

Minutes of: POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 5th November 2008

**Present: Councillor H Steen (Chair)
Councillors Evans, Farrington, Forshaw, May, Morris and Pilling**

**In Attendance: Trish Ellins, Community Safety Manager
Mike Riley, Communities Manager
Sarah Blackwell, Trainee Solicitor
Stephen Stray, Planning Unit Manager
Rebecca Lawlor, Regeneration Delivery Manager
Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder, Resource and Finance
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer**

Also Present: 1 Member of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Philip Ham, Co-opted Member.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 2 September 2008 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

No urgent items were raised under this item.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised by members of the public.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and asked Members and Officers to introduce themselves.

She informed Members that a full report on the Housing and Regeneration Bill would be presented to the meeting in January, along with the Enforcement Policy and updates on existing policies.

7. ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY

The Community Safety Manager gave a verbal update on the proposed Road Safety Strategy.

An Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group had been established and recommended to Cabinet in its final report that there was a need for the Council to have a Road Safety Strategy.

The Community Safety Manager indicated that there is currently a County Strategy governed under the Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety. Government targets were set in 2000 which run until 2010 and therefore the Council's Road Safety Strategy would only be a short-lived Strategy.

She explained how local issues can be undertaken to reduce casualties, with Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety running a number of programmes in colleges which the Council could feed into. These include programmes around car safety seats with free checks being undertaken at local supermarkets.

Other initiatives within the Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety include the 'Wasted Lives' Campaign which includes a DVD, that highlights the consequences of dangerous driving. Suggestions were made by Members that this DVD should be available to Rehabilitation Centres and the Community Safety Manager agreed to discuss this with the Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety.

The Community Safety Manager also suggested working with the Council's Communication Team to have a media campaign with the Rossendale Free Press as 'supporters' of the campaign.

The Partnership also had Road Safety Grants which organisations could bid for. Members agreed that these grants needed to be publicised so that organisations would know about their availability. The Community Safety Manager agreed to send the leaflet to Members and also make them available in the one stop shop and on Neighbourhood notice boards.

A member raised concern that the Strategy would only be short term and indicated that the road safety was a long term issue and therefore should it be a long term robust Strategy.

Resolved:

That the information be noted.

8. NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

The Communities Manager presented a report which provided a draft framework for the delivery of Neighbourhood Management throughout Rossendale.

To deliver the Council's commitment to sharing power with our communities as part of the Council's move into phase three Rossendale's approach to Neighbourhood

Management needs to be broadened across the Council and its partners.

A view widely expressed by partners and the community is that Neighbourhood Forums were presently seen as a Council function where partners and the community were invited to attend. Public attendance varied across the forums. The issues raised were often the same eg highways, dog fouling, blocked drains and crime and disorder.

A key principle of the review was to explore the development of a Neighbourhood Forum which sit within the framework of the Rossendale Partnership and were inclusive, where all members were seen as playing an equal and active part.

One of the principle functions of the Neighbourhood Forums would be to develop and implement a Neighbourhood Plan. A standard agenda item on the Neighbourhood Forum would be to discuss how collectively the members could tackle the priorities identified in the Plan.

He indicated that there were different priorities for different areas of the Borough and positive steps were being taken to deliver services more closely with the community.

Members discussed a number of ways to consult with the public and the Communities Manager explained that there would be 4 community events throughout the Borough with a drop in centre. A number of organisations would be asked to participate, including Lancashire County Council, the Primary Care Trust, and local community groups. These would begin in January and therefore the final report would not be presented to Cabinet until February at the earliest.

Resolved:

That the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to the direction of travel as outlined by the Communities Manager and that Member's comments made at the meeting would be factored into the consultation process.

9. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – NEW MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME

The Trainee Solicitor presented a report on the Council's requirements to adopt a new Freedom of Information Model Publication Scheme.

The Freedom of Information Act required all public authorities to maintain a publication scheme detailing the types of information that is regularly made available to the public. The new model scheme would be effective from January 2009.

Officers within the Council had been asked to provide details of how information within their service would be accessed by the public. Concern was raised by members that there were still gaps within the report and it was confirmed that some Officers had not yet returned their information. Members asked that Officers ensure that the information they present was accurate and correct.

A member also asked that information on the Council's Partners should be included in the report, as well as Equalities information. This would be fed back to Legal Services.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources explained that charges for the individual requests still needed to be confirmed and the methodology would be mathematically calculated by the Finance Department.

Resolved:

1. That the feedback received from the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee be included in the report.
2. That the Scrutiny Support Officer write to the Trainee Solicitor indicating that the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee raised concerns that Officers were not supplying the information and that all information both accurate and correct should be returned by 21 November 2008.
3. That a copy of the final report be sent to Members.

10. UPDATE ON THE CORE STRATEGY AND ALLOCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

The Planning Unit Manager presented a progress update on the Core Strategy and Allocation Development Plan Document and gave an overview of the different development plans as follows.

- The Local Development Framework is a 15 year vision on the planning authorities approach to local development and contains a suite of Development Plan Documents.
- The Local Development Scheme was a timetable detailing when the documents would be produced.
- The Core Strategy is the key Development Plan Document in providing the overall strategic vision for the future of the Borough, which would set out how the Council would respond to local priorities and meet the challenges of the future in terms of delivering development needs and protecting our environment. The Council cannot finalise other policies until the Core Strategy is in place.

Some consultation had already taken place, but more is required to make a revised document robust. Having regard to new regulations recently introduced by the Government, the Government Office for the North West has advised that the Council can now undertake further consultation on an amended document without the need to go back to Full Council before a final draft document is put before this committee, Cabinet and Full Council. This approach will help speed up the process of the document being adopted by the Council, but will mean the timetable as set out in the report will need to be amended.

A working group would be established in the New Year, comprising the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, the Shadow Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Minority Opposition Group.

The Planning Unit Manager agreed to present a further update to the next Policy Overview and Scrutiny Meeting in January.

Resolved:

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the Planning Unit Manager present a further update at the next Policy Overview and Scrutiny Meeting in January.

11. PENNINE LANCASHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY

The Regeneration Delivery Manager gave a brief overview of the Equality Impact Assessment and the Biodiversity Impact Assessment, which were attached to the report.

She indicated that initially there was a Fit for Purpose Strategy 2005/08, following which the Government Office North West highlighted the need for partnership working and a Pennine Lancashire task group from each of the six Pennine Lancashire Authorities was established to develop a joint Housing Strategy for Pennine Lancashire.

The development was supported by PLLACE (Pennine Lancashire Leaders and Chief Executives) and co-ordinated by officers from Blackburn with Darwen with input from Elevate.

Officers from Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale had been assigned to lead on the 3 key themes (Quantity, Quality and People) with the Head of Regeneration at Rossendale was leading on the development of the People delivery plan.

There was discussion on the need to recognise the role and influence of Rossendale within the Pennine footprint, in particular the need for a rail link between Manchester and Rossendale, but the Strategy does not include this.

It was also felt that the document needs to expand on the role and needs of the 'people' section within both the main body of the report and the proposed detailed action plans.

Resolved

1. That the Committee note that this is a strategic document for Pennine Lancashire and that there is a need to recognise the role and influence of Rossendale within the Pennine footprint and the feasibility of the train link between Manchester and Rochdale which would support the economic and housing offer for Pennine Lancashire.

2. That the Committee ask that the draft strategic document further expands on and identifies the role and needs of the 'people' section within the main body of the report and the proposed detailed action plans.

12. FORWARD PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1st NOVEMBER 2008 TO 28th FEBRUARY 2009

The Committee reviewed the key decisions within the Forward Plan for the period 1st November 2008 to 28th February 2009.

The Scrutiny Support Officer informed the Committee that, along with those reports going to the next Committee highlighted in the Chair's Update, the following would also be included.

Housing and Regeneration Bill
Update on the Core Strategy and other related documents

At the last meeting it was agreed that the Committee would also like to consider the Pennine Lancashire Development Company and Pennine Lancashire Multi-Area Agreement before going back to Cabinet.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.45pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date