

Minutes of: POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 7 August 2007

**Present: Councillor J Farquharson (Chair)
Councillors L Barnes (for F Lynskey), A Cheetham (for P Steen), G Haworth, A Hewlett, C Pilling, T Swain**

In Attendance: Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

Also Present: Councillor Essex

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, indicating that at the last meeting it was agreed that we would have sight of the Sustainable Community Strategy, but as there had been a Member Development session on 25 July to specifically look at the Strategy, it did not seem necessary to consider the Strategy again.

The Chair provided an update on the key actions as detailed below.

- The Locality Plan would be submitted to the Committee prior to a decision being made by the Cabinet.
- A progress update of the Litter Bins Task and Finish Group would be presented to a future meeting.
- The Licence Conditions for Private Hire/Hackney Carriage Vehicles be submitted to a future meeting.

Members were reminded of Overview and Scrutiny training information which had been sent to all Members. Anyone interested in attending had been asked to contact the Scrutiny Support Officer.

Members agreed at the last meeting that there was a need to change the way that the Committee received future reports. The Committee would receive a briefing paper which would highlight why a proposed policy was being considered, what the consultation process would be, if any, and explain what differences and improvements the policy would achieve. This would improve the Policy Scrutiny function and support Members in their Community Leadership role by ensuring that Members are engaged in the early stages of Policy Development.

The Scrutiny Officer had produced a Highlight Report which would be presented to the Senior Management Team to make them aware of the future intentions of the Policy Scrutiny Committee.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Lynskey, and Steen.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 12 June 2007 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4. URGENT ITEMS

There were no items of urgent business.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised under this item.

N.B. It was agreed that the following reports be considered en bloc.

7. THE BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC HOUSING STRATEGY AND THE SUPPORTED HOUSING STRATEGY

The meeting considered the briefing papers prepared by the Housing Research and Strategy Officer which provided information on the purpose of producing a BME Housing Strategy that would specifically look at housing needs issues for BME communities within Rossendale.

A second briefing paper highlighted why the Council needed to produce a Supported Housing Strategy that would identify the needs of vulnerable groups within Rossendale.

Members discussed the identified risk within the briefing paper which stated that there were risks in having a Strategy specific to BME Housing in terms of Community Cohesion and the Sustainable Communities agenda.

Members agreed that it was important that further discussions be held with the Portfolio Holder and the Housing Research and Strategy Officer at the next meeting in October.

Members endorsed the Supported Housing Strategy and the need to ensure that there was sufficient ground floor housing to accommodate older people in Rossendale.

Resolved

That taking into consideration the risks identified within the BME Housing Strategy, the Cabinet be recommended to adopt one Housing Strategy to include elements of the BME Housing Strategy and that a separate BME Strategy be not approved.

8. UPDATE ON THE RAWTENSTALL AREA ACTION PLAN AND THE BACUP, STACKSTEADS AND BRITANNIA AREA ACTION PLAN

Further to the last meeting of the Committee requesting an update on the current position in respect of the Rawtenstall Area Action Plan and the Bacup, Stacksteads and Britannia Area Action Plan (BSBAAP) a paper had been produced by the Senior Forward Planning Officer for discussion by Members.

The Rawtenstall Area Action Plan was at the Revised Preferred Options stage and the next stage would be its submission to the Government Office North West.

The Bacup, Stacksteads and Britannia Area Action Plan, Issues and Option version had been published in 2005. Work on the preferred options version subsequently commenced, but this had been halted whilst it was viewed against the national and regional planning policy context and the changing nature of the Housing Market Renewal Programme.

A strategy titled Bacup Renaissance was currently being developed and consideration was needed as to how the BSBAAP work could dovetail to the Bacup Renaissance work. Members raised a question as to what the remit was of the Bacup Renaissance and why both were being developed at the same time.

Resolved

That the information be noted.

9. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee 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 meeting discussed the Employment Land Study which was due to be considered by Cabinet in September. The Scrutiny Support Officer agreed to check the next forward plan on 16 August and if the report had been put back to a further date, then this Committee would like a presentation from the relevant Officer at the next meeting in October.

The Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that both the Polling Station Review and the Enforcement Policy would be taken to the relevant Task and Finish Group for consideration.

Resolved:

That the Senior Planning Officer be requested to attend the next meeting should the Employment Land Study not be submitted to Cabinet in September.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair, Councillor Janet Farquharson, announced her resignation from the Council with effect from 8 August 2007.

Members wished her good luck and best wished for the future.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.25pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date