

scrutiny

focus on performance

REPORT OF: The Chair of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

REPORT TO: Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

ON: 11th April 2012

RE: End of Year report for Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Purpose of the Report

In December 2010, the Council faced unprecedented budget reductions of up to £48M over the next four years. Reviews of all aspects of the Council's business were underway or planned. At the first meeting of the new municipal year, Members were provided with a copy of the "Transformational Agenda" report which outlined the current position with regards to savings. The Executive Members outlined their confidence in delivering the budget challenges agreed at Finance Council and the progress made by efficiency service reviews in their Portfolio areas, explaining their satisfaction and confidence with their portfolio positions, emphasising the challenges to the budget with the need to meet 100% of the targeted savings, and the overall budgetary position of the Council.

Members choose the following topics and timelines over which to scrutinise their topics.

Topic	Timeline	Completed
£250,000 Reduction in Core Fee	June -Oct	✓
Reduction in Street Cleaning	June -Oct	✓
Selective Landlord licensing	Oct-Feb	✓
Promoting Growth	Oct -Feb	✓
Transformational Budget	June- March	✓

2. Final Recommendations

Selective Landlord licensing

- 1) That the Committee fully supports the introduction of a planning Article 4 direction within Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.
- 2) That the Executive Member explores options to limit the impact in the delay of the introduction of the Article 4 direction.
- 3) That the Executive Member ensures that once the Article 4 direction has been introduced, that the Council actively publicises its use and that the required resources are given to the key portfolios which are then able to enforce its use.
- 4) That the Executive Members explore all avenues open to them, to work with Executive Board to allow fines awarded for successful prosecutions of landlords, to be ring fenced to reinvest in further schemes which promote responsible landlords and raise the quality of housing.
- 5) That there be an ongoing evaluation of the Selective Licensing Scheme in Blackburn with Darwen of:
 - Its continued feasibility benefits borough wide and learning from pilot schemes;
 - The level of staffing and financial resources required for its effective operation; and
 - The practicalities of operating a Voluntary Registration Scheme alongside any Selective Licensing Scheme.
- 6) That the introduction of an incentive scheme to encourage landlords to become members of the accreditation scheme be explored.
- 7) That as a matter of priority, training be given to all Members to make them more aware of the Council's regulations and powers, to enable Members to identify houses of multiple occupation (HMO) and private rented accommodation. This will enable Members to identify concerns and work better in their neighbourhoods.
- 8) That training is also provided to all relevant Council departments to ensure that unregistered houses of multiple occupation are identified and brought to the attention of relevant officers. This will enable officers to co-ordinate and address issues and promote Council priorities which may be impacted on by private landlord issues e.g. Think Family.
- 9) That further work is undertaken to more widely publicise the advice services available for residents, tenants and landlords offered by the Council through the local authority and the impact results demonstrated to the Committee.

- 10) That the Executive Member look to develop plans to tackle environmental and nuisance issues emanating from concentrations of HMO/private landlord areas to allow for a more targeted and focussed approach using a range of existing enforcement powers and delivering positive outcomes. Sharing the agreed plan with Members once agreed.

Promoting Growth

- 1) That the Committee supports the Regeneration Portfolio's plans for the Freckleton street corridor and requests that Members are kept up to date of progression and any changes to current plans.
- 2) That the Regeneration Portfolio ensures that any investment in the road network is properly planned and future proofed to ensure it remains relevant to assist development.
- 3) That the Executive Member for Regeneration ensures that priority is given to ensuring job creation as an outcome for all decisions affecting Council assets and regeneration schemes,
- 4) That the Regeneration Portfolio ensures that each individual future regeneration schemes prioritise local job creation as a key indicator and outcome in a schemes success.
- 5) That the Committee supports the innovative proposal being considered by the Regeneration Portfolio on the use of Council assets to deliver agreed outcomes, in particular the potential property disposals on the bases of providing difficult and attractive sites together to encourage development.
- 6) That the Council explores ways in which Council Assets be negotiated on a long term lease basis to developers to try and stimulate growth and job creation in the borough, while retaining long term ownership.
- 7) That the Executive Member continues to work with its Partner organisations and continually looks to best practice, demonstrating to the Committee efforts that have been made to ensure that all Regeneration schemes achieve best value.

2.1 Recommendations already agreed and submitted to the Executive

£250,000 Reduction in Core Fee

- 1) That the Committee acknowledges the difficulties and challenges faced by the Regeneration Portfolio and CAPITA in achieving the required savings agreed by the Council.

- 2) That the Committee supports the positive and true partnership working between Regeneration and CAPITA in agreeing a reduction in the Core fee and would support further initiatives between the two bodies to identify savings.
- 3) That the Executive Member ensures that appropriate safeguards and monitoring are in place to ensure that work moved from the Core Fee to none Core Fee is cost effective in the long term.
- 4) That the Committee supports the removal of providing Christmas Trees from the core fee and actively encourages the use of Partner organisation and donations/sponsorship.
- 5) That appropriate and transparent monitoring of Traffic Regulars Orders (TRO's) are in place and that reports by exception are provided if none core TRO's are required.
- 6) That the Committee supports the arrangements of profit Sharing with CAPITA from HAMIS and that further innovations are looked at to allow CAPITA to diversify in other areas of potential future profits.

Reduction in Street Cleaning

- 1) That the Committee acknowledges the difficulties faced by the Executive Member for Environment in achieving the required savings set by the Council.
- 2) That the Committee supports the work undertaken to make the Environment Department/Staff as flexible and responsive as possible in light of balancing a budget and maintaining a service.
- 3) That the Executive Member consider the balance of resources deployed between preventing littering occurring and dealing with litter after the event, as the presences of litter generates more littering, and prevention is better than a cure.
- 4) That ward Members be provided with information concerning waste dumping and littering 'hot spots' in their ward to facilitate monitoring.
- 5) That consideration be given to identifying effective methods of educating and encouraging against littering, particularly 'hot spot' areas.
- 6) That Lancashire Police be asked to encourage their Officers in Blackburn with Darwen to use their powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices in respect of littering more vigorously.

- 7) That the Environment Portfolio makes regular and consistent use of the shuttle and the Council's website to promote anti-littering and advertise related campaigns.
- 8) That future and similar local campaigns be rejuvenated and co-ordinated to encourage more voluntary litter picking to improve the local environment.
- 9) That the Executive Member ensure where possible that all initiatives to promote clean streets link in with current and future Council campaigns to help the portfolio:
 - Promote clean streets
 - Engage with the public
 - Educate people
- 10) That the Executive Member looks to reintroduce a school educator in some capacity as a proactive method to reduce future risk and costs to the Council from dumping of litter and waste.
- 11) That the Council look to empower all Councillors to be litter champions for the Borough and to actively spread the Council's street cleaning message in Schools, Mosques, Churches and ward surgeries.
- 12) That the Executive Member try to and make use of Partner organisations/outside bodies/agencies, to provide education in schools where possible, and that the Portfolio looks at other opportunities to encourage and engage schools and children.
- 13) That the Portfolio ensures that all Community Pride/engagement projects are appropriately supported to ensure maximum publicity, that the projects are effective and that they meet the Council's objectives.
- 14) That the proposed Environment Portfolio Dashboard reports be given to Members along with a map of fly tipping hot spots.
- 15) That regular use of 'The Shuttle' is used to highlight resident's responsibility to help keep the Borough's streets clean as well as services that are available to residents in order to achieve this.

3. Synopsis

It will be useful for the Annual Review in April, to gather Scrutiny Members comments and views on how successful the Committee has been in its first year operating under new arrangements.

What differences do you think the Committee has made in its scrutinising of the Portfolio(s)?

What has helped the Committees progress throughout the year?

What has hindered the Committees progress throughout the year?

What improvements would you suggest for the Annual Review.

Do you feel that by choosing the topic of **£250,000 Reduction in Core Fee** the Committee has:-

STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Ensured this scrutiny topic will demonstrate an efficient use of public money					
Better met the needs of citizens					
Been led and owned by Members not officers					
Influenced, developed or reviewed policy					
Contributed to the "improvement agenda" e.g. Performance Agreement.					
Ensured corporate priorities are met.					
Engaged - - Public - Partners - Press					

Do you feel that by choosing the topic of **Reduction in Street Cleaning** the Committee has:-

STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Ensured this scrutiny topic will demonstrate an efficient use of public money					
Better met the needs of citizens					
Been led and owned by Members not officers					
Influenced, developed or reviewed policy					
Contributed to the "improvement agenda" e.g. Performance Agreement.					
Ensured corporate priorities are met.					
Engaged - - Public - Partners - Press					

Do you feel that by choosing the topic of **Selective Landlord licensing** the Committee has:-

STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Ensured this scrutiny topic will demonstrate an efficient use of public money					
Better met the needs of citizens					
Been led and owned by Members not officers					
Influenced, developed or reviewed policy					
Contributed to the "improvement agenda" e.g. Performance Agreement.					
Ensured corporate priorities are met.					
Engaged - - Public - Partners - Press					

Do you feel that by choosing the topic of **Promoting Growth** the Committee has:-

STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Ensured this scrutiny topic will demonstrate an efficient use of public money					
Better met the needs of citizens					
Been led and owned by Members not officers					
Influenced, developed or reviewed policy					
Contributed to the "improvement agenda" e.g. Performance Agreement.					
Ensured corporate priorities are met.					
Engaged - - Public - Partners - Press					

Councillor Naushad Surve

Chair of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor John Pearson

Vice-Chair of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Contact Officer

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