

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 25 March 2008

Present: Councillor Dennis Edgerley (Chair), Councillor Laura Lennox (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Ken Ball, Alan Cain, Harold Heaton, Margaret Iddon, Margaret Lees, Greg Morgan, Geoffrey Russell, Edward Smith and Iris Smith

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

08.OS.13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Marie Gray.

08.OS.14 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by any of the Committee Members on any of the agenda items on the agenda.

08.OS.15 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No members of the public had requested the opportunity to raise question(s) on any of the agenda items.

08.OS.16 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 February 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

08.OS.17 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 27 MARCH 2008

A request had been received in the specified time for the Committee to consider the undermentioned report which was on the agenda for the Executive Cabinet meeting to be held on 27 March 2008.

08.OS.18 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) informing members on the proposal to merge Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire Community Safety Partnerships into a Lancashire South Strategic Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

The report indicated that the current three year Community Safety Strategy for Chorley would be coming to an end on 31 March 2008. There had been a requirement from 2007 for each Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to produce a Strategic Assessment. Chorley along with the local authorities of South Ribble and West Lancashire had undertaken a joint Strategic Assessment under the agreement and guidance of the three Chief Executives and Chief Superintendents.

The principle of merging the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to form larger strategic partnerships was supported by the Home Office in order to further reduce crime and disorder and in tackling the misuse of drugs. Other beneficial factors included the pooling of resources to increase capacity, the co-ordination of displacement and the ability to focus resources on front line action.

Attached to the report was a document prepared by Chief Inspector Debbie Howard proposing the merging of the three Crime Reduction Partnerships to form a larger Strategic Partnership for Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancs. This would result in a more streamlined process for meetings with each area maintaining a platform for local issues.

A number of Members expressed their concern at the speed of implementing the new structure. This was a significant change to the existing structure and it was considered that greater consultation was necessary.

RESOLVED – That the following recommendations be submitted to the Executive Cabinet meeting to be held on 27 March 2008.

- 1) That implementation of the proposals be delayed by 6 weeks, to allow for greater consultation.
- 2) That the proposal be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its 19 May 2008 meeting.
- 3) That the suggested pilot runs for a period of 12 months.
- 4) That success criteria be developed against which the project can be measured.
- 5) That an interim review be done 6 months after the implementation of the pilot.

08.OS.19 CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2008/09 - MONITORING

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) updating Members on the 2007/08 capital programme and seeking recommendations for the revision of the Programme which would need to be determined by the Executive Cabinet at its meeting on 27 March 2008. The report showed the split between slippage and other budget changes that were taken into account in the revision to the programme.

The report outlined a number of additions to the 2007/08 programme and other budget adjustments totalling around £381,000.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) commented on the proposed alterations to the capital programme, highlighting in particular a major recommended change to the programme in 2007/08 being the capitalisation of interest in respect of the land assembly required for the Gilibrand Link Road, for which the Council had received the necessary capitalisation direction. The interest would otherwise be charged to the revenue budget which would save the revenue budget £213,000.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

08.OS.20 SCRUTINY INQUIRIES - EFFICIENCY GAINS AND ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

The Chair welcomed the final reports from the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel on its inquiries into Efficiency Gains and Absence Management.

The Chair of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel introduced the reports outlining the objectives and the outcomes of both inquiries.

Members discussed the reports and the recommendations made, noting that they expressed a wish to amend recommendation 12 of the Efficiency Gains inquiry.

RESOLVED – 1) That the following recommendations of the Efficiency Gains inquiry be forwarded to the Executive Cabinet for approval.

Objective One – To assess the performance of the council in achieving the efficiency targets set by the government

The sub-group found that the council has achieved the targets set by the government a year in advance and therefore have made no recommendations in this area.

Objective Two – To ensure that efficiency gains do not adversely affect our customers

1. To ensure that cost reduction/efficiency gains do not adversely affect front line services robust service performance monitoring arrangements identified continue to be strictly followed, including the retention of a number of performance indicators as set out in the report.

Objective Three – To identify the Council's future plans to tackle the efficiency agenda

2. A strategy be prepared setting out how the Council intends to meet the challenging target to reduce the operating costs of the Contact Centre by 25% by 2011.
 3. A corporate plan setting out our strategic approach be prepared by Officers, indicating how the gains demanded through Comprehensive Spending Review 07 will be delivered.
 4. A strategic approach be taken to service procurement through partnership, collaboration and shared services.
 5. The programme of business process re-engineering (commenced through integration of waste management public contact and the Customer Relationship Management) be continued, to maximise efficiency gains.
 6. To continue to develop the transactional functionality of the Council's website as part of channel optimisation.
 7. To increase the information relating to efficiency gains presented to the Executive Cabinet.
 8. To recognise the drive to thin client technology and focus on new ways of working (for example reducing inkjet printers by encouraging two sided copying).
 9. To add the transformation agenda to the remit of the member development steering group.
 10. To implement a sustainable procurement policy and action plan to ensure the council's commitment to the environment, equality and diversity issues.
 11. To suggest a future scrutiny inquiry topic of the provision of information and communication technology for members and staff.
 12. To investigate the extent to which Members might be included in the health and well-being initiatives provided for council staff.
- 2) That the following recommendations of the Absent Management Inquiry be forwarded to the Executive Cabinet for approval.

1. **Employees should speak to their manager (or a nominated officer if their manager is not available) when phoning in sick rather than a colleague. *In addition to the Manager being aware immediately of the absence and reasons it also gives the opportunity to discuss any diary appointments or outstanding workload that the Manager can redistribute.***
2. **To enable managers to check the absence employees diary and activate an “out of office” message on e-mails, informing senders that the person is unavailable and who to contact if the message is urgent. *This will ensure that all e-mails are responded to.***
3. **To set an annual target of 8.5 working days lost due to sickness for internal Council use. *This would be top quartile performance.***
4. **Return to work interviews should be carried out by managers (or a nominated officer if their manager is not available) on the first day back in work. They should be held in private and handled sensitively ensuring the employee is fully fit to return to work. *It also gives the Manager the opportunity to discuss any issues that may have contributed to the absence and welcome the employee back into work as a valued member of the team.***
5. **To report long-term and short-term sickness as well as the overall figure. *This will highlight trends to the management team.***
6. **To support the implementation of a workplace listeners scheme. *This will support the mental well-being (health and well-being strategy).***
7. **To continue to provide antibacterial hand wash in all toilets and kitchens. *This works towards creating a safe and healthy workforce (health and well-being strategy).***
8. **Encourage staff to take up the Active at Work and new initiatives offered. *This promotes physical activity (health and well-being strategy).***
9. **Feedback on the new Occupational Health contract as part of the monitoring of inquiry recommendations. *It is important to continually monitor the Occupational Health contract to ensure that staff receive the best possible service.***

08.OS.21 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY PROCESS

The Committee received a report of the Director of Corporate Governance setting out the review that had taken place over the last 12 months on the Council's overview and scrutiny function.

The report indicated the means to address concerns that the current structure was not as efficient as it could be and to increase Member engagement with the scrutiny process by promoting scrutiny reviews undertaken by small task and finish groups.

The report set out the background with a consultation exercise carried out with discussions on the proposal with political groups.

The proposal was for an overarching Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the two current scrutiny panels (Corporate and Customer and Environment and Community) being disbanded. The Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was suggested to be 12 with the Committee establishing and appointing task and finish groups to undertake reviews. A task and finish group would consist of four or five members from the membership of the main committee but could include other Council

Members (other than Executive Members) who would be interested in the topics under scrutiny.

Some Members expressed concern that the membership of 12 Councillors for the Committee would be too small and suggested 15 would be more appropriate.

Discussions took place on the size of task and finish groups with a view that two Members from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be a more appropriate number with other interested Members.

The Chair pointed out that he would express his views to the Executive Cabinet and other Members would voice their opinions through their respective political groups, or at the Council meeting on 22 April 2008.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

08.OS.22 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Governance seeking approval to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/09 which identified the proposed areas of work to be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Task and Finish Group.

The Committee was recommended to consider the topics suggested for scrutiny inquiries and to choose an initial three topics for the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

It had become apparent following the I&DeA training session with Members that a large number of ideas for topics could be scrutinised. Other topics had also been suggested since those training sessions.

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be continuing into the 2008/09 Municipal Year with the Joint Central Lancashire Inquiry into Affordable Housing as well as the Chorley Town Centre Audit and Design Strategy.

RESOLVED – 1) That the following scrutiny inquiries be undertaken during 2008/09 by the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups.

- **To examine the contract and other issues relating to the service provided by Chorley Community Housing (CCH).**
- **Streetscene Issues**

2) That the second meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the 2008/09 Municipal Year considers a third topic for an inquiry.

08.OS.23 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08

The Committee received the updated Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

The programme included the scrutiny inquiries and the planned monitoring of the past inquiry recommendations as well as the work undertaken by the Committee and Panels.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

08.OS.24 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Council's Forward Plan setting out details of the key executive decisions expected to be taken between 1 March 2008 and 30 June 2008.

The Committee had previously indicated its wish to have the opportunity of considering and commenting on the Pay and Workforce Strategy in advance of its consideration by the Executive Cabinet.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

Chair