

Minutes of: POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 8 July 2008

**Present: Councillor H Steen (Chair)
Councillors Evans, Farrington, Forshaw, Morris, May
Mr P Ham (Co-opted Member)**

**In Attendance: Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive
Liz Murphy, Head of People and Policy
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer
Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder, Finance and Resources**

**Also Present: Councilor Sandiford
1 Member of the public**

The Chair welcomed Teresa Stearn, Northern Region Lead for Cohesion, Diversity and Culture with the Audit Commission, who attended the meeting to brief Members in relation to their role of scrutinising the equality implications in policy decision.

Members were informed that anything the authority do should make a difference for local people and that the Council was required to review policy and services on behalf of the public. She indicated that equality issues had to be included at every stage of the scrutiny process.

Members should challenge policy makers on the Equality Impact Assessments and ask questions and if need to, ask for further information before accepting a policy.

A number of questions were raised by members which were answered.

The Chair thanked Teresa for the presentation. The Head of People and Policy agreed to circulate the presentation to Members.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor C Pilling.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 4 March 2008 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

No urgent items were raised under this item.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised by members of the public.

6. CITY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

The Chief Executive presented a report updating Members on the arrangements for the establishment of a Pennine Lancashire Development Company, which would be presented to Cabinet on 30 July. Members had received a report in June 2007 setting out the joint working in East Lancashire, and agreeing to explore the feasibility in relation to the establishment of a City Development Company and Multi-Area Agreement. This report updated Members on progress made and requested agreement to the next steps.

The Pennine Lancashire Area comprises the local authorities of Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale, which encompasses one unitary authority (Blackburn with Darwen), the five District Councils and Lancashire County Council.

The Chief Executive explained that Government Policy (for example the Sub National Review) was increasingly encouraging local authorities to develop new delivery arrangements with greater capacity and more focus on improving the economy. Much of this involved groups of authorities working together across boundaries, according to market areas.

Members raised a number of questions which the Chief Executive answered, including the following.

- Start up costs
- What would happen if Rossendale wasn't included
- Monitoring of outcomes for Rossendale
- Implications for Rossendale
- How would the Council be kept informed of developments
- What prompted this to go ahead

Resolved:

1. The Committee agreed that in principle, commitment is given to the formation and membership of the Pennine Lancashire Development Company
2. That the Committee agree that the Leader and Chief Executive be authorised to participate in a shadow Governing Body/Board of the Company in order to agree the final Members Agreement; Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association.

7. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2008/09

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources presented the proposed Member and Training Development Strategy, which would enable the delivery of effective learning and development to Councillors in 2008/09.

In 2006 the Council was awarded the Charter Status in member development and the Portfolio Holder indicated that to maintain the charter the Council would need to be reviewed after 3 years to demonstrate that they are still committed to member development. At the Member Development Working Group it was agreed that the Council should commit to striving towards achieving exemplar level II standard.

The Portfolio Holder indicated that it would be helpful to have a co-opted Member on the Member Development Working Group.

There was discussion on the Member Enquiry Service and the Scrutiny Support Officer encouraged Members to use this service, indicating that if a Member is writing direct to a particular Officer they should still copy this to the Member Support Assistant.

Resolved:

1. That the Member Training and Development Strategy for 2008/09 be agreed.
2. That the Committee agree to the commitment to strive to level II of the North West Charter for Member Development when reviewed in 2009.

8. HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

The Head of People and Policy presented a report on the development of a Health and Wellbeing Policy for employees of the Council. The Policy had been developed to manage the Council's obligations to maintain the health and well-being of all staff This which would include blood pressure checks, smoking cessation, healthy lifestyles. Funding would be explored in relation to Healthy Communities.

A question was asked in relation to extending this service to Councillors and partners and the Head of People and Policy agreed to amend the Policy to include Councillors and partners.

The health promotion programme would include physical activity and fitness taster sessions and the Council are bidding for health and community funds to provide 6 free swims and 6 aerobic classes for those staff wanting to take up the offer.

A number of questions were raised to which the Head of People and Policy responded.

Resolved:

That the Policy be agreed with amendments to indicate that the service be extended to Councillors and partners.

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

The Chair presented for information the Annual Report for 2007/08, which was a combined report that had also been presented to the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 June, following which it approved by the Council on 25 June.

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08 be noted.
2. That the Annual Report be forwarded to all Directors, Heads of Service, Lancashire County Council and other relevant organisations to promote the work of scrutiny.

10. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

Members considered the Work Programme 2008/09. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board informed Members that the report included current/ongoing work carried over from the last 12 months.

A Task and Finish Group would be established to look at Grass Cutting, which was undertaken by 4 agencies and therefore there was a need for a consistent approach.

It was agreed that a Task and Finish Groups should be limited to two at any one time.

Resolved

That the Work Programme for 2008/09 be agreed.

11. FORWARD PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1st JULY 2008 TO 31 OCTOBER 2008

The Committee reviewed the key decisions within the Forward Plan for the period 1st July 2008 to 31 October 2008.

The Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that four items had already been agreed for the next meeting in September, two being briefings on the Proposals Map for Consultation and the Housing and Regeneration Bill. The other reports would be the Organisational Development Plan and Domestic Violence Policy.

It was agreed that whilst the Planning Unit Manager was presenting a briefing on the Proposals Map for Consultation it may be worthwhile asking for a further two briefing in relation to the Approval of the Allocation Development Plan Document and the Approval of the Core Strategy..

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.35pm)

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date