

Minutes of: POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 22nd February 2007

**Present: Councillor P Starkey (for H Steen in the Chair)
Councillors D Barnes, Dickinson (for J Pawson)
Entwistle and Lynskey (for J Thorne)**

**In Attendance: Carole Todd, Head of Street Scene and Liveability
Philip Mepham, Interim Environmental Health Manager
Jason Foster, Client Services Manager
Ilona Snow-Miller, Head of Community and
Partnerships
Julian Joinson, Democratic Services Manager
Jerry Smith, District Partnership Officer, LCC
Martin Profit, Groundwork Trust**

Also Present: Councillors Driver and Neal

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Pawson, H Steen, J Thorne and Dr M Lee, Co-opted Member.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 11th January 2007 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no items of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided an update as to actions taken since the last meeting as follows:-

- The matter of public conveniences had been discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and it had been agreed that a Task and Finish Group should be set up to look at it. Councillors Neal and Eaton had agreed to serve on this Group and Councillors Ruddick and Hancock had been asked to contact the Scrutiny Support Officer with other names.
- The Smokefree Strategy had been considered by the Cabinet in January 2007 and had been agreed.
- The Corporate Priorities had been considered by Cabinet last night and Full Council had been recommended to approve them. The Cabinet had also agreed that a workshop session would be held with all Members for future reviews of priorities.

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered a consultation document issued by the Neighbourhood Engagement Policy Officer of Lancashire County Council, in respect of the development of a Corporate Framework for Engagement with people living in neighbourhoods across Lancashire. Jerry Smith, the District Partnership Officer, outlined some key areas within the document as follows:-

- The consultation ran until 21st April 2007.
- Engagement happened across a broad spectrum from providing quality information to empowering people to make decisions and manage budgets.
- Neighbourhood arrangements included parish and town councils; neighbourhood management; district area committees and councils; market town partnerships; residents' associations; and the voluntary, community and faith sector.
- Where a legitimate organisation was identified the County Council would consult and involve that body. For neighbourhood organisations wishing to take on more formal decision-making and management responsibilities the County Council would develop a test similar to that for quality parishes.
- Members would have a key role in these arrangements and there would also be links to the Lancashire Locals and Area Forums.
- The pilot Charter between Whitworth, Rossendale and Lancashire Councils was an example of closer working. Lancashire Local also had a protocol for working with parishes.
- Rossendale's priorities in relation to street scene, crime reduction, and the environment linked well with Lancashire's priorities on highways, youth and community issues, libraries and crime reduction.
- The Lancashire-wide lead would be Adrienne Banks, Neighbourhood Engagement Policy Officer and the local Rossendale lead would be Jerry Smith, District Partnership Officer.

The Head of Street Scene and Liveability outlined Rossendale's approach to neighbourhood working, which included the creation of 4 township areas, with neighbourhood managers and teams. The proposals were to develop the 4 Area Forums and to ensure that all stakeholders were in the same place to

deal with issues from the public. A small budget would be allocated to each area forum. The intention was to develop neighbourhood agreements, charters and plans and a multi-agency approach to include the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), police, fire and youth services. Area forums would be more robust and user friendly, with carefully planned agendas and improved advertising.

Resolved:

1. That the County Council's consultation on proposals for engaging with neighbourhoods in Lancashire be noted
2. That Rossendale's outline plans in respect of neighbourhood engagement be noted.

8. STRATEGIC REVIEW OF LEISURE

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships on the Strategic Review of Leisure. The Head of Community and Partnerships highlighted issues within the report. The Council had commissioned PMP to undertake a review. There were three themes to the review including what facilities were needed; what facilities were already in place and their condition; and whether the Council was making the most out of the existing facilities.

The consultants had indicated that overall the number of facilities was sufficient and that these were situated in the right locations. The review had identified that Haslingden swimming pool was relatively old and that its facilities were out of date. A proposal had already been developed to create a Health and Fitness Suite at Haslingden Sports Centre. It was proposed that over time the swimming pool would be relocated to that site. Other proposals would see investment in the Marl Pitts facilities and a more coordinated approach to its usage. Further investment was required in the facilities at Bacup, but consultations would need to take place about the type of facilities to be provided.

A White Paper had been produced for consultation purposes, which included some specific questions as follows:-

- Is increasing participation in leisure activities the right target for the Council to pursue?
- Will implementing the proposal in this White Paper help achieve increased participation in leisure activities?
- Will implementing the proposals in this White Paper deliver the right range of facilities for the Borough?

The Committee was reminded of that health was a priority within Rossendale since people died 2 years younger than the national average. Members were asked to consider whether the questions were suitable and to make comments to the Cabinet about the Strategy.

Members discussed in more detail the recommendation to support the previous decision concerning a Health and Fitness Suite at Haslingden Sports Centre. Councillor Entwistle expressed the view Members should look carefully at the proposals to ensure that they were viable. The Head of Community and Partnerships reported that the Lifestyle Centre proposals would generate an income which would help to fund future developments. Councillor Driver stressed the need to invest in fitness and leisure facilities in order to improve local health.

Resolved:

To note the Strategy set out in the White Paper 'Improving the Borough's Leisure Offer' and to endorse the wording of the three key questions within the document.

9. PLAY STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability on the Draft Play Strategy. Councillor Driver indicated that the Strategy looked at what the Council was providing now and the way forward. The Head of Street Scene and Liveability stated that the Council had entered into an agreement 6 months ago to carry out a review of Open Spaces, which had led to Groundwork Rossendale producing the draft Play Strategy and an Open Spaces Strategy.

The Client Services Manager indicated that the development of the Play Strategy would enable the Council to access a £200,000 Big Lottery Fund grant for children's play. In addition the Council had provided a capital improvement programme of £250,000 over 5 years from 2006/07. The Council also intended to work with partner organisations to attract an additional £3M funding to improve other sites. An executive summary of the draft Strategy would be available shortly.

Members discussed the methodology used to prioritise the wards in which the initial improvements would be focussed. Mr Profit indicated that the assessment had been based upon a combination of levels of deprivation, lack of free facilities, numbers of children and standards of existing facilities. Members were informed about the detailed schemes which would be funded in the within the first 3 years of the programme. Concern was expressed that play facilities needed to cater for a range of age groups.

Resolved:

To recommend the Cabinet to approve the draft Play Strategy as a way of improving children's play.

10. UPDATE ON OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

The Head of Street Scene and Liveability provided an update on the Open Spaces Strategy. This was the second piece of work being undertaken by Groundwork and would enable bids for funding to be submitted. The Strategy

looked at provision in each area including private sector provision and that in neighbouring authorities. It was anticipated that the full Strategy would be available in March 2007 and Members of the Committee would have an opportunity to comment on the Strategy at that time.

Resolved:

To note the update report on the Open Spaces Strategy.

11. HEALTHY BUSINESS SCHEME

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability on progress in the development of a Healthy Business Scheme. The Interim Environmental Health Manager indicated that the workplace had a powerful effect on the health of employees in many ways. How healthy a person felt affected his or her productivity, and how satisfied they were with their job affected their own health, both physical and psychological.

A workplace where the health and well being of employees was a priority could improve health and reduce health inequalities. High standards of health and safety were allied with policies and procedures that took into account the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health of workers. Employers could also contribute to health and regeneration outside the workplace by employing and purchasing locally, and enhancing the skills of their workforces.

The Environmental Health Service had recognised that the general health of the people of Rossendale was not as good as the Region or National averages. As a part of the process of redirecting the work of the service, it aimed to deliver services that would make a significant difference to the health of residents and employees by targeting workplaces as a "Healthy Setting". A meeting had been held on 31st January 2007 attended by 18 people with a range of interests, including two large local employers. It was hoped to work with these businesses to develop an approach, which could then be rolled out to other local businesses.

Members discussed a number of related health issues including Smokefree Rossendale and the level of dental provision within the Borough.

Resolved:

1. To note the progress being made and support the concept of a Health Business Scheme.
2. To request officers to invite David Peat, Chief Executive of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale PCT, to meet Members to discuss the allocation of resources for dental health provision within the Borough.

12. ROSSENDALE ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability on the result of the recent public consultation exercise in relation to the Council's draft Environmental Strategy. The Interim Environmental Health Manager indicated that on 2nd November 2006, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered a report describing the proposal to produce an Environmental Strategy for the Council and publish it for public consultation. The report had been considered and approved for consultation by Council at its meeting in December 2006.

Consultation on the draft copy of the Rossendale Environmental Strategy had run from Monday 11th December 2006 to Friday 26th January 2007. The consultation exercise had aimed to gain a full understanding of the current levels of activity, the contributions groups and individuals could and did make and to gather ideas and encourage participation in the implementation of the Strategy in order to help achieve its aims and objectives.

The consultation had attracted 6 responses. Although the number was few, the quality of responses had helped to improve the Strategy. Members considered a list of the comments made and the proposed responses, which had been included in the current version of the Strategy.

The Council had installed the 'Acorn' Environmental Management System which would monitor progress against the Strategy and would allow the Council to achieve 'gongs' at each step.

Members discussed a number of environmental issues, including flooding and contaminated land.

Resolved:

To note the report on the Rossendale Environmental Strategy.

13. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the items detailed in the Forward Plan and whether they wished for any Policies to be submitted to the Committee prior to a decision being made by the Cabinet.

Resolved:

That the contents of the Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.05pm