

## Policy Development Scrutiny Committee

Date	08 Dec 2011
Venue	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members	Councillor Fabian Craig-Wilson (Chairman) Councillor Leonard Davies (Vice-Chairman)  Ben Aitken, Frank Andrews, Susan Ashton, Julie Brickles, Peter Collins, Simon Cox, David Donaldson, Charlie Duffy, Nigel Goodrich, Kath Harper, Kiran Mulholland, Edward Nash, Elizabeth Oades, Elaine Silverwood
Other Councillors	Sue Fazackerley; Karen Buckley
Officers	Allan Oldfield, Clare Platt, Paul Walker, Tracy Scholes, Joanna Scott, Ian Curtis, Paul Swindells, Darren Bell, Annie Womack
Others	Members of the public; Tim Lince (Acting Chair of Lowther Gardens Trust); Isabelle Leclercq.

### Public Platform

A request to speak on Item 9 of the agenda had been received from Mr Tony Wedge representing Lytham Amateur Operatic Society. The Chairman invited Mr Wedge to address the committee. Mr Wedge raised concerns relating to the new conditions, booking arrangements and charges being introduced by the Trust, and how they impacted upon local amateur groups. The Chairman assured him that members would take his comments into account when debating the item.

#### 1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. There were no declarations.

Cllr Simon Cox declared a prejudicial interest in Item 9 as his company was providing accountancy services to the Lowther Gardens Trust.

Cllr Elaine Silverwood declared a personal interest in Item 9 because her brother runs the café at Lowther Pavilion.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 November 2011 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

Cllr Kiran Mulholland for Cllr David Chedd

Cllr Kath Harper for Cllr John Davies

Cllr Peter Collins for Cllr Karen Henshaw

Cllr Nigel Goodrich for Cllr Richard Redcliffe

4. Capital Programme 2011/12 to 2015/16 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Update to 20/09/11

This report was introduced by Joanna Scott, Assistant Director of Finance. This was the first time that the committee had received a report on the Capital Programme, and so Ms Scott gave an overview of each of the sections contained within the report.

In response to a member's question she gave a brief explanation of the meaning of high, medium and low level risks in the section relating to Ongoing Financial Risks and advised where a full definition could be obtained.

Members had several questions relating to the cost of borrowing, where the council borrowed from and why was it necessary to borrow, all of which queries Ms Scott addressed.

There was also a query about the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing or leasing of vehicles for Operational Services. Ms Scott advised that it would be likely that borrowing to purchase would be a cheaper option, and a financial business case was being prepared.

In response to a question about the estimated liability remaining after the capital receipt from the sale of Clifton (Lytham) Housing Association Ltd, Ms Scott said that she would provide updated information to members of the committee as soon as possible.

After the debate the committee RESOLVED:

- 1 To thank Ms Scott for her report and to note the Capital Programme position as detailed within the report.

*There was no recorded vote as the Chairman decided that the matter was not controversial.*

5. General Fund Budget Monitoring Report 2011/12 - Position as at Quarter Ended 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2011

Mr Allan Oldfield, Director of Customer and Operational Services, introduced the report which outlined certain budget areas for further attention. He referred members to Appendix A (the “hotspots”). Only one item, Building Control, showed a potentially adverse variance and an explanation for that variance was given within the body of the report. Appendix B showed savings targets, which all showed an anticipated Favourable outturn again with the exception of Building Control and an explanation was provided in the Director’s Update.

It was queried whether it was ever an option to transfer capital into revenue accounts and Mr Oldfield advised that this was not possible.

Following the debate, the committee RESOLVED:

1. To note the current position and the comments outlined in the report.

*There was no recorded vote as the Chairman decided that the matter was not controversial.*

6. Mid Year Performance Exception Report 2011/12

This report examined areas of over and under performance for the Authority based on the indicator set for 2011/12 which was devised to capture current levels of performance in each service area.

Mr Darius Ward, Corporate Performance and Projects Manager, went through this report for members of the committee. He addressed each directorate’s performance in turn and invited comments and queries from members.

Benefits targets were an issue in Governance and Partnerships, but it was explained that new systems implementation had been a factor, as was a 25% higher caseload.

In Community Services, members queried the indicator relating to the percentage of households in mortgage difficulties approaching the LA for assistance. Clare Platt, Director of Community Services explained that the Authority is normally advised by lenders and that the council then approaches the borrower in a proactive way. However, she said that not all those in difficulty are willing to engage with the process until it is too late.

There was also a query about why the determination of major planning applications had fallen below target, as the department was now fully staffed. Mr Walker, Director of Strategic Development Services, advised that two major applications had been exceedingly complex and this had brought the average time to determine above the target.

Mr Ward advised members that there had been a delay in preparing the Value For Money assessment, and that the work was ongoing across the other 11 District Councils of Lancashire, and LCC.

The committee RESOLVED:

1. To note the report
2. To request that the Value for Money assessment be brought to committee after the financial year end.

*There was no recorded vote as the Chairman decided that the matter was not controversial.*

7. Fylde Coast Economic Development Strategy - Task & Finish Group Interim Report

This report was introduced by the Chairman of the committee, who is also the Chairman of this Task & Finish Group. The Task & Finish Group had been appointed at a previous Policy Development Scrutiny Committee meeting on 27 July 2011 to look into the issues around a review of the Economic Development Strategy.

Committee members were advised of the Group's meetings and activities so far, and the work which yet remains to be done in order to complete the review and formulate recommendations for the committee to consider.

The committee RESOLVED:

1. To note the report

*There was no recorded vote as the Chairman decided that the matter was not controversial.*

8. Exclusion of the Public - Lowther Gardens Trust

Members were invited to consider passing a resolution concerning the exclusion of the public from the meeting in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the business to be discussed is exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The committee RESOLVED:

1. To exclude the public

Before the committee debated the following item, Cllr Cox left the room, as he had declared a prejudicial interest in the matter.

9. Lowther Gardens Trust

This report was introduced by Clare Platt, Director of Community Services, and Tim Lince, the Acting Chairman of the Lowther Gardens Trust, made a presentation to committee members.

It concerned the five year business plan requested by the Council and developed by the Trustees of the Lowther Gardens Trust for the operation and management of Lowther Pavilion. The matter had been referred to Scrutiny by Cabinet for consideration of the identified deficit as a subsidy to the Trust.

The matters under consideration were debated at length by members and they RESOLVED:

1. To appoint a working group to review the issues and to report back to committee.

*There was no recorded vote as the Chairman decided that the matter was not controversial.*