contract to put financial penalties on the contractor for not returning the receptacle to the point of collection and new style receptacles for recycling were commended.
3. It was hoped that the issue of waste littering areas after collection would be reduced under the new contract.
4. It was hoped that the plans for Market Walk phase 2 would come into fruition in the future.

On the base budget review savings 2008/09 Members asked for clarification on several items and commented that the maintenance of bus shelters and street furniture, although not the responsibility of Chorley Council, did have a positive impact on the streetscene. It was noted that one of the corporate priorities was to “develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live”. The increase in charges for the hire of the Lancastrian was noted with some concern.

Members considered the schedule of potential savings for Directorate savings targets 2008/09. It was highlighted that proposed savings should not have a negative impact on the service delivered to the customer. Support was given to merging the enforcement functions currently delivered by Governance and Neighbourhoods.

The Panel discussed the proposals for increasing fees and charges in 2008/09. **Members discussed the increase proposed for grant of right of burial fees and a suggestion was made that the increase be phased.**

Members considered the plans for Capital Resources and noted that the priorities were affordable housing, the town centre, sustainability and climate change and investing in the green corridor. Members clarified several points and supported the proposals relating to affordable housing and the green corridor. It was noted that Chorley Council would manage the homelessness function in the future.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) for his report and attendance at the meeting. It was noted that the discussion on budget scrutiny had been useful and the approach to budget scrutiny had been an improvement on last year.

RESOLVED – That the

- 1. report be noted and**
- 2. comments of the Panel be forwarded to the Executive Cabinet.**