

Scrutiny Reporting Back

Chorley Council's Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny in 2017/18



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1. MEMBERSHIP OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2017/18



Councillor John Walker
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2017/18



Councillor Roy Lees
Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2017/18

Councillors Charlie Bromilow, Paul Clark, Jane Fitzsimons, Zara Khan Paul Leadbetter, Matthew Lynch, June Molyneaux, Greg Morgan, Alistair Morwood, Steve Murfitt, Debra Platt and Kim Snape

2 INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Once again the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has had a busy year undertaking a varied and extensive work programme and three task group reviews. Councillor John Walker and Roy Lees were appointed Chair and Vice Chair respectively for another year. There were also several new members welcomed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel, consisting of six members met quarterly to monitor the council's Organisational Plan and Business Planning performance, along with a focus on a number of different service issues.

The three task group reviews established by the Committee were to undertake reviews on the topics of -

- Council's Leisure Management Contract
- Council's Waste Management Contract
- Quality of Housing provided by Social Landlords

The Committee continued to receive six monthly monitoring reports following the Executive Cabinet's response on the implementation of outcomes and measure success from past scrutiny reviews:

CCTV Provision and Infrastructure – the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a third monitoring report that provided an update on the implementation of the recommendations made by the 2014 task group. The project was completed in 18 months, but had been expected to take three years to deliver and implement. At the time the monitoring report was written, the scheme was on time and within budget.

Feedback received from the police had been positive, with the quality of the pictures being produced significantly assisting in the detection of crime and subsequent prosecutions.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) - the Executive Cabinet accepted the 10 task group recommendations which could be split into five key areas/actions and formed the council's 2017/18 CSE Action Plan -

- training and awareness raising for elected members and officers;
- taxi trade (the majority of which had already been trained) and licensing community training;
- work with partners in producing appropriate materials/delivering events to raise CSE awareness amongst parents and guardians, improve links and maintain links with secondary and primary school;
- elected members personal safety guidance; and
- the council to continue to raise awareness within the community

3 CHALLENGING PERFORMANCE

The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel focused on the performance elements of scrutiny, and considered all monitoring information. Scrutinizing performance is a key role for scrutiny and one of the benefits to the dedicated resources was that a smaller number of members were able to drill down to the detail in key areas and adopt some consistency in approach.

The panel for 2017/18 consisted of the following membership -

Councillor John Walker (Chair)
Councillor Roy Lees (Vice Chair)
Councillor Matthew Lynch
Councillor June Molyneaux
Councillor Greg Morgan
Councillor Alistair Morwood

The Panel met four times within the last twelve months, considering the Council's Corporate Strategy, key projects and monitoring that captured all the directorate and service level business improvement plans. The Panel also considered an additional performance focus, where different directorates are put under the spotlight.

3.1 Early Intervention and Support

Councillor Beverley Murray, Executive Member (Early Intervention) and Jamie Carson, Deputy Chief Executive/Director (Early Intervention and Support) were in attendance.

Key areas of discussion included -

Volunteering – the majority of existing groups and volunteers had been signed up to Chorley Time Credits. The number of hours earned through volunteering had increased by 47% which has been reflective of the success of the Time Credits earn and spend model. The next step was to encourage groups to extend the services they provide, with support from the Council, to encourage new volunteers.

Neighbourhoods – In 2017/18, 24 new neighbourhood preferred projects, to be delivered in partnership with local communities and key partners, were proposed. Due to the success of the initiative in recent years, more ambitious environmental improvement projects are being put forward, with the predicted cost to the council becoming greater overall. Going forward, greater importance would be given to those projects that required officer support or match funding for their delivery, and projects focused on improving the health and wellbeing of residents are to be encouraged.

Integrated Community Wellbeing - The Performance Panel received a progress report on the Integrated Community Wellbeing Service which was established in April 2017. Phase 1, the relocations of 120 Lancashire Care staff to the council's Union Street office had been completed with them joining the existing 50 Chorley Council staff. To aid better understanding of the various services within Integrated Community Wellbeing a directory of services had been created for each team.

Phase 2 had commenced and would focus on transforming and integrating the services. Phase 3 will evaluate the success of the service.

3.2 Customer and Digital Context

Councillor Adrian Lowe, Executive Member (Customer, Advice and Streetscene Services) and Asim Khan, Director (Customer and Digital) were in attendance.

Members of the Performance Panel considered a report by the Director of Policy and Governance which provided contextual information in regards to an update on Waste and Streetscene performance and the delivery of the Digital Strategy 2017/20. It was reported that a series of modernisation improvements have been implemented which include changes to working arrangements in the areas of Waste, Streetscene and the Digital Strategy.

3.3 Council's Communications and Events Team

Rebecca Huddleston, Director (Policy and Governance) was in attendance.

The Performance Panel considered a report which provided information on the events delivered by the Council's Communications and Events Team, including a summary of the financial cost in delivering each event, the revenue generated, and the number of attendees. Since 2009, the Council's events delivery had significantly increased from two annual events (Picnic in the Park and the Christmas lights switch on), to a yearlong programme of activities designed for people of all ages.

In addition to the events, the Communications and Events Team is also responsible for internal and external communications which include press enquires, social media, branding and website development.

During debate, the Performance Panel discussed many aspects of the work of the Communication and Events Team, including the –

- Economic benefits of hosting events in Chorley compared with the cost to the council;
- The promotion of events
- Sponsorship opportunities.

3.4 Business, Development and Growth

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Leader/Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform) and Mark Lester, Director (Business, Development and Growth) were in attendance.

The Business, Development and Growth directorate are responsible for delivering a number of significant corporate projects including, Primrose Gardens, Market Walk extension, the Digital Office Park and the Youth Zone.

Key areas of debate included -

- Performance of projects
- Market Walk extension
- Steeley Lane Gateway
- Performance indicators
- New Economic Development Strategy

4 KEY MESSAGES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

4.1 Council's Leisure Management Contract – Chaired by Councillor Alistair Morwood

Chorley Council's Leisure Contract is due to expire in 2020, with a formal review being conducted in 2018. Pulse Regeneration was the appointed consultant who were commissioned to review the current contract, carry out research into leisure provision both nationally and locally, and provide model options for Executive Cabinet approval. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered that it was timely to undertake a task group review to study the findings of the consultant and that of officers of the council.

Chaired by Councillor Alistair Morwood, the task group met five times gathering evidence from Active Nation, Lancashire Care Foundation Trust, and officers from the Council's Early Intervention and Support, Legal and Human Resources teams, and considered written evidence from Pulse Regeneration.

Before a decision is made on the Council's Leisure Contract, the task group recommended that more detailed analysis take place to determine the financial feasibility of continuing to outsource the services compared with delivering the service in-house. This analysis should be used to inform the decision required in readiness for the formal contract review period commencing in 2018.

4.2 Council's Waste Management Contract – Chaired by Councillor John Walker

In advance of the council's waste contract with Veolia expiring on 31 March 2019, consultant, Ricardo AEA was appointed to provide consultancy support and model a number of options for the new contract. The consultant's findings were presented to the Executive Cabinet, at its meeting on 14 December.

On the Chair's proposal, it was agreed that the whole Overview and Scrutiny Committee would review the council's waste contract, including the consultant's findings in advance of the report being considered by the Executive Cabinet. The review was conducted over two meetings to which the Executive Member for Customer, Advice and Streetscene Services, Director of Customer and Digital and the Waste and Streetscene Manager were present.

As part of the review the Committee considered

- the financial saving required in the MTFs,
- the financial and reputations risk relating to the contract
- Details of the service delivery models, waste collection service options and the procurement timetable
- the findings and proposed model options of the appointed consultant as well as the recommendations that the Executive Cabinet would be asked to consider.

After careful consideration, the Committee agreed to support the recommendations proposed for the Executive Cabinet in that –

1. the outcome of the modelling work be included in the report to the Executive Cabinet on 14 December 2017.
2. the waste collection service to remain outsourced, with tender documents to be prepared on the existing service with an amendment to extend the blue bin collection cycle to four weekly.

4.3 Quality of housing provided by social landlords – Chaired Jane Fitsimmons

The Task Group have scoped the inquiry and set out the information they would like to review and witnesses to interview.

A survey has been commissioned and was sent out to a random sample of 4,000 tenants in May.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY: COUNTER TERRORISM

In the 2015 Counter Terrorism Act, local authorities were obliged to give due regard to the need for people being radicalised and drawn into terrorism. The Prevent duty which came into force on 1 July 2015 required local authorities to develop new ways of working, data sharing, processes and training. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee sought an update to gain an understanding on how the council was meeting its obligations of the Prevent duty.

Members of the committee received information on the work of the council which included the findings of an internal audit of the service, and recommendations for future improvements to the council's response.

Resulting analysis of the Prevent work undertaken at the end of March 2016 concluded that the council's future Prevent action plan in Chorley over the next eighteen months would focus on four key areas –

- Increased partnership and community awareness;
- Community cohesion and tolerance;
- Internet security in public buildings;
- Review of child and adult safeguarding.

Since 2016 three key members of staff have been trained to deliver the Prevent Home Office Training. Those employees have gone on to deliver the same training to colleagues with specific responsibilities across the council and partner services. In addition all employees are required to complete an e-learning module on the topic. Elected members have also had the opportunity to

attend a Member Learning Session and complete the e-learning module. Reference to Prevent was also contained in the council's adult and child safeguarding revised policies.

The Committee was also informed of the emergency plans in place between partner organisations, headed up by the emergency services in the case of a terrorist attack (or any other disaster); and received reassurance that the building design for three of the council's major building projects (Market Walk extension; Primrose Gardens, and the Youth Zone) would incorporate security measures as part of the planning and design stage.

6 CHALLENGING THE EXECUTIVE

In addition to challenging the Executive Members through the Performance Panel, the Committee worked together positively with the Executive Leader and the Executive Cabinet in scrutinising their proposals which included the extent of changes to be made to the Select Move Policy update.

7 FINANCIAL SCRUTINY

At its meeting held in January 2018 the Committee welcomed Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) who provided an overview of the draft budget proposals for 2018/19, including a forecast for the following two years to 2020/21. The Executive Member also presented the relevant proposals in respect of the use of forecast resources identified in 2018/19 and budget consultation.

Chorley Council has experienced, and will continue to experience in the coming three years, large reductions in its major funding sources, including Revenue Support Grant, Retained Business Rates, New Homes Bonus and income from LCC. The forecast budget deficit for 2019/20 is £1.6m and £2.2 in 2020/21.

In addition to a balanced budget, there are proposals for investment to support the Corporate Strategy. This includes the delivery of the Digital Office Park, Primrose Gardens extra care facility and the delivery of the Market Walk extension. The Council is working with partners to deliver some of these projects.

The proposed budget was set to increase council tax by 2.99% and areas for investment and one off spends within the proposed budget. There are a range of methods by which the financial challenge will be met, including a review of contracts, implementation of shared services, productivity reviews, income generation, the development of employment land and options relating to creating a housing company.

Consultation was underway on the proposed budget with members and residents being encouraged to put forward their views. Comments received as part of the consultation would be reviewed, and where necessary the final budget will be updated accordingly. Feedback obtained through the consultation process will also be used to inform budget priorities in future years.

Members of the Committee debated a number of issues including the –

- 6% increases in Lancashire County Council's portion of council tax bill;
- Risk associated with business rates income to two applications for mandatory charitable relief received from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. If successful, it would have a significant impact on the council's revenue budget.
- Funding contributions for PCSO's.

OTHER TOPICS CONSIDERED

8.1 Update on the Integrated Community Wellbeing service

The Committee received an update on progress made in implementing the Integrated Community Wellbeing service in partnership with Lancashire Care Foundation Trust (LCFT). In April last year staff from Chorley Council and LCFT co located at the council's Union Street offices to focus on prevention and early intervention. A series of service-wide events have been held to encourage interaction and establish the culture and focus of the service.

The Integrated Referral Hub has achieved some positive outcomes for residents with 78 cases being considered. The main reasons for referral being emotion/wellbeing support, requests for adaptations, moderate mental health issues and housing/homelessness issues. As a result, there has been agreement that the focus for service improvements should be directed to mental health, homelessness and employability.

It was reported that services within LCFT are commissioned and this is the biggest risk facing the integrated service. For example, the 0-19 contract has recently been awarded to Virgin Healthcare, but this is the subject of a current legal challenge.

During debate, members of the Committee raised several queries, including –

- The direct supervision of Chorley Council and LCFT staff;
- How referrals are made into the service, including GP's;
- Response from the service will depend on the severity of the case;
- Improvements to the implementation of disabled facilities grants, through the use of occupational therapists from LCFT, rather than LCC

8.2 Health and Safety presentation

Denise Fisher, Health and Safety Advisor delivered a health and safety presentation.

Members of the Committee received. During discussion the Committee was made aware that –

- Employees taking longer to complete a task by ensuring it was done safely would have the support of their manager;
- The Director (Customer and Digital) informed the committee that the council has a responsibility to keep staff safe, and as a new approach has been implemented alongside the modernisation strategy, which overall has led to a gain in efficiencies;
- A pilot had been undertaken on the A674 in Wheelton to cut the edgings in addition to the grass, and the need to engage a traffic management company for health and safety purposes. The findings of the presentation are to be evaluated and the recommendations presented to members.

8.3 Review of communication with Councillors

Rebecca Huddleston, Director (Policy and Governance), presented a report which reviewed communications with members, as requested at the meeting in October. It was acknowledged that members received information in different ways, including –

- intheknow (fortnightly);
- intheboro (monthly);
- Member Learning Sessions;
- agenda papers;
- undertaking overview and scrutiny inquiries;
- briefings (for Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, Executive Member and portfolio briefings, Opposition briefing etc);
- press releases and social media.

In September 2017, the Member Support Working Group had reviewed intheknow and its effectiveness as a communication tool. The Working Group considered the e-zine continued to be a useful tool and that no changes to the publication were required. However, it was agreed that Democratic Services should promote the use of intheknow with officers, especially in relation to ward information and neighbourhood preferred project updates.

To assist members, the document containing officer contact telephone numbers and the officer management structure in the Members' Room will be updated. The Committee was advised that ICT are looking to create a dynamic application on the iPads to provide officer contact information and will consult the Member Support Working Group on its development.

8.4 Flooding position statement

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the current position of council's Flood Relief Scheme, including volumes of applications, amounts of monies pending and already paid out. The report also delivered an overview of wider flooding issues in the borough and the action taken to address these.

A total of 426 properties in the borough were confirmed as flooded as a result of Storm Eva on 26 December 2015. The council's Flood Relief scheme was made up of a number of different elements based upon guidance. There were other funds and schemes available, including a local discretionary relief fund, the Lancashire Flood Appeal and Property Level Resilience Grants (PLRG).

The council's scheme was closed to new applications on 30 November 2017. There are currently 28 outstanding applications. There have been some lengthy delays in work being completed due to the fact that many flood doors and barriers are bespoke and as such have a long lead time for manufacture.

Recent information has indicated that the MHCLG are intending to close the scheme on 31 March 2018 with final payments for reimbursement to the council being made in June 2018. The council is seeking confirmation that any grants paid out after this time will still be reimbursed.

The report set out totals, including unclaimed grants for properties in Croston where a grant application has not been made by homeowners despite a number of reminders being issued. The council made a significant financial contribution of £1M to the Croston Flood Risk Management Scheme which is vital in reducing the risk of flooding to the community. The council is also endeavouring to secure grant funding which the government has already earmarked for the protection of the community of Croston and has been in correspondence with ministers over a number of months.

Work has been taking place in a number of specific areas where flooding is a known issue, including The Common (Adlington), Town Lane and Waterhouse Green (Whittle-le-Woods), Hurst Brook (Coppull), Clematis Close (Euxton) and Weldbank Lane (Chorley).

It was reported that the Croston Flood Risk Management Scheme is now complete. The scheme decreases the river level through Croston during a flood event by restricting the amount of water flowing through the new structure and embankment, holding back the water in a flood storage basin upstream. The defences were put into operation for the first time over the weekend of 21 and 22 October 2017, successfully protecting the residents and the community. It is expected that the likelihood and severity of flooding will be significantly reduced although there may still be some issues with surface water flooding which will be duly considered and investigated following a heavy rainfall event.

9 CONCLUSION AND THE YEAR AHEAD

It has been an interesting year for scrutiny, resulting in some key recommendations on topics of concern to members and the public. Challenges ahead are to continue to scrutinise areas of interest for members and their constituents; to follow up on the implementations of scrutiny recommendations, to work more effectively with our partners on scrutiny and to continue to challenge the Executive in a constructive way with recommendations that result in positive outcomes for the residents in Chorley.

The Council will hold four meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and four meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel in 2018/19, Councillor John Walker, will remain Chair and Councillor Alistair Morwood will replace Councillor Roy Lees as Vice Chair, we also welcome some new members to the committee. The draft work programme will be considered at the first meeting of the Committee in June. This includes the monitoring of previous inquiry recommendations and potential future review topics.