

REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

General Report

1. This report summarises the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19 January 2009.

Items from Executive Cabinet on 8 January 2009

2. We considered a number of reports, including the Treasury Management Strategy, the draft Revenue Budget for 2009/10 and the draft Capital Programme for 2008/2009.
3. We made several recommendations to the Executive Cabinet on the three reports, which will be considered at their meeting on 12 February.

Treasury Management Strategy

4. We discussed the current turmoil in the markets, the balance between risk and return from the Council's investments and alternative options to the using just banks for cash deposits.
5. The Executive Member (Resources) and Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) answered several queries from Members on the strategy and advice given by the Council's treasury management advisors. It was acknowledged that lessons had been learned from recent unprecedented events and in taking the strategy forward, recommendations have been made relating to sovereign ratings, negative watch ratings and the use of a DMAF account.

Draft Revenue Budget for 2009/10

6. The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) reported that there has been significant movement in the base budgets, due to rising costs and decreasing incomes. In previous years the Council has achieved a balanced budget, but this would not be the case this year, but this was being done to protect front line services and the deficit of £250,000 would be funded from monies previously saved and held for this purpose.
7. Members discussed the factors affecting the budget and requested clarification on a number of issues, including parking enforcement, planning enforcement, the core funding grant and the Local Strategic Partnership. We noted that a report on VAT and car park charges would be produced for the Council meeting.
8. A report on the Corporate and Democratic core was tabled. We agreed to note the report and requested that the Value For Money review of support services be presented to our first meeting in the new municipal year.

Draft Capital Programme for 2008/2009

9. We considered the report highlighting slippage and budget changes to the Capital Programme. We discussed the impact on town centre redevelopment, the railway station at Buckshaw Village and sports pitches with the Executive Member (Resources) and Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation).

Monitoring of Inquiry Recommendations - Absence Management

10. We received a report updating the Committee on the actions taken following the recommendations made to Executive Cabinet in May 2008. The recommendations had been implemented, with the exception of one, which was in relation to having an out of office response for individuals absent from work, although plans were now in place for its implementation.
11. Members queried the impact of the recommendations and it was noted that following the reporting of long and short term sickness separately a trend within short term sickness had been highlighted. The absence management policy would be revised to manage this.

Update from Task and Finish Groups

12. The Joint Scrutiny of Affordable Housing with South Ribble and Preston task and finish group would be meeting on Wednesday to consider a report on land availability to build affordable houses. The production of the final report would also be considered.
13. The Chorley Partnership task group was scheduled to interview the Chair of the Chorley Partnership the following evening. A report on alcohol related harm in Chorley would also be considered.
14. The Housing Allocations Policy task and finish group had met once and would be meeting again on 5 February to complete their feedback before the end of the consultation period.

Recommendation

15. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS EDGERLEY
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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There are no background papers to this report.