

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 19 January 2009

Present: Councillor Dennis Edgerley (Chair), Councillor Alan Cain (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Nora Ball, Mike Devaney, Marie Gray, Kevin Joyce, Adrian Lowe, Mark Perks, Rosie Russell and Peter Wilson

Also in attendance: Councillor Alan Cullens (Executive Member for Resources)

Officers in attendance: Gary Hall (Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation)), Carol Russell (Head of Democratic Services) and Ruth Hawes (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

09.OS.01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Harold Heaton and Joyce Snape.

09.OS.02 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Members declared an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

09.OS.03 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No members of the public requested to speak at the meeting

09.OS.04 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 December 2008 be held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

09.OS.05 EXECUTIVE CABINET - 8 JANUARY 2009

The Chair reported that there had been no requests from Committee Members for specific consideration of reports considered at the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 8 January 2009 other than those already on the agenda.

09.OS.06 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2009/10

The Committee received the following reports of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) which had been considered by the Executive Cabinet on 8 January 2009.

(a) Treasury Management Strategy

The Committee discussed the current market position, the balance between risk and return from the Council's investments and alternative investment options.

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 turmoil in the markets and in taking the strategy forward, recommendations have been made relating to sovereign ratings, negative watch ratings and the use of a DMAF account. This shows a safety first approach and is appropriate given the difference in return alternatives is minimal.

RESOLVED –

1. To note the report and that clarification on certain points has been requested from the Council's treasury management advisors.
2. To recommend to the Executive Cabinet that
 - a. Other options for providing the Council with treasury management advice and services be researched.
 - b. Deposits are only made in British government guaranteed institutions for a period of six months.

(b) Draft Revenue Budget for 2009/10

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) reported that there had been significant movement in the base budgets, due to rising costs and decreasing incomes. In previous years the Council had achieved a balanced budget, but this would not be the case this year. This was being done to protect front line services and the deficit of £264,000 would be funded from monies previously saved and held for this purpose.

Councillor Rosie Russell left the meeting at 7.40pm.

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. It was noted that a report on VAT and car park charges would be produced for the Council meeting.

RESOLVED –

1. To note the report.
2. To recommend to the Executive Cabinet that
 - a. Assurances be given that there will not be a diminished service following budget savings proposed within the planning enforcement and CCTV service.
 - b. The reduction in the Core Funding programme be reconsidered.
 - c. Funding given to the Local Strategic Partnership be reduced by £15,000 instead of the Core Funding programme.

(c) Corporate and Democratic Core

A report on the Corporate and Democratic core was tabled at the request of the Chair.

RESOLVED –

1. To note the report.
2. That the Value For Money review of support services be presented to the first appropriate meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year.

Councillor Nora Ball left the meeting at 8.20pm.

(d) Draft Capital Programme for 2008/09

Members considered the report highlighting slippage and budget changes to the Capital Programme. The Committee 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).

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) would clarify the position on funding for sports pitches from the Football Foundation for the next meeting.

3. **The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) would email members of the Committee explaining the purpose of the VAT shelter linked to Chorley Community Housing.**

09.OS.07 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Forward Plan for the period 1 January 2009 to 30 April 2009.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

09.OS.08 MONITORING OF INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS - ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

The Committee received a report updating progress on the actions taken to implement 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.

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.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

09.OS.09 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND REPORTS FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

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.

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.

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.

RESOLVED – That the updates be noted.

Chair