

POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 2nd July 2012

Present: Councillor J Oakes (Chair)
Councillors Cheetham (substituting for Milling), Gill (substituting for Bleakley), Hughes, Kenyon, McInnes (substituting for Creaser), Pilling and Keith Pilkington (co-opted Member)

In Attendance: Neil Birtles, Principal Planning Officer
Michael Riley, Communities Manager
Gemma Rooke, Community Engagement Officer
Councillor Lamb Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and Development Control
Councillor Serridge, Portfolio Holder for Customers, Legal and Licensing
Councillor Marriott, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

2 Members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Bleakley, Creaser and Milling and Councillor Barnes, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Partnership.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 31st October 2011 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

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 informed members that at the meeting in October, the Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Solicitor in relation to the debt collection process. The Committee agreed that a further report should be presented to

Performance Scrutiny. In January the Finance Manager presented a report and the Scrutiny Officer has tonight circulated these minutes to you for information. Members of performance scrutiny have now asked for an annual update on the amount of debt outstanding.

7. UPDATE ON THE SHOP FRONT DESIGN GUIDE SPD AND INTERIM POLICY STATEMENT: HOT FOOD TAKEAWAYS

The Principal Planning Officer informed Members that the above documents were first presented to Policy Scrutiny in June 2011 when both documents were in draft form.

The Shop Front Design being Supplementary Planning Guidance was only adopted in May 2012 as they were waiting for the Core Strategy to be a formal document.

The Hot Food Takeaway was approved one year ago and was referred to in planning reports.

Members received copies of two appeal decisions taken by the Planning Inspectorate which highlighted comments about the use of both the Shop Front Design Guide and the Interim Policy Statement for Hot Food Takeaways, which helped when forming the decisions.

The Principal Planning Officer indicated that the Planning Department were working on the Site Allocation DPD and the House Extensions SPD which might be more appropriate for early review (having been adopted in 2008).

It was suggested that a further report be brought back to Policy Scrutiny in twelve months when they have a better record of permissions granted by the Development Control Committee.

Resolved:

1. That the information be noted.
2. That the Committee receive a further report in twelve months.

8. UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Community Engagement Officer informed Members that the original Community Engagement Strategy was never adopted by Council four years ago. Therefore, given the fact that there had been a number of legal changes since the development of the community engagement strategy, including our legal duty to inform, consult and involve the community in decision making, it was recommended that the present strategy be updated. The 'draft' strategy was currently on our webpage and accessible to all.

The new vision and toolkit would clarify what 'Community Engagement' means and be based on best practice across other public, private and third sector providers and organisations. The engagement vision would be at the front of what we do and how we do it. There has been a variety of techniques and tools to better engage,

which included the following terms that were clearly defined in the strategy as part of the 'ladder of engagement'.

Informing: Letting people know something. This may include leaflets, website, information and press releases;

Consulting: Seeking views on something and using these views to inform what we do. This may include structured questionnaires such as the Citizens' Panel;

Involving: Residents become a part of the decision-making process. This may include various groups providing their knowledge and expertise to inform decisions;

Collaboration: Working together with communities to identify problems, discuss them and create a positive change. This may include joint project delivery between the Council and community groups;

Empowering: The community leads on the decision and they take responsibility into their own hands. This may include supporting the development of social enterprises.

Using the ladder of engagement would be a positive way of looking at such things as the budget decisions, looking at the ladder to decide what stage the council want to use for each of their budget decisions.

A number of questions were raised by Members which the Community Engagement Officer responded.

A comment was made that once you had reached the end of the ladder – Empowering, it appeared to indicate that at this stage people would be left alone to continue. It was felt that there should be additional information in the strategy to highlight the fact that some people may need additional support to manage and solve issues and therefore have the opportunity to go back down the ladder at some stage.

The Community Engagement Officer indicated that it was important to know why we had the strategy and that people agreed with the principle behind it. Rossendale was lucky in the fact that the community groups in the Borough get on and do their own work. This strategy would outline very clearly to what level the council will get involved and support work. It also gives less reliance on the council and allows us to work closer with community groups and individuals to achieve end goals.

There were very positive comments from the Members who indicated that the more involved the community was from the outset, the more supportive they would be throughout.

Resolved:

That Policy Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the Community Engagement Vision and Toolkit, with amendments suggested by Members.

9. FORWARD PLAN

The Scrutiny Support Officer outlined the Forward Plan document and the reports expected to be presented to future meetings, which were as follows.

- Abolition of Council Tax Benefit and replacement with a Local Scheme
- Commercial Enforcement Policy
- Parks Home Enforcement and Licensing Policy
- Customer Access Review

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.15pm

Signed
(Chair)

Date