

Policy & Service Review Scrutiny Committee



Date	14 December 2006
Venue	Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Committee members	Raymond Norsworthy (Chairman) Martin Taylor (Vice-Chairman) Maxine Chew, Elizabeth Clarkson, John Longstaff, Elizabeth Oades, Dawn Prestwich, Fabian Wilson
Other Councillors	John Coombes, Kiran Mulholland, Barbara Pagett
Officers	Ian Curtis, John Cottam, Lyndsey Lacey, Annie Womack , Hazel Wood

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.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED - To approve the minutes of the Policy and Service Review Scrutiny Committee held on 23 October 2006 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

There were no substitute members

4. Data Protection Policy

Ian Curtis (Head of Legal Services) presented a report on proposals to introduce a policy setting out how the council intended to comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Mr Curtis explained that most organisations adopt and maintain an information or data protection policy setting out how it would comply with its obligations. He added that such a policy could serve to assist persons working in the organisation to know how they are expected to deal with personal data. It

could also help provide assurance to external bodies that the council takes its obligations seriously and is complying with them. He explained that the act required the council to comply with the eight data protection principles in dealing in any way with personal data.

A copy of the draft data protection policy was circulated with the agenda for members' consideration.

Members enquired whether the council had a central data system in place. Mr Curtis confirmed that no such system has been established.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Cabinet adopt a Data Protection Policy as set out in the report.

5. Lowther Gardens charitable trust

Ian Curtis (Head of Legal Services) introduced an updated report on the financial implications of the council remaining the sole trustee of Lowther Gardens in particular the effect on rate relief and potential grant income.

Mr Curtis confirmed that if the council remained the sole trustee of the Gardens this would not impact significantly on rate relief or potential grant income. Details with respect to the mandatory rate relief scheme and information obtained from a desk top study of potential sources of grant funding was set out in the report.

The committee enquired whether there was any difference in the Council applying for grants and the council as a charitable trust applying for the same. Mr Curtis addressed this point.

Members also asked how the council intended to manage and administer Lowther Gardens if it remained a sole trustee. Mr Curtis recommended that a proper management structure be established. He suggested that as a registered trust the council would need to administer Lowther separately which would include a revision of the accounting system.

The feasibility of establishing a small committee to manage the trust was also discussed.

Following discussion the committee RESOLVED:

1. To report to Cabinet that the eventual decision about whether the council continues as sole trustee of the Gardens would not impact significantly on rate relief or potential grant income.
2. To recommend to Cabinet the establishment of a small member/officer committee to consider an appropriate management structure and constitution for the Lowther Gardens trust and report on its proposals to a future meeting.

6. Discretionary additional licensing of houses in multiple occupation

John Cottam (Housing Services Manager) presented a report on the feasibility of introducing a discretionary licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation.

The report set out the background and benefits of the scheme, powers available to the council under the Housing Act 2004 and the possibilities, impact and resource requirements of the introduction of the discretionary scheme to cover properties that did not fall to be licensed under the mandatory scheme.

Mr Cottam explained that the review was prompted by concerns of elected members in the central ward. He added that the proposed scheme would initially affect the central ward with the potential for other wards in the future.

Members enquired about the number of properties that would need to be inspected and the associated cost implications. Mr Cotam responded to this point. The committee also asked whether the LSP could contribute towards the project or whether there could be some joint initiative for the scheme.

Members asked how many landlords were likely to register under both schemes. Mr Cottam indicated that, with the mandatory scheme, no more than 30 properties were likely to be registerable. With the discretionary scheme, up to 500 properties were likely to be eligible across the borough of which 200 were likely to be in central ward and could be eligible for registration.

Following a full debate, it was RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet that a cross cutting review of the scheme be undertaken by representatives of the Policy and Service Review Scrutiny Committee (Councillors Dawn Prestwich and Fabian Wilson) and representatives of the Community Outlook Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Kiran Mulholland and one other)

7. Vice- Chairman's report on previous recommendations

The Vice-Chairman (Councillor Martin Taylor) presented an implementation tracking document detailing previous recommendations made by the committee. The tracking document was circulated with the agenda for members consideration

The Vice-Chairman provided the committee with an update on action undertaken on all the items listed.

The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.
