

**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

AGENDA ITEM: 6

HELD: 24 NOVEMBER 2011

Start: 7.30pm

Finish: 9.10pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Kay (Chairman)
Mee (Vice Chairman)

Aldridge	Griffiths
Mrs. Atherley	Hodson
Bailey	Mrs. Kean
Blane	Lea
Cheetham	Mawdsley
Coyle	Pratt
Fillis	Savage

Officers: Borough Planner (Mr J Harrison)
Assistant Director Housing & Regeneration (Mr B Livermore)
Member Services Manager (Mr G Martin)
Assistant Solicitor (Mr M Hynes)
Partnership and Performance Manager (Ms C McNamara)
Principal Member Services Officer (Mrs S Griffiths)

In attendance: Councillors Furey, Moran, R. Pendleton and Westley

36. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs. Houlgrave and S. Jones.

37. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no changes to membership of the Committee.

38. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Councillors Mrs. Atherley, Bailey, Blane, Cheetham, Hodson, Kay, Mee, Pratt & Westley declared personal interests in item no.8 (The role of Parish and Town Councils and the impact of the Localism Bill Review) in view of them being members of Parish Councils and, where appropriate, Lancashire Association of Parish & Town Councils, NALC.
2. Councillor Aldridge declared a personal interest in item nos. 9 (Peer Review – Landlord Services and 10 (Housing Service Improvement Plan) as he and members of his family are tenants of rented garage sites/Council accommodation.

40. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of a party whip.

41. MINUTES

The Chairman provided an update on the following items which had been raised at the last meeting of the Committee held on 22 September 2011 in relation to:-

- Min. no. 26 Housing Service Improvement Plan
- Min. no.30 Pedestrian (zebra crossing) in Westhead Village & Southport Road, Scarisbrick
- Min. no. 31 Traffic lights at the Wigan Road/Knowsley Road/Moor Street junction and the Moor Street/St. Helens Junction be upgraded to include a pedestrian crossing (i.e. pelican type) facility
- Min. no. 33 Minutes of the LCC Health Scrutiny Committee – 12 July 2011

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 22 September 2011 be approved as a correct and signed by the Chairman.

42. MINUTES OF THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING OF 13 OCTOBER 2011

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Member Development Commission meeting held on 13 October 2011 be noted.

43. THE ROLE OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS AND THE IMPACT OF THE LOCALISM BILL REVIEW

The following three items were considered.

44. PARISH COUNCILS - CURRENT ROLE/STATUS/FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

In introducing his oral presentation on the above, the Members Services Manager indicated that there were around 9,000 Parish, Town, Community and Neighbourhood Councils (local councils) representing around 16 million people across England and within the West Lancashire Borough 54% of the electorate were within a parished area.

He outlined the petitioning procedures for the establishment of a Parish Council and how members are elected. He referred to their powers e.g. to provide facilities (such as allotments, leisure, bus shelters, litter bins, car parks, community centre, parks and open spaces etc.) to represent (e.g. planning applications), wellbeing (to spend on any activity which adds to the wellbeing of its community), and duties e.g. preparation of external audited annual accounts, appointment of Responsible Financial Officer.

He went on to explain that finances raised by the Parish Councils through precepts, concurrent funding and capital funding, loans, rents or leases.

In concluding his presentation the Member Services Manager referred to the newly enacted Localism Bill in particular to the general power of competence contained within it.

During the ensuing discussion Members raised questions/comments in relation to:-

- Qualifications for Parish Council Clerks
- Precepts – capping/collection
- Role of representative body – National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
- Positive changes to parished areas brought about by Parish Councils

RESOLVED: (A) That the presentation be noted.

(B) That the Borough Treasurer provide information to Members on costs of collecting Parish precepts.

45. DRAFT LOCALISM BILL 2011

In a report circulated and contained on pages 271 to 274 of the Book of Reports the Transformation Manager provided a summary of the above-mentioned Bill in particular to areas of interest to Parish Councils. Members noted that the Bill received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011 and was now an Act of Parliament to be implemented by April 2012.

The ensuing discussion highlighted the following comments/questions in relation to:-

- Right to challenge
- Bid and buy community assets
- Planning – neighbourhood plans/community right to build
- 3 tier partnerships
- Purpose of the review

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

46. PROJECT PLAN

RESOLVED: That the updated Project Plan, be noted.

47. PEER REVIEW - LANDLORD SERVICES

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration as circulated and contained on pages 281 to 313 of the Book of Reports advising Members of the outcome of a Peer Review (Landlord Services) undertaken by Helena Partnerships.

During the ensuing discussion Members raised questions/comments in relation to:-

- current system for repairs/maintenance
- repairs inspections
- recruitment freeze and use of agency staff
- walkabout within Wards
- tenant handbook/terms and conditions of tenancy

The Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration outlined the current arrangements for tenants reporting repairs/maintenance issues, and reported that an appointments system would be implemented in April 2012. He went on to outline Council policy regarding the use of agency staff and to explain why charges are made for certain type of repairs.

RESOLVED: That the Peer Review be noted.

48. HOUSING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration as circulated and contained on pages 315 to 374 of the book of Report to facilitate Members scrutiny of the Housing Improvement Plan in order to ascertain whether the Council is meeting all of the requirements of the Tenants Services Authority.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

49. COMPLAINTS MONITORING

Consideration was given to the report of the Transformation Manager as circulated and contained on pages 375 to 383 of the book of reports containing data on complaints received by the Council from April 2010 – March 2011.

The ensuing discussion highlighted comments/questions in relation to:-

- Affect of staff reduction on number of complaints
- Determination of a complaint
- Types of complaint

RESOLVED: A. That the report be noted.

- B. That the Transformation Manager be requested to report to Members how low level concerns can be captured and reviewed by the Council in order to learn from these and drive improvement forward.

50. ITEMS AT THE REQUEST OF A MEMBER/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no items under this heading.

51. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE MEMBERS UPDATE

There were no items under this heading.

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CHAIRMAN