

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 13th March 2012

PRESENT: Councillor McInnes (Chair)
Councillors Cheetham (substitute for Steen),
Crawforth, Driver, Kenyon, Milling, Morris, Oakes,
Robertson, Sandiford (substituting for L Barnes), and
Stansfield

Irene Divine (Co-opted Member)

ALSO PRESENT: Gemma Rooke, Community Engagement Officer
Grant Roberts, Job Centre Plus
Pete Berry, Job Centre Plus
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Marriott

1 Member of the Public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Barnes, Pilling and Steen and Keith Pilkington (co-opted Member)

2. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2012 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Morris declared an interest as a Board Member of Rossendale Leisure Trust.

4. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for discussion.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair asked members to forward any suggestions for next year's scrutiny work programme to the Scrutiny Officer. A sub group would be

established in the new municipal year to agree the work programme which would be approved at the first meeting of the committee in June

7. PRESENTATION ON THE NESTA PROGRAMME

The Community Engagement Officer gave an overview of the NESTA programme, which was part of the Creative Councils.

Rossendale was the only Borough Council shortlisted with 16 other local authorities to work with a small group of local authorities across the Country and their partners to develop, implement and spread new approaches to meet medium and long term challenges facing communities and local services.

The council has been given £30,000 for the pilot scheme which would build on the success of an innovative pilot project that was run in Bacup last year, in partnership with local community organisations - Bacup CHAT.

It was proposed to extend the project now to cover other areas of Rossendale and it would be called 'MAD Chatting' (Making a Difference Chatting).

The council has recruited volunteers to support unemployed residents to access services and assess individual needs and what support they need. These volunteers would go out into the community asking about access to services. All volunteers would be trained on recording techniques and storytelling (observe, listen to situations and relay accurately to others), to deliver the programme.

Volunteers would sit down with managers of services such as CAB and Job Centre to talk about experiences of accessing their services.

The 12 volunteers, from across Rossendale meet 2-4 hours per week.

A number of questions were raised as follows, which the Community Engagement Officer responded (in bold).

- The need to ensure that the information the volunteers are receiving is the right information and the need to be cautious as to how they use the information
- Criteria for the programme – **every local authority was doing it different**
- The profile/nature of the volunteers – **ex-offenders, unemployed**
- Length the scheme was running – **12 weeks with a minimum of 30 hour volunteer time to get their qualification, which would be a level 2 in Community and Volunteering**
- Who are the mentors – **Accrington and Rossendale College, Maden Centre, Community Engagement Officer**

- The outcome of the scheme – **So far £10,000 had been released to undertake the programme. The other £20,000 would be released and the Council are looking to see if they can do 2 more similar programmes, but this depends on internal resources.**

The Community Engagement Officer indicated that the Creative Council would finally choose 5 organisations to take the initiative forward. They would need to submit the final idea in May with the outcome known in a few months.

The Chair thanked Gemma for her presentation.

8. PRESENTATION FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JOB CENTRE

The Chair welcomed Grant Roberts and Pete Berry, who informed the committee that the role of the Job Centre Plus was to help working age benefit recipients get back into work. Customers have the opportunity to get the help and support they need to get back into work or close to the working environment.

Training schemes were available through various partner organisations, with work experience being a valuable tool to fill the gaps in their CVs to help them back into work.

Job Centre Plus had an appointment system to deal with benefit claims and customers were seen by a personal advisor or assistant advisor and received help with completing CVs and online applications.

A Customer Service Manager signposts customers to the appropriate channels.

Customers have access phones in each buildings and touch-screen job points. They were in the process of installing internet devices in both Bacup and Rawtenstall offices. At the moment internet services were available through Direct Gov.

They were currently developing a digital service – text messages, social media, facebook, twitter. They were also liaising with partners to promote the internet service as a preferred method of contact.

A number of questions were raised by members, which the representatives from the Job Centre responded (in bold)

- Are there people to deal with the systems in place – **the service was developed over a period of time and they were striving to get access that people need. If a customer was seen to be struggling to use the system they had workshops to support them.**

- What are the opening times – **open 9-5pm 5 days a week, closed at lunchtime – not a full job centre plus service in Bacup.**
- How do you know what jobs that the customer is applying for and what sort of records are kept - **the service is tailored to the individual and they are given the opportunity to look for work they want, but with the expectation to open up their job search if required.**
- Length of time allowed on job seekers allowance – **2 elements to this a) contribution based (6 months) or means tested.**
- Travel warrants for interview outside of the area – **help is given for outside normal travel distance. There is also a scheme to help with travel costs for those new in work through a flexible support fund.**
- Support for those with literacy issues – **Mandate customers to go to college to address barriers and skill need.**
- Current trends – **the register had increased over the last 12 months.**

The Chair thanked both representatives for their informative information.

9. REPORT OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor Robertson, as Chair of the Task and Finish Group presented the findings of the Group to Members, indicating that the Group found that there was tremendous movement by young people for young people.

A number of questions were raised which Councillor Robertson responded.

Resolved:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee approve the report of the Young People's Services Task and Finish Group.
2. That the report be forwarded to Cabinet for comments, asking for a response to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in June 2012.
3. That the report be forwarded to Lancashire County Council for comments, requesting a response to the recommendations within two months.

10. REPORT OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor McInnes, as Chair of the Task and Finish Group presented the findings of the Group to Members.

A number of questions were raised which Councillor McInnes responded.

Resolved:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee approve the report of the Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group.
2. That the report be forwarded to Cabinet for comments, asking for a response to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in June 2012.
3. That the report be forwarded to Lancashire County Council for comments, requesting a response to the recommendations within two months.

11. UPDATE ON THE WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12 AND DISCUSSION ON THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2012/13

The Scrutiny Support Officer provided an update to the Committee on the progress of the work programme for 2011/12, indicating that there were still two pieces of work outstanding – Community Transport and Street Cleaning. Regular updates on the Birthing Centre would be presented by the Chair once she had received the information from the Primary Care Trust.

It was agreed that the two outstanding issues would be included in the work programme for 2012/13 when a decision would be made as to whether to carry them into the new municipal year.

The Scrutiny Officer reminded members to send in ideas and suggestions for the work programme for 2012/13, indicating that she had already received some suggestions.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 and closed at 8.20pm.

Signed
(Chair)

Date