

**CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

HELD: 9 JULY 2015

Start: 7.30pm

Finish: 10.15pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Dowling (Chairman)

Mrs Atherley	G Hodson
S Bailey	McKay
Barron	Mrs Marshall
Mrs Blake	Oliver
Delaney	O'Toole
Forshaw	Pendleton
Devine	Savage
Greenall	West

Officers: Assistant Director Community Services (Mr D Tilleray)
Assistant Director Planning (Mr J Harrison)
Technical Services Manager (Mr C Brady)
Community Safety Officer (Mr C Owens)
Partnership and Performance Officer (Ms A Grimes)
Assistant Solicitor (Mr M Hynes)
Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs C A Jackson)

In attendance: Councillor J Hodson (Portfolio Holder for Planning)

Director of ICT, BT Lancashire Services (Mr M Orford)
Director of Revenues and Benefits, BT Lancashire Services
(Mr J Unsworth)
Principal Business Relations Manager (Ms S DeVall)

1. APOLOGIES

There are no apologies.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Members noted the termination of membership of Councillors Blane, Hudson and L Hodson and the appointment of Councillor Forshaw, Pendleton and Savage, for this meeting only, thereby giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were items of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of a 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 meeting held on 19 February 2015 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 12 March 2015 be noted.

8. CONFIRMATION OF WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Solicitor as contained on pages 13 to 16 of the Book of Reports that set down the proposed Work Programme for the Committee for 2015/16.

RESOLVED: A. That the decision of the Council to establish a 'Public Involvement at Meetings Working Group' as part of the Work Programme and the terms of reference, as set down in the appendix, be agreed.

B That the Work Programme for the Committee 2015/16 as set out below, be confirmed and included on the Council's web-site.

'Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee conducts in depth reviews/policy development as set out in its work programme.

In 2015/16 the Committee will continue its review on 'A Market Town 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 2015/16 and the 'Public Involvement at Meetings Working Group' will commence its work'.

9. BT LANCASHIRE SERVICES ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to the report of the Transformation Manager as contained on pages 17 to 41 of the Book of Reports that detailed the Annual Review delivered by BT Lancashire Services 2014/15 on the ICT and Revenues and Benefits Services.

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

A presentation, supported by a series of slides as contained on pages 85 to 96 of the Book of Reports, 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 agreement.

The Director of ICT provided a review of work undertaken in 2014/15 referencing the highlights of the service provision, performance against targets and planned improvement and development for 2015/16. He made reference to the enhanced support procedures specifically for councillors and their operation.

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

- Performance Targets (measurement; quality of service; outcomes to customers; incidents reported)
- Terminology within the annual report (glossary of terms)
- Customer liaison (consultation; representation; feedback)
- ICT support for Borough Councillors:
 - Plans relating to the roll-out / availability of up-to-date technology (iPads / mobile devices)
 - Members ICT training arrangements (access / provision / level).
 - Members IT equipment and security (authentication process; access and data security)
 - Responding to changing needs (assisted/bespoke technology for visual / other impairment; future proofing)

The ICT Director responded to questions and provided clarification, referencing details within the presentation and report. In relation to the provision of a glossary of the abbreviations referred to within the documentation and comments on service delivery and connectivity, he made an undertaking to pass the observations to the Transformation Manager.

The Principal Business Relationship Manager attended the meeting and provided further clarification on the issues raised.

The Director of Revenue and Benefits then provided an overview of key activity in his Service during 2014/15 highlighting details as set down in the report and presentation. Reference was made to the operation of the service as a result of the Welfare Reform changes, highlighting activity in the year resulting from the roll out of Universal Credit (UC). He also confirmed that the technology migration (platform from Liverpool to Lancashire) had been completed.

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

- Cross-organisation Task Group (membership / representation / feedback)
- Impact of UC locally (number of claimants; information sharing; guidance / support / assistance provided through the process)

RESOLVED: That the BT Lancashire Services Annual Report 2014/15, attached at Appendix A and accompanying presentations, be noted.

(Note: Councillor Mrs Atherley left the meeting following consideration of this item.)

10. CRIME AND DISORDER - PRESENTATION

A presentation was received from the Community Safety Officer on behalf of the West Lancashire Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The presentation was supported by a series of slides as contained on pages 97 to 115 of the Book of Reports.

In his presentation, the Community Safety Officer gave an overview of the CSP structure; a summary of the established thematic delivery groups, the funding streams and how allocated to support priorities; the multi-agency approach to manage key priorities, referencing Bright Sparx's as an example of an effective multi-agency delivery that has brought effective results on and around "Bonfire celebrations".

During discussion comments and questions were raised in respect of:

- Bright Sparx (impact locally; role of other agencies)
- Partnership working (involvement; reductions in funding / effect on CSP priorities / initiatives.)
- Other anti-social behaviour issues (support throughout the year; funding.)
- Freshers' Week - extension of time period (effect on support / delivery; effectiveness of partnership working.)

The Community Safety Officer responded to questions and provided clarification on issues raised. He made an undertaking to circulate the presentation, via email and information therein, to all Members.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

11. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Q4 2014-15)

Consideration was given to the report of the Transformation Manager which detailed performance monitoring data for the quarter ended 31 March 2015, as contained on pages 43 to 61 of the Book of Reports. The reported had previously been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 June 2015.

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

- NI 195b (Improved street and environmental cleanliness – levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting: Detritus) – reasons associated with increase; process for the disposal of inert waste (hardcore / rubble).
- WL121 (Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence) - how measured; provision of additional details/reasons for sickness level).
- WL18 (Use of leisure and cultural facilities (swims and visits) – reasons for fluctuations / seasonal fluctuations).

The Partnership and Performance Officer attended the meeting, responded to questions and made an undertaking to seek clarification on issues raised relating to sickness levels and fly-tipping (inert waste).

RESOLVED: That the Council's performance against the indicator set for the quarter ended 31 March 2015 be noted.

12. WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The following items, as part of the Work Programme for 2014/15 were considered.

13. PROCESSING OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS - PIS NI157(A)(B)(C)

This item had been included on the agenda following the request, at the last meeting, for the attendance of the Assistant Director Planning in relation to relevant PIs raised as part of scrutiny of the Performance Indicators (Q3 2014/15).

The Assistant Director Planning attended the meeting and gave an overview of the service, regarded to be one of the busiest for planning applications in Lancashire and the reasons for the fluctuations that had impacted on performance in Q3.

He made reference to the performance monitoring information for Q4, on the same PIs, that showed an increase from 44.44% (Q3), in major planning applications (PI NI157a) processed, to 62.50% in Q4 and the increase in performance, in Q4 too, advised for minor applications (PINI157b) and other applications (PINI157c), resulting in improvement across the monitored PIs.

He further made reference to resources for the Service that had seen the number of officers within the Development Management team increased as a result of the increased workload but there had been some delay in securing the additional staff resource as a result of encountering difficulties in filling the additional posts with the right quality of candidate.

In response to a Member question relating to the approach used to train and fill Planner vacancies, information was provided by the Assistant Director Planning on the recruitment process and methods used to attract suitable candidates.

RESOLVED: That the response of the Assistant Director Planning be noted.

14. A MARKET STRATEGY FOR ORMSKIRK TOWN CENTRE

The following three items, as part of the review, were considered.

15. A MARKET STRATEGY FOR ORMSKIRK TOWN CENTRE - INTERIM REPORT AND REVIEW OF PROJECT PLAN

Consideration was given to the interim report, attached at Appendix A, of the Committee on the findings to date in relation to the review 'A Market Town Strategy for Ormskirk on work undertaken in 2014/15.

In relation to the Project Plan it was reported that this would be amended to include the membership of the Committee for 2015/16.

In discussion comments and questions were raised on:

- Work instigated on the Market element of the review.
- Methods to encourage stallholders (approach to advertising; shopper experience; embracing new technology)
- Stall layout and etiquette for the future (positioning of stalls; keeping pedestrian access clear; discouraging random displays of goods external to stalls)
- Link to Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy (branding of Ormskirk market; encouraging footfall; methods of advertising (local radio; links with local transport; posters at stations)
- Tourism (building on historical perspectives (tours of the Parish Church)
- Visitor Map (identification of venues; locations of "the Map" across the town; historical perspective; inclusion of defibrillator access points)

The Technical Services Manager confirmed that comments relating to issues raised previously in respect of the Market had been fed through, as appropriate and, as the Visitor Map is currently being updated, made an undertaking to pass on Members comments in relation to inclusion of the defibrillator icon to denote locations and suggested sites for the map, to be passed on, as appropriate.

- RESOLVED:
- A That the interim report be noted.
 - B That the Project Plan be amended to include the membership of the Committee for 2015/16.
 - C That comments in relation to the Visitor Map of Ormskirk Town Centre, locations and use of defibrillator icon to be taken forward, as appropriate.

16. CAR PARKING IN THE TOWN CENTRE

The Technical Services Manager gave an oral presentation on the theme 'Car Parking' in Ormskirk Town Centre as part of the Committee's review. He also circulated supporting information on revisions to the Council's car parks map and car parking charges in the town's Council owned car parks, as contained on pages 117 to 121 of the Book of Reports.

Presentation 3 – Car Parking in Ormskirk Town Centre

Members considered information presented by the Technical Services Manager on car parking in the town centre.

In the presentation it was explained that parking in town centres represents a complex of issues hampered by a number of significant problems, including the growth of car ownership, that has exceeded what many traditional urban centres can accommodate. It has had to be recognised that parking comes at a cost that needs to be covered by "someone, somewhere and somehow" but this has proved to be emotive. Car parking policies that are embedded in a holistic transport strategy remain problematic because of the numerous stakeholders involved all working to different objectives.

It is recognised that town centres today are exposed to intense competition and need to do what they can to ensure accessibility. Car use and ownership has continued to rise and saturation point is not expected until 2035.

Cost of Parking

The cost of car parking both to the 'user' and the Council or private companies, who need to cover their costs in relation to maintenance and management of car parks as well as long-term investment in the quality of the car parks, was referenced. Additionally, car parks also attract business rates that must be paid. Consequentially, neither on-street nor off-street parking is "free."

Car Parks in the Town Centre

The Council-run car parks in Ormskirk town centre are controlled through "pay and display" There are 847 spaces on 10 car parks. Two other car parks, Finnegans Square and the Park and Ride car park at Ormskirk Station remain free of charge. Current charges to use the council car parks in Ormskirk are applicable Monday – Saturday between the hours of 08.30am – 5.30pm and details were provided on the income, charges and maintenance. Parking permits are also available costing £195 per year or £24 per calendar month.

Enforcement

In relation to enforcement it was stated that the Borough Council are responsible for off-street car parking but it is the responsibility of Lancashire County Council to look after car parking breaches on-street (Monday to Saturday).

Mr Brady went on to explain the processes in relation to the operation of enforcement including the difficulties encountered by enforcement officers; evidencing breaches and the exceptions that allow some users to park in restricted areas.

It was acknowledged that there had been problems associated with a privately-owned car park servicing the town centre.

Car Parking – Findings of others

Information in relation to access and in particular improving the parking experience in town centres extracted from research undertaken by the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) was also circulated.

The Genecon report on 'High Street Performance' issued in December 2011 to coincide with the launch of Mary Portas high street review assessed the causes of decline of the high street and prognosis for the future. Its findings on spacial and physical factors features were referred to as was an extract from the Alliance Boots 'Car Parking – A Retailer's View, featured by the Federation of Small Businesses, in particular the loss of customers to other destinations with insufficient / smart car parking; on-line and out of town retail parks being cited as causes.

Future developments

It was stated that the Council continues to respond to feedback and the experiences of other local authorities.

In relation to the use of technology for alternative methods of payment of the car parking fee, including those via mobile and smart phones, these would continue to be evaluated as were up-grades to the hand-held devices of enforcement officers.

In discussion questions and comments were raised in relation to:

- Pay & Display (P&D) (charges for long and short stays; allocation of disabled bays; facilities at/provision of "cashless" P&D machines; CCTV monitoring; costs associated with provision / maintenance of P&D machines.)
- Alternative methods of fee payment (use of advances in technology; payment via smart phones; credit / debit card payments.)
- Appeals Panel (membership and role of the Panel.)
- Car Parking Map of Ormskirk Town Centre (quality of information provided on the revised Map).

Members also referred to the comments reported in the local paper in respect of issues relating to the, privately owned, car park at Two Saints. The Portfolio Holder for Planning, who was in attendance at the meeting, with the permission of the Chairman, addressed the Committee and made an undertaking to take forward the matter and respond appropriately.

The Technical Services Manager responded to questions and provided clarification on issues raised in discussion. He confirmed, that the updated Ormskirk Town Centre map of council car parks, as circulated, would be included on the Council's web-site.

RESOLVED: A That the presentation and information therein be noted.

 B That comments in relation to:

1. Alternative methods of payments at Pay and Display machines be included as part of any future assessment of these facilities;
2. Ormskirk Town Centre map of council car parks, as revised, to be included on the Council's web-site;

 be taken forward, as appropriate.

17. NEXT STEPS

Members considered the next steps of the review as set down in the Project Plan.

RESOLVED: That in relation to the next steps of the Review the proposals for the next meeting to be held on 15 October 2015 be noted.

18. ITEMS FROM THE MEMBERS' UPDATE

There were no items under this heading.

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Chairman