

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

GENERAL REPORT

1. This report summarises the business transacted at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 August 2008, as well as a brief summary of the recent activities and matters discussed at meetings that have taken place of the Task and Finish Groups.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11 AUGUST 2008

Outstanding issues requested by the Committee

2. The Committee received information on the undermentioned issues that had been requested at its last meeting held on 23 June 2008:
 - Vulnerable Families
An update on the Vulnerable Families Project was considered in the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) on the 1st Quarter Performance Report for 2008/09.
 - Astley Park Coach House/Adventure Playground
An update on the Astley Park Coach House/Adventure Playground was considered in the Business Plan for the People Directorate.
 - Common Bank Reservoir
An update on the Common Bank Reservoir was considered in the Business Plan for the People Directorate.
 - Concessionary Travel
Representatives from Lancashire County Council attended the meeting to discuss with Members the Concessionary Travel Scheme and answer questions relating to how the scheme was being run as well as the financial issues that will affect the Council.

Waste Management Contract

3. We received from the Environmental Health Manager a presentation on the service that will be provided by the new Waste Management Contract that will be commencing on 1 April 2009. The new contract would be aiming at enhancing the Council's recycling performance and that the contractor that had been awarded the contract had demonstrated through their tender submission the quality, capability and innovation necessary to deliver a first class household refuse and recycling collection service based on a competitive tendering process that delivered the most economically advantageous contract terms to the Council.

Memorial Safety in Closed Churchyards

4. We received a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods in response to the Committee request for a report on the implications to the Council of memorial safety in closed churchyards.
5. The report provided a summary of the Council's present position in respect to the management of closed churchyards for which the maintenance responsibility including memorials had been passed to the Council.
6. We agreed that a policy be drawn up on memorial safety in closed churchyards and that a draft be submitted to the Committee for consideration in approximately 6 months time.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2008/09 Report 1 (End of June 2008)

7. We received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) setting out the current financial position of the Council as compared against the budgets and efficiency savings targets it set itself for the General Fund.
8. The report indicated that the Council was expected to make overall target savings of £320,000 in 2008/09 which equated to £80,000 for the first quarter. Excellent progress had been made with savings of £150,000.
9. The report highlighted the significant variations from the Council's budget, with members highlighting several issues including a further overspend against the revenue budget this year for the costs associated with a planning appeal. The report indicating that the final costs of the appeal would be subject to agreement over what was reasonable for the Council to pay, but indications were that the sums involved may be significant.

Capital Programme, 2008/09 – Monitoring

10. We received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) updating Members on the 2008/09 capital programme and seeking authority of the Executive Cabinet to review the availability of capital resources for the funding of the programme.
11. It was proposed that the programme be increased by £163,040 funded fully from external sources.
12. Several changes to financing the programme had been made and a number of external factors would contribute to a shortfall in expected capital receipts.
13. The cost of funding the lighting at the Coronation Recreation Ground had exceeded the budget of £60,000 and in order to proceed with this scheme it was recommended that the overall shortfall of £16,280 be met from Council capital resources. Members believed that the Police had made a contribution to the scheme and queried whether this was still available and this would be clarified.

Chorley Partnership 1st Quarter 2008/09 Progress Report

14. We received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) outlining the improvements that had been made to the Chorley Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for Chorley) since the last quarter and to keep Members informed about the current work being co-ordinated by the LSP and future plans for the LSP.
15. The report indicated that the first quarter had seen a lot of activity for the Partnership and listed the progress made to date on the current principle.
16. Members indicated that it had been difficult to access information about the LSP projects or the work of the LSP sub-groups and it was suggested that "intheknow" could be used to keep members better informed.
17. A concern was raised that the Chair of the Chorley Childrens Trust was a District Councillor who was also a Lancashire County Councillor, serving as Chair of their Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Chorley Partnership Annual Performance Report 2007/08

18. We received from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) the Chorley Partnership Annual Performance report for 2007/08.
19. The report indicated that the Partnership had had a successful year with 5 out of its 6 projects either completed or ongoing into 2008/09. Out of the performance indicators that could be reported on at this point in the year, 71% of targets had been met or exceeded with 86% improving on last year.
20. The thematic groups of the LSP continued to make progress in working towards the priorities of the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
21. Chorley's overall position in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, which gave an indication that the quality of life had improved from 172nd to 158th out of 354 local authorities in the country.
22. The Annual Report outlined the year in review, as well as looking ahead to the 11 new projects and targets for Chorley within the new Local Area Agreement.

Business Plan Monitoring Statements – 1 April to 30 June 2008

23. We received the first quarter Business Plan and Performance Monitoring Statements for the following services and noted the activities, performance and action taken to address those areas not reaching the necessary target:
 - Business Directorate
 - Neighbourhoods Directorate
 - People Directorate
 - Business Transformation Directorate
 - Policy and Performance Directorate
24. We also received a report summarising the Statements that had been completed by the Directorates.
25. We noted the various key messages of the Directorates and identified the difficulty with the on-line access booking system for the 'Get Up and Go' programme to which it was reported that it was already being addressed by Customer Services.

Performance Monitoring Report – First Quarter of 2008/09

26. We received from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) the first quarter performance management report which set out the performance against the Corporate Strategy and the Council's National Indicators for the first quarter of 2008/09, 1 April to 30 June 2008.
27. The report indicated that the overall performance of the key projects in the Corporate Strategy was very good with 25 of the projects (81%) either completed, progressing ahead of plan or on plan.
28. The report identified the completed key projects showing the key outcomes from the projects which had been completed in the first quarter of 2008/09. In total 13 (42%) of the key projects in the refreshed Corporate Strategy had now been completed, an increase of 16% on the position last quarter.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Report of the Task and Finish Groups

29. We received from each Chair of the Task and Finish Group an update on their respective inquiries and approval was given to the scoping document produced for the Chorley Community Housing inquiry.
30. It was agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise aspects of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

Neighbourhoods Directorate – Value for Money Review

31. At the request of the Committee to have an opportunity to consider and comment on this report in advance of its consideration by the Executive Cabinet, we received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on the findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from the internal value for money review conducted in the Council's Neighbourhood Directorate.
32. The review had been undertaken by an internal review team to assess how well value for money was being delivered and improved across the services within the Neighbourhoods Directorate. The report set out the review objectives and using a methodology developed in-house the team assessed value against 5 criteria – rationale, efficiency, economy, effectiveness and impact and each service within the directorate was then scored against the criteria enabling the review team to assess how well value for money was being achieved.
33. In conclusion the review was an important starting point on the 3 year programme of VFM reviews agreed by the Executive Cabinet in 2007 with the outcomes and learning from the review benefiting future work on the programme.
34. The outcomes from the review had been critical to informing and directing the restructure of the Neighbourhoods Directorate which will deliver efficiency savings for the Council.
35. The Committee agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive Cabinet.

Neighbourhoods Directorate – Restructure

36. At the request of the Committee to have an opportunity to consider and comment on this report in advance of its consideration by the Executive Cabinet, the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) submitted a confidential report on the proposed structure for the Neighbourhoods Directorate taking forward the recommendation approved by the Executive Cabinet on 14 February 2008 and those service function reviews included within the Council's budget for 2008/09.
37. The report indicated that the Neighbourhoods Directorate had recently undergone a Value for Money review which highlighted some key efficiencies and areas upon which to improve effectiveness, which require some review of the role and function of employees of the Neighbourhoods Directorate teams.
38. The Committee agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive Cabinet.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP – STREETSCENE

39. The Task Group has met three times on this inquiry into the Streetscene Division of the Neighbourhoods Directorate. Members had received details of the areas of responsibility and objectives for the division.
40. A scoping document has been approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which includes all the issues and concerns of Members and these would be focused upon at the future meetings.
41. Members main focus of attention over the coming meetings will be on the performance of both street cleansing and grounds maintenance with a concern that the schedules of maintenance are not as efficient and effective as it should be and following a request Members received copies of these documents.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP – CHORLEY COMMUNITY HOUSING

42. At the meeting on 5 August Members received feedback from Paul Lees (Group Chief Executive), Annabelle Robinson (Group Housing Management Director) and Morna Maines (Project Manager) from Adactus Housing Group.
43. The session covered a range of topics including progress in delivering promises to tenants, the performance management framework and the recent reorganisation of Chorley Community Housing. Members raised queries on total and partial renovations and the need to increase the number of residents' car parking spaces. The affordable housing strategy and issue of residents suffering from the effects of antisocial behaviour were also considered.
44. Members were assured that in the areas where issues had been raised a marked improvement would be seen in the next few months and years. It was confirmed that Chorley Community Housing would be based in Chorley for the next five years at least.
45. Members discussed the importance of partnership working on issues such as anti social behaviour, car parking, speeding motorists and litter. These issues were highlighted as part of the residents perception survey recently carried out by Chorley Community Housing. These would be taken forward by officers.
46. At the meeting on 11 September representatives from the residents associations in the Borough have been invited to attend. The aim of the session is to receive feedback on their experiences, both in setting up a residents association and ongoing support from Chorley Community Housing.

RECOMMENDATION

47. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR D EDGERLEY
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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There are no background papers to this report.