

Minutes of: POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 10 March 2009

**Present: Councillor H Steen, (Chair)
Councillors Evans, Lamb (substituting for Forshaw) Morris,
C Pilling
Philip Ham, Co-opted Member**

**In Attendance: Stephen Jackson, Head of Regeneration
Caroline Ridge, Planning Assistant
Mike Riley, Communities Manager
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer**

**Also Present: Councillor Graham, Portfolio Holder, Communities and
Neighbourhoods**

1 Member of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Forshaw.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 January 2009 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Morris and Pilling declared a personal interest in item 7 (Update on Core Strategy) as they are both on the Steering Group which received regular progress on the Core Strategy.

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. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

She informed Members that the Hot Food Takeaway Report would be presented to the June meeting. At the last meeting Members asked to receive the Drinking Water Strategy prior to being presented to Cabinet. The Environmental Health Manager had indicated that the private water supply legislation had not yet been finalised and therefore the Strategy had not been completed. Members asked for this to be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

7. UPDATE ON THE CORE STRATEGY

The Planning Assistant presented an update on the Core Strategy, which had replaced in entirety the existing Local Development Plans.

A Steering Group made up of Officers and Councillors had been set up to receive monthly progress on the Core Strategy and feedback on the content and direction. The document would be submitted to Government Office North West and the Secretary of State for adoption. The Steering Group were assisting by putting together a local perspective of what was happening.

At the present time the Forward Planning Team were working on area visions and looking at what was important for each area. The five area visions are made up of the following.

Bacup
Rawtenstall
Greater Whitworth
Haslingden and Rising Bridge
South West Rossendale (Edenfield and Irwell Vale)

Copies of each of the area visions were being circulated to Members and the wider public to encourage people in each area to attend the Neighbourhood Forums to look at the plans for the future.

The Council had adopted a project management approach to ensure delivery of the full Strategy on time.

A number of questions were raised to which the Planning Assistant as follows:

- Involvement of Rossendale Civic Trust
- Local Development for Rossendale Group which had not met for over one year
- Availability of the area visions

Councillors commended the work of the Forward Planning Team and asked that this be passed to other Members of the Team.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

8. EMPTY HOMES – PILOT SCHEME

The Head of Regeneration presented a report seeking approval on the new pilot initiative working in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord, aimed at reducing the number of long-term empty properties.

For a number of years the Council has wanted to reduce the number of empty properties throughout the Borough. The aim of the pilot is to look at targeting long-term empty properties (more than six months), through a co-ordinated, proactive approach with Great Places Housing Association (Registered Social Landlord) within Haslingden. If successful the programme would be rolled out across the Borough.

The basis of the project was that Great Places would purchase and refurbish the properties through the Home and Community Agency's Regular Market Engagement Programme. The Council was setting up a Empty Homes Task Group to agree the actions.

There were 1600 empty homes across the Borough and Members indicated that they use to receive updates on the list of empty homes in the Borough. The Head of Regeneration indicated that when he brings a report on the pilot scheme back to the Committee, it would include the list of those empty homes in Haslingden, before and after the pilot.

The Head of Regeneration explained the process for contacting owners of empty properties in Haslingden.

A number of questions were raised which the Head of Regeneration responded as follows.

- Identification of the empty properties
- What housing value would be targeted
- Council's approach to those who did not want to complete

Resolved

1. That the Committee approve the pilot programme and that the outcomes be reported to a future meeting.
2. That if the pilot programme is successful, a further report be presented to Cabinet recommending adoption of the project across the Borough.

9. INTERIM ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY

The Communities Manager presented a report on Rossendale's Interim Road Safety Strategy, which had been produced following a recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Road Safety Task and Finish Group.

There was a Lancashire Road Safety Strategy which was signed up by the 12

District Councils that includes Local Area Agreement targets with funding allocated to each target.

Rossendale's Road Safety Strategy would only be a short lived Strategy as the Government's targets run until 2010.

Members expressed concern that the figures for some areas were very worrying and the Communities Manager explained that due to limited resources there was a need to utilise resources appropriately.

Members asked for clarification on the following issues.

- When the 2 Wasted Lives Campaigns would be held as detailed in the local action plan.
- Where the accidents had occurred and cause of the accident, which would make the figures more meaningful

The Chair suggested that as the Task and Finish Group had suggested that a sub group be established to look at road safety long term then it would be appropriate that Councillor Morris and Councillor C Pilling be part of the sub group. The Communities Manager agreed to the suggestion.

Resolved:

1. That Policy Overview and Scrutiny recommend that Cabinet agrees to continue to work to the Lancashire Road Safety Strategy until the review in 2010.
2. That Policy Overview and Scrutiny recommend that Cabinet adopts the interim Rossendale Road Safety Strategy and it forms part of the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2009/10.
3. That a local Road Safety sub group be established to include Councillor C Pilling and G Morris to ensure local issues are taken into consideration.
4. That the District Partnership Officer be invited to a future meeting to provide an update when the new Road Safety Strategy was being developed.
5. That a further report be presented to the Committee following the introduction of the new Government targets.

10 REVITALISING ROSSENDALE MARKETS – MARKET STRATEGY

The Communities Manager presented an options report for the marketing and promotion strategy of Rossendale Markets in line with the Cabinet's recommendations in the Revitalising Rossendale Markets report of 21 January 2009.

The three markets in Rossendale – Bacup, Haslingden and Rawtenstall are currently heavily reliant on council taxpayer's money to continue operating.

Consultation had taken place with traders about marketing and promotion. Questionnaires were issued to 60 traders and 19 were returned. They thought that advertising and promotion for both customers and traders was the key.

The report provided information on a number of promotional ideas to be considered as part of the emerging marketing strategy which were as follows.

- Publications
- Printed adverts
- Signage
- Sponsorship
- Specialist Markets
- Group Travel
- Food Trail
- Promotions

Members provided other ideas such as; farmer's market, amalgamating the markets into one for the Borough, stall holders participating in each other's markets.

A number of questions were raised which the Communities Manager responded.

Resolved:

1. That the views of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee be included as part of the Marketing Strategy.
2. That the development of the Marketing Strategy be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities and the Deputy Chief Executive.

11. FORWAD PLAN 1st March to 30th June 2009

The Scrutiny Support Officer informed the Committee that the Hot Food Takeaway Report and Parking Strategy would be presented to the next meeting and asked members to consider any additional existing Policies which had been approved by Cabinet.

It was agreed to request an update on the Play Strategy, Open Spaces Strategy, Alternative Extensions to residential Properties and the Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy/Supported Housing Strategy which had been agreed by Cabinet during 2008/9 and these would be included on the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan for 2009/10.

Resolved:

That the information be noted.

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date