

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY POLICY TASK GROUP

Date of Meeting: 7th December 2006

**Present: Councillor Hazel Steen (in the Chair)
Councillors A. Barnes, Entwistle, Hancock, Lynskey
(substitute for D. Barnes)
Dr M Lee, Co-opted Member**

**In Attendance: Lesley Noble, Head of Policy and Change Management
Michael Forster, Property Services Manager
Heather Moore, Committee Services Manager**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors D. Barnes and J. Pawson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 2nd November 2006 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised under this item.

5. CHAIR'S UPDATE

A list was circulated highlighting the progress of the actions raised since the last meeting. The Chair provided an update on the key actions as detailed below.

- An update had been received from the Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services in respect of Planning Policies for Mobile Phone Masts and Wind Farms. It was reported that a number of policies were being developed as part of the improvement programme for Development Control. In respect of telephone masts, these were dealt with under the General Permitted Development Order and a mast over 15 metres required prior notification to the Council and it was not common practice to have a policy on this. It was further reported that there was no policy on wind farms.

- The Cabinet accepted the recommendation of the Task Group and approved the Community Leadership Policy Statement and Action Plan. Cabinet Members have agreed that monitoring would take place through their meetings with Heads of Service and it was also agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Task Group would monitor the Action Plan.
- The Cabinet also accepted the recommendation of the Task Group and approved the Partnership Policy Statement and Action Plan. The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships and the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Task Group agreed that the actions would be monitored to ensure they were delivered on target.
- The Cabinet would consider the recommendation of the Task Group in respect of the Affordable Housing Strategy at its meeting on 13th December 2006. The Chair agreed to provide an update at the next meeting.
- The recommendation of the Task Group in respect of the Environment Strategy had been considered by Full Council at its meeting on 30th November 2006 where it was agreed that the Council would sign up to the principles of the Nottingham Declaration and consultation on the Strategy was endorsed. The Climate Change Group had been invited to make a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 18th December 2006.

The Chair referred to the questionnaire circulated by the Scrutiny Support Officer asking for Members' views on the pilot Overview and Scrutiny working arrangements. She encouraged those Members that had not completed the form to do so to support the evaluation. A report would be presented by the Committee Services Manager and Scrutiny Support Officer to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in December detailing the results of the evaluation and asking Members to consider whether the pilot arrangements should be formally introduced.

The Chair reported that the Committee Services Manager was working with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to facilitate two training sessions for scrutiny members. The first being on the white paper and the role of scrutiny and the second on effective partner scrutiny. The Committee Services Manager informed the meeting of the provisional dates and indicated that these would be confirmed to all members at the earliest opportunity.

6. REVISIONS TO THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Task Group considered the report of the Executive Director of Resources which detailed proposals to revise the corporate priorities.

The Head of Policy and Change Management reported that the review of priorities was linked to the policy led budget process and she outlined the changes in priorities which the Cabinet were consulting on prior to making

their final budget proposals to the Council as set out below.

- Delivering quality services to customers (linked to the corporate objectives of Customers and Improvement)
- Delivering regeneration across the Borough (linked to the corporate objectives of Economy and Housing)
- Keeping our Borough Clean and Green (linked to the corporate objective of Environment)
- Promoting Rossendale as a place to live and visit (linked to the corporate objective of Economy)
- Improving health and well being across the Borough (linked to the corporate objectives of Health and Housing)

Enabled by:

- Strong financial management and the delivery of value for money services (linked to the corporate objective of Improvement)
- Equipping Members to fulfil their leadership role in the community (linked to the corporate objective of Community Network)
- Maintaining a workforce with the skills to deliver the priorities for the Borough (linked to the corporate objective of Improvement)

The Task Group raised concerns about the process of the development of the priorities and considered that they were general in terms of prioritising expenditure. It was also indicated that consultation of customers and stakeholders should be featured within the priorities.

Resolved:

1. That the Task Group agrees in principle to the revised corporate priorities as set out in the report and the comments of the Group be fed back to the Cabinet.
2. That the Cabinet be asked to note the strong desire of elected members to take part in the formulation of priorities and that the Cabinet be recommended to facilitate a workshop session to allow all elected members to do this on future reviews of priorities

7. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Property Services Manager reported that the Council's previous submission of its Asset Management Plan to the Government Office North West (GONW) had been revised, a copy of which had been circulated to the Task Group for consideration.

He informed the meeting that it was important that the Council had an up to date Asset Management Plan linked to its Capital Strategy to enable the Council to enhance and protect its assets.

In response to a question from a Member, the Property Services Manager confirmed that GONW Regulations stated that the retention of assets was

required to be justified.

The Task Group discussed the Council's disposal procedure and the Property Services Manager indicated that this would be monitored and reviewed.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be recommended to approve the submission on the Asset Management Plan to the Government Office North West.
2. That the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Task Group be requested to review and monitor the annual asset performance report.

8. FORWARD PLAN

The Task Group considered the items detailed in the Forward Plan and whether they wished for any Policies to be submitted to the Group prior to a decision being made by the Cabinet.

The Committee Services Manager reported that the next Forward Plan would be published on the 14th December 2006 and she highlighted a number of amendments for the consideration of the meeting.

The meeting discussed the Rawtenstall Area Action Plan and the development of the Valley Centre and it was reported that a session for Elected Members would be held on 30th January 2007.

In response to a question about the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, particularly the review on polling stations, the Committee Services Manager agreed to contact the Elections Officer to obtain an update and to feedback to the Group.

Resolved:

That the following reports be presented to the Task Group prior to consideration by the Cabinet:

- Play Strategy
- Open Spaces Strategy
- Strategic Review of Leisure

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.10pm