

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 6 December 2011 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor M Thomas (Chairman)

Councillors:

R Bennett	K Horkin
S Bibby	C Ross
I Brown	I Sayers
S Carefoot	N C Walsh
P Dowson	J White

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

559 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Hill, A Knox and S Knox.

560 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 August 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

561 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor White referred to minute 293 and asked Committee to reconsider inviting Councillor Hilton to future meetings to speak to Committee in her role as the Council's representative on the Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee. The Chair commented that he would raise this matter again with the Leader of the Council.

562 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

563 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

564 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representative on outside bodies.

565 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Principal Policy and Performance Officer presented her second report of 2011/2012 which detailed the Council's performance against our local

performance indicators. The report comprised quarterly figures for all our indicators reporting by exception. She also reported on the performance clinic in relation to the following performance indicators – RH1, RH5 and RH7, which had been held on 18 October 2011 and had been attended by Members of this committee and the Health and Housing Committee, who were the parent Committee for those indicators.

In relation to indicator RH1, which related to public sector dwellings returned into occupation or demolished, it was felt that this indicator would be closer to its target by 31 March 2012.

Indicator RH5 which related to length of stay in temporary accommodation, it was noted that this was very much dependent on the temporary accommodation market improving which seemed unlikely in the short term.

Indicator RH7 – the number of affordable homes delivered, there was already a marked improvement in this indicator which had gone from red to green over the past couple of months.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

566 REPORT OF WORKING GROUPS

a) Energy Efficiency in Council Owned Buildings

Councillor Sayers reported on a recent meeting of the Joint Working Group from Community Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in November. The Working Group had discussed a number of suggestions with the Principal Surveyor, including voltage stabilisers, wall construction, better heat exchange in the CCTV monitoring office and the cost of water usage in male toilets.

The Director of Community Services also gave his comments on how these issues could be taken forward.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Working Group be encouraged to finalise their findings and review a course of action with the Principal Surveyor by early 2012.

b) Membership on Outside Bodies

Councillor White presented his comprehensive review of membership on Outside Bodies. The report supplied a list of bodies on which Councillors sat, gave details of whether they were statutory or non statutory, how frequently they met and how often reports were received by the parent Committee.

He commented that there were a number of anomalies which the report highlighted including bodies which no longer existed, bodies where the Council was no longer a member of and some bodies which had been

omitted from the list in the Council's year book. In some cases, outside bodies had no parent Committee to report to.

A survey had been carried out of all Councillors seeking their views on their membership on outside bodies, its usefulness and whether Councillors fully understood the work of the body they served on.

Members then asked specific questions about particular outside bodies including Clitheroe Royal Grammar School Trustees and the Copster Green and Salesbury Commons Management Committee. They also discussed the report in some detail and the Director of Community Services gave advice on how Committee could best progress the report.

RESOLVED: That the report in its entirety be submitted to the Corporate Management Team for their views with a request that the report be then referred to Policy and Finance Committee on 27 March 2012, so that any changes can be incorporated in time for the publication of the 2012 Ribble Valley Borough Council year book.

c) Safeguarding

The Head of Leisure and Tourism gave Members a potted history of safeguarding and how it affected many aspects of the Council's operations. He commented on the Council's work with the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board in reviewing the Council's policies and good practice in this area.

He highlighted a number of areas which would require attention:

- Corporate policies and procedures
- Operational procedures
- Training/awareness
- Joint working/information sharing
- Local leadership

He also circulated a copy of a draft action plan which covered the following key issues:

- Operational policy procedure
- Senior management involvement
- Member involvement
- Corporate documentation
- Embedding safeguarding in normal business
- Awareness/training
- Engagement
- Leadership
- Joint working/information sharing
- Equality and diversity

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

d) Functioning of this Committee

Councillor Thomas reported that this report would look at how other fourth option councils operated, how the Committee had operated in the past and how they were currently working, subjects which had been investigated and then passed on to other committees for their views; and current terms of reference. There was one final piece of work in relation to performance indicators which needed to be added to the report and it was hoped to present the final report to Committee before March 2012.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

e) Member Training

Councillor Bibby commented on a previous piece of work which had been carried out in 2009 which she felt was too complicated. As a result of this the scoping document which had been prepared would now need to be revised. She further commented that although resources had diminished in recent times, she felt there was enough knowledge amongst senior councillors to enable them to train up newer Members and share their knowledge on different topics such as planning and information technology.

Other Councillors commented on their experience of training in other areas of work.

She commented that her aim was to produce a final report for consideration by Committee in April 2012.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

f) Ribble Valley Borough Council Website

The Chairman reported that this working group was being led by Councillor Knox who unfortunately was absent from tonight's meeting.

The Chairman referred to the recommendation from the previous Committee in relation to the possibility of appointing a dedicated web master to help improve the Council's website. The Director of Community Services commented that as part of the Council's recent restructure, an unfilled post in IT had been agreed to be filled and it was hoped that this post would go some way towards improving the Council's website.

The Chairman also reminded Members that they had been encouraged to navigate the website looking for any problems which could then be fed back to Councillor Knox to help him with his investigations.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

VISIT TO RICHMONDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Chairman referred to a recent visit which Councillors and officers had made to Richmondshire North Yorkshire, to find out more about how they handled scrutiny.

The Principal Policy and Performance Officer had prepared a briefing note of the visit which included a comparison of the two districts (Ribble Valley and Richmondshire) and some key points of difference between their approach and ours to the scrutiny function. Amongst the key points to emerge were

- Richmondshire is led by independent councillors and does not have any political interference in its scrutiny function
- They have a full time officer who deals with nothing else than scrutiny and progress chase reports and investigations.
- They publicise all their work and ask the public for scrutiny topics.
- They co-opt members of the public where appropriate.
- They are free to scrutinise other partners eg police, NHS and frequently call them to account.
- They see their purpose as adding to and aiding the decision making process.

RESOLVED: That

1. the Principal Policy and Performance Officer be thanked for her excellent summary; and
2. the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

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