

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 2 February 2010 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor J S Sutcliffe (Chairman)

Councillors:

R Hargreaves	C Ross
T Hill	I Sayers
K Hind	N C Walsh
B Jones	J H White

In attendance: Director of Community Services, Principal Policy and Performance Officer, Community Development Officer

Also in attendance: Councillors B Hilton and S Hore.

773 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Berryman, J Hill and M Thomas.

774 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

775 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) Minute 643

Councillor Sayers queried why there was no-one present from NHS East Lancashire at this meeting to speak about the future plans for Clitheroe Hospital.

The Director of Community Services reported that, in the light of the Chief Executive and Chairman of NHS East Lancashire having attended the recent Health and Housing Committee it was felt by Corporate Management Team that nothing would be gained by inviting the same people to attend this meeting.

776 REPORT FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Hilton reported on three issues:

- LCC Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Clitheroe Hospital.
- Oral Health – Access to NHS Dentistry.

(a) LCC Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed issues around budget setting, performance assessment and performance management. The performance management and assessment reports had been very favourable with some services scoring 'excellent'. In terms of budgets a number of efficiency measures were currently being looked at including natural wastage, rationalisation, and reducing sickness absence.

She commented that the three PCTs in Lancashire all operated very differently but were all regarded as efficient.

(b) Clitheroe Hospital

The Chief Executive and Chairman of NHS East Lancashire had attended the recent meeting of the Health and Housing Committee to update Members on the position with the modernisation project which had been and remained frozen. There did not seem to be any way this situation would be resolved in the short term.

Members expressed their comments on the presentation and concerns about the future of the project.

(c) Oral Health – Access to NHS Dentistry

Councillor Hilton reported that the waiting list for NHS dental treatment had reduced from 21,900 down to 7,000 although there were parts of the Ribble Valley where provision was still not good. She commented that there were currently NHS dentists in Whalley, Clitheroe and Longridge.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Hilton be thanked for her report.

777 CONSULTATION RESPONSE – DUTY TO RESPOND TO PETITIONS

The Principal Policy and Performance Officer informed Committee of the draft guidance on the Duty to Respond to Petitions which the Government was currently carrying out a consultation on and the Council's response to that consultation. She commented that the duty was part of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act which proposed a duty on local councillors to respond to all petitions including E Petitions that related to services they were responsible for or services where they shared delivery responsibility.

These provisions had yet to be brought into force and the Government was now consulting on the implementation of those provisions. She highlighted the main statutory requirements which were as follows:

- To have an online petition facility which allowed anyone to set up a petition on the Authority's system.
- To adopt a petition scheme which set out how the Authority would acknowledge receipt of petitions and advise the petition organiser how the petition would be dealt with.
- The petition must relate to a function of the Authority.
- The Authority could delegate to an appropriate officer the power to reject petitions on the grounds of being vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate.
- The new petition scheme did not apply to petitions received under other statutory procedures.
- For ordinary petitions the Authority was given flexibility to set the threshold number of signatures.

- The Act provided that a petition may be signed by anyone who lived, worked or studied in the Authority's areas.
- Petitions requiring debate must be reported to full Council and Council could set a higher threshold for the number of signatures.
- Petitions to hold an officer to account must name a senior officer and would trigger an open meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee at which the officer may be questioned by the Committee in relation to his actions on a particular matter.
- Where the petition organiser was not satisfied by the actions taken by the Authority in response to a petition the petition scheme must give a right of appeal to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Government proposed to make statutory orders to bring these provisions into force and to provide guidance on how authorities should discharge their new duties. The consultation included giving consideration as to when the duty should be implemented and whether the requirement for an E Petition facility should be brought in at the same time or delayed for a further 12 months.

She further reported that as part of the East Lancashire Collaborative Research and Consultation Service (CRACS) the Council were currently developing a joint consultation and engagement website. As part of this development the Council had ensured that the website had the capability of hosting E Petitions so we would be well ahead of the game. The total cost of the project to the Partnership was around £30,000.

Members then discussed in some detail the questions and suggested responses provided by the Principal Policy and Performance Officer. In particular, Members were concerned about the numbers of people required to trigger a petition, particularly in sparsely populated areas in the Ribble Valley. They felt that this needed addressing in relation to the response to question 7 and amended that response accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the approved response to the consultation on the duty to respond to petitions as now amended be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government in accordance with the deadline of 24 February 2010.

778 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT – QUARTER THREE

The Principal Policy and Performance Officer presented her report giving the Quarter 3 figures for the Council's performance against national and local indicators.

Committee again discussed the three red indicators and sought more explanations for why the Council were failing to meet these targets. The Director of Community Services explained that the sports development target had been affected by reduced staffing levels. He also commented that the sickness absence figure suffered a dip and performance looked bad in comparison to recent periods. However, in comparison to the performance of others nationally, we are still performing very well. Finally, the Principal Policy and Performance Officer explained that the Environmental Health Manager had stated that he had bigger priorities to tackle within his section than health and safety inspections, hence the reason for his targets currently not being met. Members then discussed the PI report in some detail.

RESOLVED: That Committee note the performance information provided and identify that those areas where additional information is required are LPI CD16 (attendance at sports development activities) and LPI EH2 (the percentage of health and safety initial inspections that should have been carried that were carried out.

LPI EH2 –

The current annual inspection programmes for both Health and Safety and Food Safety inspections are behind target, in relation to achieving the annual target. Both of these are due to an above normal number of 'significant' gastro-enteric events experienced within the Borough since April 2009. The Food Team has been required to investigate 8 incidents involving between 20 and 50 persons reported experiencing clinical symptoms, which is well above the number normally investigated. This work naturally takes priority in accordance with the priorities set out in the Annual Food Safety Plan and by necessity involves significant officer time. Every effort will be made to achieve the annual food premise target by the yearend but will, by necessity, be at the expense of other pro-active work. Community outbreaks by necessity take priority as recognised and agreed by this Council's Health & Housing Committee. There has also been another successful year for the Event Safety Advisory Group in the effective co-ordination of the multi-agency group who dealt with 65 significant outdoor events occurring over 95 days within the Borough, involving considerable officer time during the summer months. The Food Inspection Team has also been involved in the preparation for a major prosecution. Subject to no further major issues arising, every effort will be made to achieve 60-70% of Health and Safety inspections by the end of quarter 4.

LPI CD16 –

The post of Community Sports Coach was removed from the establishment around 18 months ago due to discontinuation of external funding. The post was responsible for approximately 70% of attendances; therefore targets need reviewing for future years in accordance with current resources available.

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IMPROVING SCRUTINY FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

The Community Development Officer referred to Minute 644 of Committee dated 1 December 2009 and again apologised for the lack of progress on this matter.

He reminded Members of the recent announcement about crime figures for Ribble Valley being at an all time low and the inherent difficulties in driving crime down even further. He also referred to a recent meeting held in Longridge to discuss anti social behaviour in the town where it had again been apparent that the situation was not as bad as had at first been thought.

He highlighted three areas which Committee may wish to consider in relation to a more detailed scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership.

1. In relation to people's perception or fear of crime being worse than what the figures suggest.
2. In relation to the recently published Strategic Assessment which maps all areas of concern for the CSP and sets out its priorities for the forthcoming years.

3. The whole alcohol agenda and the efforts being made by the Community Safety Partnership to look at different initiatives to help tackle binge drinking, underage drinking, proxy sales of alcohol and alcohol related crime.

Members discussed the recent crime figures and expressed their concern about alcohol related crime and its impact on the residents of Ribble Valley.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Community Development Officer discuss with the Police and the Primary Care Trust a detailed report and presentation on the problems caused by alcohol and the ways in which the Community Safety Partnership was tackling those issues;
2. Representatives from the Police and the PCT be invited to make this presentation at the next meeting of this Committee in April 2010.

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WORKING GROUPS

(a) Traffic Calming in Villages

Councillor Sayers reported that good progress was being made by Councillor Thomas on this report. Useful meetings had been held with LCC Officers and the Police and most parishes had completed the questionnaire on traffic calming measures in their village. Parishes had indicated five or six possible solutions although speed indicator devices appeared to be the most popular. He also referred to the relaxation of the requirement for physical restrictions on 20 mph zones although the issue of proper enforcement was a relevant factor.

(b) Planning Enforcement

Committee received a written report from Councillor John Hill but Councillor Sayers asked that in the absence of Councillor Hill this report be deferred until the next meeting of this Committee. This was agreed.

(c) Waste Collection

The Chairman referred to the recent trip to Glass Recycling UK at Barnsley which he had found most useful.

(d) Leisure Services

The Chairman announced that a meeting had been arranged with Colin Winterbottom, the Council's Leisure and Sports Development Manager, to discuss how sport and physical activity alliance work and the question of writing bids for funding. The meeting would be attended by Councillors Sutcliffe, Sayers and White.

The meeting closed at 8.21pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact John Heap (414461).