

Minutes of: **PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 22 January 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Sandiford (Chair)
Councillors Crawforth, Driver (substituting for L Barnes), Lamb, Stansfield, Thorne
Bernard Divine (Co-opted Member)

IN ATTENDANCE: Linda Fisher, Executive Director, Business
Philip Mepham, Environmental Health Manager
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer
Councillor Brian Essex, Portfolio Holder

ALSO PRESENT: 1 Member of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Barnes and Neal.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2008 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for discussion.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A member of the public asked a question in relation to the Cabinet Meeting on 21 January, which was attended by approximately 160 members of the public and the organisation of the event.

The Executive Director of Business confirmed that they were reviewing accommodation arrangements for such meetings in the future.

6. CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed the Committee that a response had been received from the Right Honorable Jane Kennedy MP in relation to reducing packaging, which had been discussed at previous meetings. The response was circulated to Members for information.

The Chief Executive had provided a briefing session for Members on the Local Area Agreements and Multi-Area Agreements which was very informative. The Chair informed Members that if anyone that hadn't attended, but would like further information, should contact the Scrutiny Support Officer.

Lancashire Scrutiny Partners Forum would be holding a training event on new arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny in February and the Chair agreed to provide an update at the March meeting.

The Chair asked Members to contact the Scrutiny Support Officer if any constituents had raised issues in relation to the transfer of A & E services from Burnley General Hospital to Blackburn Royal Hospital. Lancashire County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny had set up a Task Group to look at any evidence and formulate a view as to whether to formally review these services.

Once members had sent in their views a Response Group would be established to formulate a reply to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at County.

7. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PERFORMANCE (APRIL 2008 - SEPTEMBER 2008)

The Executive Director - Business presented a report which outlined the current position on the Planning Unit performance. She informed Members that this was the first report and further reports would be presented to the Committee.

The Council's performance in processing planning applications had improved immensely and it was no longer subject to 'special measures'.

Government targets for the percentage of 'minor' applications processed within 8 weeks of receipt had increased from 55% in March 2003-April 2004 to 65% in 2006-07. Percentage targets for 'other' applications had increased from 70% to 80% over the same period. However, the Council's actual performance targets had comfortably exceeded these targets throughout the period.

In March 2007-08, performance in processing 'major' planning applications exceeded the Government's target for the first time in four years.

The current performance for quarter 2 – June- September 2008 was as follows.

Majors 1 of 1 – 100%
Minors 61 of 67 – 91.04%
Others 89 of 99 – 89.90%

The performance for quarter 1 and quarter 2 together (April-Sept 08) was as follows:

Major planning applications - 75% determined in 13 weeks
Minor planning applications – 91% determined in 8 weeks
Other applications – 90% determined in 8 weeks

Applicants were encouraged to use 'pre-application discussion' which enabled them to talk through their application with Planning Officers prior to submission. Information was also available on the Council's website.

The Executive Director of Business circulated copies of the Development Control Questionnaire which asked for feedback on the quality of the services provided by the Planning Unit.

Members raised the following questions, to which the Executive Director of Planning responded:-

- Timescales for retrospective applications
- Information on the Council's website explaining acronyms used within the Council
- Pre-application service and value for money
- Standard charges for planning applications and examples of charges made by other Authorities
- Financial aspects of Section 106 agreements

The Executive Director - Business agreed to present a memorandum on financial aspects of S106 agreements to the March meeting and also provide the Committee with the following information.

- Comparison of pre-application service and value for money in relation to other authorities
- Retrospective applications on breaches of appeal

Resolved

1. That the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress of the Planning Unit.
2. That a letter be sent to the Planning Unit indicating that the Committee appreciate the success and hard work of the planning department

3. That further performance reports be presented to the Committee on an annual basis.
4. That a Corporate Enforcement Report be presented to a future meeting of the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
5. That a report be presented to the March meeting on financial aspects of S106 agreements.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE

The Environmental Health Manager presented a summary of the recent and current performance of the Environmental Health Service and outlined some issues that could affect future performance.

Greater involvement by the Local Better Regulation Executive would affect the design and delivery of enforcement activity in the future which will inevitably affect current services, although services had already changed in anticipation of the future requirements.

A service review was required to make sure that the Council fits in with the new requirements.

The Environmental Health Service Annual Report 2007/08 was discussed which highlighted what the service does, how it was organised and future plans for the current year.

The following questions were raised which the Environmental Health Service Manager responded:-

- Availability of EU money for issues relating to environment
- Monitoring odours at Interfloor
- Value for Money

The Environmental Health Manager circulated numerous leaflets used by the Council to evaluate different services to enable them to make improvements were needed.

Resolved:

1. That the Annual Report be noted.
2. That further performance reports be presented to the Committee on an annual basis which should include financial information to enable to Committee to assess value for money of their various initiatives

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.20pm

Signed(Chair)

