

**CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

HELD: 16 JULY 2014

Start: 7.45pm

Finish: 10.25pm

PRESENT: Bailey (Chairman)

Councillors: Ashcroft McKay
Mrs Blake Mrs Marshall
Barron Mee
Delaney Ms Melling
Dereli Nolan
Devine O'Toole
G Hodson Pryce-Roberts
J Hodson Mrs Stephenson

Officers: Assistant Director Community Services (Mr D Tilleray)
Housing Needs and Allocations Manager (Ms N Bradley)
Technical Services Manager (Mr C Brady)
Partnership and Performance Officer (Ms A Grimes)
Assistant Solicitor (Mrs T Sparrow)
Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs C A Jackson)

In attendance: Director of ICT, BT Lancashire Services (Mr M Orford)
Director of Revenues & Benefits, BT Lancashire Services
(Mr J Unsworth)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor L Hodson and the Transformation Manager (Mr S Walsh).

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Members noted the termination of membership of Councillors Mrs Baybutt, Mrs C Evans, Mrs R Evans, Fillis and Wright and the appointment of Councillors Barron, Mrs Stephenson, O'Toole, Pryce-Roberts and Devine for this meeting only thereby giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of a Party Whip.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 February 2014 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7. MINUTES OF THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Member Development Commission meeting held on 27 February 2014 be noted.

8. BT LANCASHIRE SERVICES ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to the report of the Transformation Manager as contained on pages 13 to 34 of the Book of Reports that detailed the Annual Review delivered by BT Lancashire Services 2013/14 on the ICT and Revenues and Benefits Services.

The Chairman welcomed the representatives from BT Lancashire Services (BTLS).

A presentation was undertaken by Mr Mark Orford (Director of ICT) and Mr J Unsworth (Director of Revenues and Benefits) on the work that had been undertaken over the previous 12 months under the shared services arrangement.

The Director of ICT provided an overview of changes in 2013/14 making reference to the continuity of services delivery through the period of management change. In reflecting on the period of delivery of the Contract to the Council in 2013/14 he made reference to: the direct savings of £530,000; the ICT investment of £7,500 and the combined ICT and Revenues and Benefits Added Value of £25,000, referencing the summary of financial benefits from the Partnership, in the first three years, as at 31 March 2014.

The Director of Revenues and Benefits provided details of improvements relating to governance arrangements that were overseen by the Shared Services Board; the key contractual elements of the agreement; the principles that governed the relationship and made reference to the 'Quality of Service' Report produced each month.

The Director of ICT then went on to provide details in relation to performance of the Services and concluded with an overview of planned developments for 2014/15 in both Services.

Comments and questions, related to the ICT Service, were raised in respect of the following:

- Contact Centre Platform – Upgrade and options for replacement. Utilisation /adaption/ introduction of similar systems already used /in place at the County Council.

- ICT support to Borough Councillors:
 - delays in setting-up new Council Members with PCs, connectivity and associated issues;
 - plans relating to the availability of up-to-date technology (introduction/use of iPads / Tablets);
 - network difficulties (accessing the Intranet, links within emails, remote access)
 - proposals related to authentication process (multiple password logging);
 - availability of applications, similar to “Wake on LAN” system, to allow remote access to a PCs for “repairs”;
 - Shared Services Board – terms of reference, composition and Member representation.
- County Council shared service facility (dual-hatted Members): access to each network (Intranet; Global address book; ColnS); Broadband issues (subscription payment; speed of wi-fi; doubling-up of devices; passwords; authentication process).
- Original concept of the shared service arrangement – take-up by other authorities; perceived benefits; front-end on-line services access and efficiency.

The ICT Director responded to questions referencing details within the annual review report. In relation to ICT problems experienced by Members, both on Borough and County systems, and in respect of the feedback provided on the envisaged service and general issues, the Director of ICT made an undertaking to take these forward, as appropriate.

The Chairman asked that the comment relating to delays in setting up new Members that referenced Member Services be passed on to that Service.

The Director of Revenue and Benefits then provided an overview of key activity in his Service during 2013/14 highlighting details as set down in the review report. Reference was made to the various elements as a result of the introduction of Welfare Reform particularly the Universal Credit system, scheduled to go live in September 2014; the transitional arrangements including liaison with other stakeholders and actions related to the technical re-platform.

He also made reference to the collaborative approach, particularly in relation to the provision of financial data and performance monitoring, referencing targets and activity covered in the review report.

Comments and questions, related to the Revenue and Benefits Service, were raised in respect of the following:

- Training and development arrangements for staff – Learning and Developing Programme
- Provision of jobs locally – affect as a result of the transfer of services from Lancashire Place to Accrington.
- Universal Credit (UC) – performance monitoring / targets; provision of help, support, and advice for those affected by the changes.
- Guidance for Members on functions that will be affected.
- Future changes – Housing Benefit.

The Director of Revenue and Benefits responded to questions. In response to issues raised relating to the introduction of the UC in September, the role of the local authority in the process was outlined (support services for claimants; transitional arrangements and assistance to help manage financial debt). He stressed, however, that the payment of UC will be administered centrally by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).

In response to the request for guidance to assist Members on the changes affected by the UC that come into effect from September 2014, the Director of Revenue and Benefits made an undertaking to circulate 'Guidance to Members'.

RESOLVED: That the BT Lancashire Services Annual Report 2013/24, attached at Appendix A and accompanying presentations, be noted.

(Note: Following consideration of this item, the Chairman varied the order of business to allow the 'Members Update' Request (Item 11(a) 'Welfare Reform Update' to be considered next. (Minute 12 refers). The minutes follow the order as set down in the agenda.)

9. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Q4 2013/14)

Consideration was given to the report of the Transformation Manager which detailed performance monitoring data for the quarter ended 31 March 2104.

In discussion Members raised questions and comments in respect of the following:

- Annual review mechanisms related to PI targets;
- TS2A (Average time take to re-let local authority housing (days) (General Needs) – issues affecting performance; progress on remedial action.
- N192 (Percentage of Household Waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting) – methodology related to disposal of untreated street sweepings, including leaf litter; source of contaminants.

A discussion ensued on the new guidance, issued by the Environment Agency, related to the disposal of street sweepings and gulley waste, particularly as it relates to leaf litter. Concerns were expressed as to the source of the contaminants (exhaust fumes etc.) and its effect on recycling and composting, including testing of "litter"; treatment and method of disposal.

RESOLVED: A. That the comments of the Committee in relation to the disposal of leaf litter, in light of the new guidance, issued by the Environment Agency, be passed to the Assistant Director Street Scene.

B. That the Council's performance against the indicator set for the quarter ended 31 March 2014, be noted.

10. MEMBER ITEM - CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

Consideration was given to the presentation 'Choice-Based Lettings', on behalf of the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration, by the Housing Needs and Allocations Manager in response to a request held over from a previous meeting of the Committee. The presentation was supported by a series of slides as contained on pages 117 to 128 of the Book of Reports.

The presentation detailed the:

- Banding System.
- Advertisement of properties.
- Bidding process
- Procedure of how homes are offered.
- Feedback
- Information available on the Homefinder website.

In conclusion, the Housing Needs and Allocation Manager reiterated that, at the current time, there are sufficient properties available for allocation.

Comments and questions were raised in the respect of the following:

- Housing need – criteria applied to applications from ex-service personnel.
- Banding System – factors determining housing needs within each band.
- Factors assessed (housing need; status; local connection; references; declarations.)
- Council policy in relation to “small” pets for companionship (for example, “small house birds”).
- Reallocation of housing adapted for particular needs.

The Housing Needs and Allocations Manager responded to questions explaining that each housing application is assessed on a case by case basis and the teams try to be as sensitive as possible when assessing needs against the criteria. In response to a question on housing allocation and homelessness the procedure and the separate work, undertaken by the Homelessness Team, was explained.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the Housing Needs and Allocations Manager for an informative presentation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

11. ITEMS FROM THE MEMBERS' UPDATE

The Committee were advised that the following two items had been referred from the Members' Update (Issue 1).

12. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

Consideration was given to a request, submitted by Councillor McKay, for a presentation, to a future meeting, on Welfare Reform, to include information in respect of any impact on the West Lancashire Challenge Project resulting from the introduction of Universal Credit.

The Director of Revenues and Benefits (BTLs) indicated that a presentation could be arranged to all Members related to the changes being introduced.

Following a brief discussion on the 'Welfare Reform Update' article, as contained on pages 57 to 78 of the Book of Reports, it was agreed that a presentation with input from the service areas involved (Revenues and Benefits / Housing and Regeneration) should be arranged .

RESOLVED: That a presentation on the impact of the West Lancashire Challenge Project resulting from the introduction of Universal Credit (as part of the implementation of Welfare Reform arrangements), be arranged in consultation with the Transformation Manager and Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration.

(Note: The Directors of ICT and Revenue & Benefits Services (BTLs) left the meeting at following conclusion of this item.)

13. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2013/14

Consideration was given to a request in relation to the Food Safety Service Plan 2013/14 article, as contained on pages 79 to 104 of the Book of Reports, submitted by Councillor McKay, for a presentation on it, to a future meeting.

In discussion comments /questions were raised in relation to the following:

- Staffing issues in delivering the Food Safety Service Plan.
- Commercial food premises – inspections and associated work.
- Enforcement – registration of (commercial) food production premises; issues relating to food contamination.
- The role of the Food Standards Agency (FSA).
- Food Safety Risk Ratings – displaying ratings at premises.

The Assistant Director Community Services (ADCS) responded to questions.

It was concluded that, as a consequence of the discussion that a separate presentation was not required, the request for which was withdrawn.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Food Safety Service Plan 2013/14 be noted.

14. REVIEW TOPIC FOR 2014/15 AND CONFIRMATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Solicitor as contained on pages 105 to 115 of the Book of Reports that gave details of the outcome of the Topic Scoring Exercise undertaken on 25 June 2014 in relation to topics submitted by the deadline and set down the proposed Work Programme for the Committee for 2014/15.

Members discussed the results of the scoring exercise (Appendix A) and the proposals therein, particularly noting the proposal for a presentation, to a future meeting on 'The investment in Renewable Energy by the Council'.

In relation to the topic that had scored the highest namely 'A Market Strategy for Ormskirk Town Centre', the Technical Services Manager, who attended the meeting, was invited to speak and provided additional information on the topic idea.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were noted:

- The position of a Market Strategy, for Ormskirk, as part of the work on the Economic Development Strategy.
- Proposals in relation to the development of Moor Street and its impact on current market arrangements.
- Managing Market Traders / Visitors expectations – response to current and future trends / ventures.
- Raising the profile of the Market – branding; mix of trades;
- Current arrangement and aesthetics of the market stalls;
- The market in relation to other North West markets – best practice /establishing its own profile.

Following the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed that an in-depth study on 'A Market Strategy for Ormskirk Town Centre' be undertaken by the Committee.

- RESOLVED:
- A. That the results of the scoring exercise (Appendix A) be noted and the recommendations therein be actioned and endorsed.
 - B. That the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration be requested to provide a presentation on 'The Investment in Renewable Energy by the Council' to a future meeting.
 - C. That the topic selected for review in the 2014/15 Work Programme of the Committee be 'A Market Strategy for Ormskirk Town Centre' and that a draft Project Plan for the review be prepared for submission to the next meeting.
 - D. That the Work Programme for the Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out below, be included on the Council's web-site:

**'Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

Conducts in depth reviews/policy development as set out in its programme.

In 2014/15 the Committee will be conducting a review on 'A Market Strategy for Ormskirk Town Centre'.

The Committee considers as part of its routine work:

- Items referred from 'Members Update' at the request of a Member
- Members Items/Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)
- Performance management
- Acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee
- Recommendations from previously conducted reviews.

The Member Development Commission will continue its work during 2014/15.'

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Chairman