

REPORT OF THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF POLICY AND CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.

With only two Committee meetings left before the end of the year, never has it been more important to use these meetings as milestones, as opposed to vehicles in which to do the actual business of the Committee. All three of the overview and scrutiny Committees still have work outstanding, some of which looks ambitious if it is to be completed before the end of the municipal year.

Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the beginning of November asked its member if pre decision Scrutiny should become a work programme priorities for Policy and Corporate Resources for the next 4 months, and as a result of the positive response both the Chair and Vice Chair were consulted as to the proposals wider local legislative and policy context in advance of Policy Council. In terms of other priorities; "delivering the budget 2011-13" and "engaging with residents" were Members clear choice of preference with "further large scale budget cuts in 2013-15", "the demotivation and disintegration of partnerships" and "community tensions / extremism" being secondary priorities Members wished to focus on.

Reconfiguration of mental health services; Dementia; Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee especially has an uphill agenda to complete – with the inclusion of Dementia – a hot topic that has attracted comment from Councillors across the borough. At the December meeting of Policy and Corporate Resources OSC it was agreed by Members to establish a short term task and finish group to scrutinise the current reconfiguration of mental health services across Lancashire; specifically Dementia services. Because this consultation will impact on several Committees Policy and & Corporate Resources OSC Members agreed that any Scrutiny Member from any of the three Scrutiny Committees would be invited to take part in this Scrutiny review. The task and finish group will be coordinated by Cllr Ron O Keeffe, reporting through his Children and Health Committee to Policy and Corporate Resources OSC, and Council Forum if necessary.

Two presentations have been given already to Children and Health Committee and latterly to the Policy and Corporate Resources Committee. Debbie Nixon Strategic Director for Mental Health NHS Lancashire will be attending the next meeting of Children and Health OSC on the 18th January to give the Committee an update on where the preparation is up to and an expected timeline as to when the consultation will take place. Having had that presentation and conversation, Members who are willing to do some short term task and finish group work will be asked for suggestions of how they wish to progress Scrutiny of the consultation further.

This will follow in the footsteps of other short term sub Committees, holds the decision makers to account and delivers similar results; we will be able to secure what is best for the people of Blackburn with Darwen and Pennine Lancashire.

Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

last meeting of the Committee was unfortunately cancelled due to industrial action, however the work of two task groups still continued;

1) Selective Landlord licensing and minimising the proliferation of Houses with Multiple Occupation:

- The task group have received an overview of the subject and issues facing the Council and undertook an in-depth question and answer session with the Executive and Officers.
- The task Group has requested a written response to a number of questions asked.
- Members are looking to undertake site visits early in the New Year.

2) Promoting growth by innovative use of Council powers and assets:

- Promoting Growth task group have received a detailed report from the Director for Regeneration.
- Members have a meeting with the Director in the first week of January (rearrangement of Decembers cancelled meeting).
- Task Group may also undertake a number of site visits to the Knowledge Zone, Freckleton street corridor (and others) to see possible approaches to different site in the borough the Council has open to it.

The Children's & Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee have continued to work within the three task and finish groups established at the start of the Municipal year:

- Children's; Connexions Service and the increase in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and the increase in Youth Offending Team numbers (YOT)
- Adults; Development of the Centre for Independent Living
- Culture and Leisure; Review of Re:refresh

To date each of the Task and Finish Groups have done the following:

Children's

Two task and finish group meetings: At the first meeting Members had the opportunity to question the YOT team on the;

- Re-structure to their service,
- Impact that this has had on the young people,
- Impact on the core service,
- Impact on staff caseloads,
- Preventative services.

Questions were asked and answered on the Connexions service; specifically:

- A restructure of their service

- The impact on young people and staff as a result of the re-structure
 - The impact on their core service
 - The rising NEET levels – Key areas and hard to reach groups
- Visits were undertaken to a Referral Order panel (Members who attended were impressed with how this worked).
 - Visits to Connexions in both Blackburn and Darwen – Opportunity to see how it works sit with Personal Advisors and began exploring young people's opinion of the service.
 - Further visits to Connexions in the New Year have been requested to build up a bigger picture of the service also possible visit to a school with a Connexions Advisor to see the service working within schools.
 - Second Task & Finish Group meeting Members reported back on findings of visits and planned next steps.

Adult Services

- The specific focus of the review has been the development of the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) however the group also looked at personal budgets during the second half of the review.
- Two task & finish groups held question and answer sessions with Officers on the following issues:
 - Project plan for CIL including timescales, key people involved and funding
 - Personalised Budgets
 - Resource Allocation System (RAS)
- Visits were also undertaken to Warrington and Blackpool Independent Living Centres.

Culture, Leisure & Sport

- Two Task and Finish Groups have questioned Officers from the Council and Care Trust Plus on Re:refresh looking specifically at:
 - Funding of the Service
 - Health impact that the service has had on service users
 - Marketing and Publicity (particularly in GP surgeries and Health Centres)
 - Referrals from health professionals to the service
 - Demographics of service users.

Clearly considerable work has already taken place, and the pace of reviews has not slowed. We have been pleased with the progress made, and the ability for each of the three Committees to deliver work programmes within constrained resources and tight timeframes. What both Members and officers need to be ever mindful of is the positive outcomes this work needs to produce at the end of the year. Which in itself will be part of the challenge in the Annual review.