

## **REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **General Report**

1. This report summarises the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 29 September and 10 November 2008.

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 29 SEPTEMBER 2008**

#### **Items from Executive Cabinet on 2 October 2008**

2. We considered a number of reports from Executive Cabinet, namely the Climate Change Strategy; Growth Point - Programme of Development; and Future Contractual Arrangements for Civil Parking Enforcement in Chorley.

Comments were fed through to the Executive Cabinet expressing reservations about the effectiveness of solar panels and suggesting that the remit of the £20,000 grant fund for solar panels be widened to include more innovative ways of generating or saving energy in the domestic sector. The Committee also requested that the Executive Cabinet look at the Councils own requirements in the use of restrictions placed on listed buildings e.g. prevent the installation of double glazing and other energy saving measures.

3. In considering a report updating Members on the next stage in the Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point Programme of Development, Members discussed the shortfall in the funding for Buckshaw Village Railway Station and also how the growth point programme could generate more affordable hosing provision.

#### **Capital Programme Monitoring 2008/09 and Onwards**

4. The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on changes in the current years capital programme. The Committee approved a revised capital programme with a reduction of £970,270 which was made up of £949,400 in slippage to 2009/10 and other reductions of £20,870.

### **Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power – Proposals Relating to Overview and Scrutiny**

5. The Committee received a report from the Corporate Director (Governance) on proposals relating to overview and scrutiny contained in the above White Paper.

The Government wishes to raise the visibility of scrutiny and has combined recent proposals in the Local Government and Involvement in Health Act 2007 with some new approaches to scrutiny. Overall, however, these are limited and in many local authorities are already in place. Proposals include:

- encouraging more creative involvement of the public in scrutiny
- moving committee meetings and hearings out of the Town Hall and into the community and considering webcasting
- greater public involvement in suggesting and selecting topics for review
- making information more readily available and accessible on websites and at council offices
- councillor call for action

- formalising dealing with petitions with any appeals being considered by overview and scrutiny
- further embracing powers to require information from partners
- power to have area scrutiny committees in two tier areas
- requiring dedicated scrutiny resources in County and Unitary Councils

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10 NOVEMBER 2008**

### **The Council Investment Process and the Deposit in Landsbanki**

6. The Committee discussed whether to undertake a review of the Council's investment process and deposit in Landsbanki but decided to await the draft Treasury Management Strategy which would come to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment as well as Executive Cabinet.

### **Chorley Town Centre Audit and Design Strategy**

7. We received a report of the Corporate Director (Business) that summarised the main contents of the Chorley Town Centre Audit and Design Strategy which has been the subject of extensive consultation with overview and scrutiny. The Strategy envisaged Chorley as a vibrant, diverse, sustainable, accessible and attractive place. It highlighted the opportunities and challenges for Chorley Town Centre and recommended a number of Urban Design Objectives, and associated projects and implementation processes as a means to realise this vision.
8. Members welcomed the strategy and acknowledged that it was a document that had been widely consulted on. Consideration was given to how the Council could encourage the evening economy of the Town Centre and improve the cultural offer beyond daytime activities.
9. Members also asked to be kept fully informed of when the works mentioned in the project timetable were commencing or had actually been completed on a regular basis and it was thought that this could best be achieved through the Members e.bulletin, 'intheknow'.

### **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2008/09 Report 2 (end of September 2008)**

10. We received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) which set out the Council's current financial position as compared against the budget and efficiency savings targets it set itself for 2008/09 for the General Fund.
11. The report indicated that the Council was expected to make overall target savings of £320,000 in 2008/09, which equated to £160,000 for the first two quarters. Excellent progress had been made with savings of £234,000 already achieved.
12. There are a number of areas that will be monitored closely as the year progresses, these are:
  - Contributions to Corporate Savings and Efficiency Targets
  - Major income streams, in particular car parking fees, land charges and markets
  - Concessionary travel costs
  - Benefit costs.

13. With the economy now moving towards recession, the impact was starting to be felt across several areas of the Council's services with income levels being significantly lower than those budgeted for.
14. The report highlighted a potential overspend of up to £250,000 in respect of concessionary travel costs and it was recommended that contingency plans be developed to identify further savings that could mitigate the effect of this, should a significant overspend materialise.
15. Members raised concerns that the twelve districts had not yet all signed up to the pooling arrangements for the concessionary travel scheme and consideration was given to what would be the impact on the Council should the pooling arrangement fall down.

#### **Business Plan Monitoring Statements – 1 July to 30 September 2008**

16. The Committee received the second quarter Business Plan Monitoring Statements from the following Directorates:
  - Business Directorate
  - Neighbourhoods Directorate
  - People Directorate
  - Business Transformation Directorate
  - Policy and Performance Directorate
17. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) submitted a report summarising the Business Plan Monitoring Statements that had been completed by the directorates and Members noted the various key messages of the Directorates. In particular the negotiations of the Section 106 monies for the Group One, Buckshaw Village outline planning application, the costs to the Council with regard to fly tipping and the possibility of more allotments in the Borough.

#### **Performance Monitoring Report – Second Quarter of 2008/09**

18. We received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) on the second quarter performance management report, which set out performance against the 2008/09 target, 1 July to 30 September 2008.
19. The report indicated that the overall performance of the key projects in the Corporate Strategy was very good with 27 (87%) of the projects either completed, progressing ahead of plan or on plan.
20. The report identified the completed projects and showed the key outcomes from the projects that had been completed to date. In total 20 (64.5%) of key projects, in the refreshed Corporate Strategy had now been completed, an increase of 22% on the position last quarter.
21. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) also explained that the Council had registered its concerns with Lancashire County Council that the Local Area Agreement performance target for percentage of land assessed as having below acceptable levels of detritus was too high (22%) and the Council had set itself a much lower target of 4%

## **Chorley Partnership 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Performance Report**

22. We received a report of the Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) outlining the improvements made by the Chorley Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for Chorley) since the last quarter and contained updates on the work of the LSP, through its 11 strategic projects, including expenditure and the key performance indicators from the Sustainable Community Strategy and the first reporting period of the Local Area Agreement.
23. The report indicated that the Chorley Partnership projects are in the main on track, progressing well and the partnership is already starting to deliver on its Local Area Agreement targets.

### **Update from Task and Finish Groups**

#### **24. Chorley Community Housing**

This task group has met six times in total and has now completed its review with the final report and recommendations due to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December.

#### **25. Streetscene**

This task group has met seven times and is also nearing completion with the final report and recommendations due to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny committee in December.

#### **26. Joint Scrutiny Inquiry with Preston and South Ribble on Affordable Housing**

There have been three meetings, at South Ribble, Chorley and Preston with a number of initiatives brought forward and various pieces of work to be compiled by each of the participating authorities. The group has discussed a number of related issues, including maintaining the affordability of dwellings, Right to Buy and Right to Acquire, a local definition of affordable housing and bringing properties up to Decent Homes Standard. The next meeting is at South Ribble and officers from the three authorities have been requested to submit their respective policies on maintaining the affordability of dwellings.

#### **27. Chorley Partnership Task Group**

This task group has met twice and is due to meet again shortly. The scoping of the review will shortly be finalised with three key objectives. In looking at the issue of Elected Member understanding and knowledge of the LSP and its thematic groups, a Member Learning Hour on this topic was held on 17 November 2008.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

28. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS EDGERLEY  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

CR/DS

There are no background papers to this report.