

Minutes of: PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 8 March 2010

PRESENT: Councillor Sandiford (Chair)
Councillors L Barnes, Lamb, Stansfield, Thorne and Unsworth (substituting for Crawforth)

IN ATTENDANCE: Claire Birtwistle, Acting Head of Legal Services
Philip Mepham, Environmental Health Manager
Amanda Garrard, Green Vale Homes
Lee Rogers, Green Vale Homes
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer
Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

1 member of the public

Members observed a minutes silence for Bernard Divine, co-opted Member of the Committee.

The Chair asked for approval to alter the order of the agenda to allow item D1 to be discussed first on the agenda.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Crawforth and Neal and Councillor Smith (Portfolio Holder for Customer Services).

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2010 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

In relation to Item 8 – Update on Performance Target LI 82 (ii) Tonnes of Household Waste Recycled, as requested at the last meeting, Members received comparative recycling figures with those of other Local Authorities.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for discussion.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow the member of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair updated Members on her meeting with the Chief Executive to discuss Rehabilitation Services. The Chief Executive agreed to discuss this with the Primary Care Trust and has now received confirmation that rehabilitation services would be commissioned and offered from the Hub.

With regard to winter maintenance, there would be a workshop in June or July between LCC and the Council through a multi-agency approach to draw everything together. The workshop would be organised through the LSP.

The Chair reminded Members of the visit to the new health build, which was due to take place at 1.30pm on 19 March 2010.

7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATION AND FINDINGS OF MALADMINISTRATION

NB This item was presented at commencement of the meeting.

The Acting Assistant Head of Legal Services presented a report of the outcome of the Local Government Ombudsman joint investigation with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman into a complaint of maladministration on the part of Rossendale Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and the Environment Agency.

She explained that Rossendale Borough Council had now put procedures in place following the recommendations by the Ombudsman which included a letter of apology and compensation to the complainant. The Council had taken a number of actions which included:

- The improvement of file management and case notes.
- Lancashire County Council and the Environment Agency had set up a joint working protocol and the Acting Head of Legal Services asked to be part of that working protocol.
- A multi-agency working group established between the Council, Lancashire County Council, Environment Agency and the Police, so that if any action does need to be taken in the future all agencies would work together from the onset.

The Acting Assistant Head of Legal Services informed Members that Managers would be invited to attend a training session on the new procedures which would be implemented shortly.

Members indicated that if a Councillor had been involved in a complaint that is eventually brought to an Overview and Scrutiny meeting then the Councillor should be invited to the meeting to contribute to discussions.

A number of comments were made which were as follows:

- Length of time the complaint had taken, which was approximately 8 years and the detrimental effect this must have had on the lives of the complainant
- Possibility of scrutinising the Environment Agency through Overview and Scrutiny
- Not sure that having to pay 10% was fair, the Council do not have the power to act as they can only inform the Environment Agency of concerns.

Resolved:

1. That Members note the findings and recommendations of the joint report of the Local Government Ombudsman and Parliamentary Ombudsman.
2. That the improvements be noted.
3. That the comments of the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee be forwarded to Full Council.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES – ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

The Environmental Health Manager presented the Environmental Health Service Annual Report 2008/9, which outlined achievements of the service and future objectives.

He updated Members on the results of the customer satisfaction survey. After a request for service has been completed the Council send out a form asking the customer a number of questions on the service they had received. Approximately 420 forms were sent with a return of 60 (14%) Overall customers indicated that the Council provided a high level of satisfaction.

The Environmental Health Manager explained the number of ways the Council would achieve their vision of an efficient, effective and economic service, which included:

- Working with the Local Strategic Partnership in relation to climate change, working closely with LCC's Climate Change Group, providing projects and working on joint issues.
- The Healthy Workplace Scheme where employees are surveyed on things like lifestyles and values. They would then use healthy communities funding to provide the employer with benefits i.e.

gym membership for a short period to help remove barriers to the adoption of a healthy lifestyle

- Housing Standards – concentrating on improving private rented sector housing.
- Restarting the out of hours noise monitoring service, working with other Pennine Lancashire Authorities. There is a Local Authority employee based at Blackburn Police Station, who receives calls from a dedicated telephone number who passes the information onto another worker who goes out to collect evidence of noise. If it was felt that the Police should be involved then they would be contacted, otherwise the information would be passed to the Environmental Services for follow-up action.
- Arrangement for public burials – The Council pay for funerals for people who have no next of kin. They also attend the funeral on behalf of the Council. A suggestion was made that ward Councillors should be made aware of these burials and given the opportunity of attending on behalf of the Council. The Environmental Health Manager agreed to the suggestion and would ensure that this does happen in the future.

Members felt that in relation to noise monitoring, the Police and the Local Authority should work closer together to ensure co-operation and enhance expectations of people who contact the dedicated number. It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Community Safety Manager highlighting the concerns of Members.

Resolved:

1. That the Committee note the Environmental Health Service Annual Report 2008/09.
2. That a letter be sent to the Council's Community Safety Manager with the comments of the Committee in relation to the noise monitoring service and the need for closer partnership working.

9. GREEN VALE HOME PERFORMANCE

The Chair welcomed Amanda Garrard, Group Director of Operations at Green Vale Homes and Lee Rogers, Operations Manager in charge of day to day operations of Green Vale Homes.

The Group Director gave an update on the changes affecting Green Vale Homes explaining the new regulations which have now changed from the Housing Association to the Tenants Service Authority, providing value for money from a customer perspective and the Homes and Communities Agency, which provides grants for new housing.

A key area of work was around collating customer profile which included gender, age and people with particular issues/disabilities. This enabled them to contact people living alone, the over 75s and vulnerable people

during the recent cold weather to ensure they were coping and if they required any support. Members commended the service.

The Group Director then gave a brief overview of the following:

- Number of improvements to homes – 1834 new kitchens and 680 new bathrooms
- Anti Social Behaviour and the need for more prevention work
- High satisfaction level with the repairs service
- Providing a more comprehensive service for older people – now working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with teams covering each area
- Intensive activity with younger people
- Development of new homes – Staghills and Green Brook House
- Improved Customer Services
- Tenant Involvement and Communication
- Homelessness – five year contract with the Council ends soon and they intend submitting a further bid
- Choices Based Lettings – 74 properties throughout Rossendale, with the list of properties available updated weekly. The list being available at the One Stop Shop.

A number of questions were raised to which the Group Director responded.

The Chair thanked both Amanda and Lee for attending the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm at finished at 9.05pm

Signed:
(Chair)

Date: