

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 4 February 2010

PRESENT: Councillor Sandiford (Chair)
Councillors A Barnes, (substituting for Forshaw)
Cheetham (substituting for H Steen) Dickinson,
Farrington, Lamb, Milling, Morris, C Pilling,
Robertson (substituting for Crawforth), Stansfield,
Thorne,

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder, Finance and
Resources
Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder, Customer
Services

IN ATTENDANCE: Phil Seddon, Head of Financial Services
Jason Foster, Operations Manager, Communities
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

ALSO PRESENT: 5 Members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Barnes, Crawforth, Neal, H Steen and Bernard Divine (co-opted Member).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Dickinson and Essex declared a personal and prejudicial interest as they were Trustees on Rossendale Citizen's Advice Bureau. Councillor Robertson declared a personal and prejudicial interest as she was a Trustee on the Board of Rossendale Citizen Advice Bureau and also a member of the Credit Union.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for discussion.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow the member of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

N.B Members agreed to the re-arrangement of the agenda

5. BUDGET SETTING AND COUNCIL TAX

The Head of Financial Services gave a presentation on the Budget Consultation for 2010/2011.

The Chair indicated that the Scrutiny Support Officer would collate all comments and send them to the Head of Financial Services to be included in the budget report to the Cabinet.

A number of questions were asked by a member of the public in relation to the following:

- Bins - the need to model services requirements with existing resources
- Leisure – the need to know the whole cost implications before making the final decision.
- Pay and Wages

Councillor Essex indicated that Rossendale residents wanted to see improved services but at lower costs.

In considering the report Members discussed the following areas:

- Retaining staff and enabling them to better their skills
- Rossendale providing a better service
- Council's contribution to PCSOs
- Methods used for the budget consultation
- Need to look at efficiency savings on waste vehicles

There was discussion on the refuse fleet and ensuring maximum life out of our vehicles. The Operations Manager explained the process and that at present vehicles have a 3 year warranty, but there was a possibility of extending this further.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair gave an update on matters arising from the last meeting:

Community Payback Scheme

The Community Safety Officer provided details of the Community Payback Scheme indicating that the Council worked with Probation on a number of projects over the years, including the youth shelter, assisting with erecting fencing and a landscaping project. Offenders work in the community on identified projects – either through the Community Safety Partnership or The Communities Team (via Neighbourhood Forums).

Although it was currently badged as 'unpaid work' it was in effect Community Payback. However, there wasn't the additional funding that came with the Community Payback 'Pilot' Schemes.

Any work that was requested had to be assessed by Lancashire Probation Trust to ensure it meets the criteria and health and safety regulations. They have a work programme and will, wherever possible, assist with any project identified.

A member indicated that there was only one project within the Borough and this needed to be extended to other areas.

It was agreed that a meeting be arranged with the Community Safety Officer and Councillor Cheetham to discuss the issue further.

Adult and Social Care Commissioning

The Chair indicated that the Council had been asked to respond to the above consultation and therefore a response group was needed to respond on behalf of the Council. Any Member interested was asked to contact the Scrutiny Support Officer.

Rehabilitation Services

The Scrutiny Support Officer circulated copies of letters sent to the PCT and East Lancashire Hospitals following recent presentations on health services, with particular concern about rehabilitation services being taken away from the new Rossendale Health Centre. Responses to the letters were also circulated and the Chair expressed her ongoing concern. She informed the Committee that she had arranged a meeting with the Chief Executive to discuss the issue and how to progress.

The Chair had also contacted the Chair of the East Lancs Hospitals Trust to make her aware of the situation.

Other Issues

A member asked for clarification on a review of winter maintenance undertaken by Lancashire County Council. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the County had not undertaken a scrutiny review, although an Officer had done a piece of work and this was confirmed by Councillor Smith, who indicated that County Councillor Winder was the Rossendale representative on the group at County.

A member asked about the future of Lancashire Locals and whether Overview and Scrutiny could look into this. Councillor Smith indicated that the County had not made any decision on their future and this would be discussed at LCC's Full Council meeting on 25 February 2010.

Members felt that Lancashire Local was a forum for joint working with the County in the public domain. The Chair agreed to discuss this with the

Chief Executive when she meets to discuss Rehabilitation Services and winter issues.

7. REPORT OF THE VALUE FOR MONEY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chair presented the report of the Value for Money Task and Finish Group, explaining that the one of the Council's Priorities was to provide value for money services

Grants to outside bodies account for a significant element of Council expenditure and each year the Council gives £200,000 in grants to the voluntary, community and faith sector. Therefore, it was agreed within its 2009/10 workplan to undertake a review of those organisations who receive the most grant funding, those being, Sunnycrest Family Centre, Haslingden Credit Union and Rossendale Citizen's Advice Bureau.

In total for 2010/11, the Council had received 27 applications for grant funding totalling over £250,000. The Citizen Advice Bureau received £75,000, which amounts to 42% of the overall community grants budget.

The recommendations within the report indicate that both Sunnycrest Children's Centre and Haslingden Credit Union provided a value for money service.

In relation to the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Chair informed Members that the Task and Finish Group heard from Officers within the Council that the Council could offer a similar service in-house and therefore take some of the work off the CAB to help reduce the six week wait for monetary advice.

It was recommended that the Council work closely with Help Direct, which is funded by Lancashire County Council as a signposting organisation. Rossendale Borough Council's Customer Services Team would provide three sessions per week within the one stop to deliver a general welfare benefit and advice service, with trained money advisers, as well as an outreach service for the public.

The Chair informed the Committee that any comments received in relation to the report would be recorded and included in the cover report attached to the Task and Finish Group report, to be presented to the Cabinet in March.

A number of concerns were raised from staff of the CAB and Councillors, who felt that some comments within the report were misleading and the Chair indicated that these would be included in the cover report attached to the Task and Finish Group report. These include the following:

- The Big Lottery Funding of £131,121 was actually project funding over a three year period

- The CAB support individuals who had been wrongly treated by the bailiff process
- CAB has 4 full-time and 6 part-time staff plus 13 volunteers

Resolved:

1. That the report and its recommendations be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting in March, along with the comments recorded at the meeting.
2. That Cabinet report back its finding to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within two months of considering the report, including the reason for their findings and where appropriate an action plan and timescales as to when actions should be completed.

8. PUBLIC REALM

The Operations Manager gave an update on the public realm project which covered highways, grass verges, trees and shrubs, street lights, signs, street furniture and litter. He outlined the current two-tier structure currently in place, in that these services are delivered by both Lancashire County Council and the District Councils.

Team Lancashire sponsored a pilot project to improve integration between Lancashire County Council and South Ribble Borough Council, which focused on Streetscene/public realm services. The pilot was evaluated and was seen as a success. This was now being rolled out to all 12 District Councils.

Funding had yet to be confirmed but it was envisaged that the Council could offer additional cuts and also in relation to steep bankings the County Council had indicated that they could provide or make a contribution towards a side arm flail.

The Operations Manager informed Members that the Council had met with the County Council to agree a process of member and wider stakeholder engagement.

The Chair welcomed the news indicating that it was two years since the Grass Cutting Task and Finish Group had presented a report to Cabinet asking for grass cutting to be provided by one organisation. Confirmation was requested on Member engagement sessions which were to be held.

A report would be presented to the Cabinet in March.

Resolved:

That the information be noted.

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report which highlights the work undertaken by the Policy Scrutiny Committee, Performance Scrutiny Committee and the Task and Finish Groups was provided to Members for information.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 9.20pm

Signed (Chair)

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