

Special Policy & Service Review Scrutiny Committee



Date	30 August 2006
Venue	Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Committee members	Raymond Norsworthy (Chairman) Martin Taylor (Vice-Chairman) Stephen Carpenter, Maxine Chew, Elizabeth Clarkson, Elizabeth Oades, Dawn Prestwich, Fabian Wilson, Ronald Wilson
Other Councillors	Kevin Eastham, Peter Hardy, Paul Hayhurst, Linda Nulty, Barbara Pagett, Simon Renwick, Paul Rigby,
Officers	Dave Joy, Dave Jenkinson, Paul Norris, Tracy Scholes, Chris Holland, Paul Riley, Lyndsey Lacey, Annie Womack
Others	Representatives of the Civic Society, Operatic Society, Lytham in Bloom Members of the Public

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman, Councillor Ray Norsworthy, explained the role and function of the Policy and Service Review Scrutiny Committee to the members of the public present. He stated that scrutiny committees are not decision making bodies, and can only make recommendations to the Cabinet, to individual portfolio holders or to full Council as considered appropriate.

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 & Service Review Community Forum meeting held on 13 July 2006 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitution was reported under council procedure rule 25.3:

Councillor Ronald Wilson substituted for Councillor John Longstaff

4. Future management of indoor sports/ swimming service at Fylde

Paul Norris (Community and Cultural Services Business Manager) presented a detailed report on the findings of the leisure service project undertaken by officers. Simon Renwick, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Tourism was also in attendance. The project was to determine the preferred option for the future management of council operated swimming pools.

The report concentrated on:

- Public consultation (undertaken with the general public, pool users, staff and others stakeholders) to establish the market need for swimming facilities and whether the identified need could be met from the existing facilities or require significant alteration or construction of a new facility.
- Soft market testing to identify and clarify the various options for the management of the pools, options for funding and likelihood of external investment in the existing or new facilities.
- Developing a leisure card as a mechanism for providing a co-ordinated pricing and marketing tool to be used at the council's pools, games sites and other leisure facilities.

The report also made reference to previous reports presented to Cabinet and this committee and advice given by the 4Ps (government agency).

The full results of the consultation findings were included as an appendix to the report. Mr Norris commented that a total number of 36,000 questionnaires were circulated with a total number returned of 545.

In terms of the soft market testing findings these were also set out in the report. This included a summary of meetings held with various leisure providers. The summary included information on the types of lease that could be considered by the Council.

An appraisal of the options available to the Council regarding the future management of Council operated swimming pools was given.

Members commented on the method of consultation. There was also a suggestion from some members that the response to the questionnaire was excellent which conflicted with other views.

The Chairman made reference to clear need in the borough for swimming facilities for school children and local residents. He also acknowledged that as a classic coastal resort, St Annes needed a swimming pool for its many visitors.

Members expressed their reservation about the future arrangements in particular, the need to be more specific about the contractual costs and whether or not there would be a reduction of facilities. Councillor Simon Renwick (Portfolio Holder) gave an assurance that that there would be no lesser provision in Fylde.

Members asked for clarification on the three types of leasing. Mr Norris addressed this point.

The net costs of St Annes swimming pool and Kirkham baths were also discussed.

The following questions were put to Members: (the Committee's response is in italics)

- Should investment be made in urban and rural swimming over and above the current level of funding?

Prepared to consider further investment but would require more information

- Should this investment be based on 'what the public wants' based on the questionnaire?

Any investment should be made to generate further income

- What level of investment should be made?

Unable to comment at this stage

- Should this investment be made into existing facilities or new build?

Unable to comment at this stage

- Should the pools be managed by the council or an external provider?

Not adverse to market testing

- If external, what level of management is preferred/ affordable?

Option 4

- How should this management be procured?

Tender process

- When will the project be completed?

Unable to comment at this stage

Following a full debate the Committee RESOLVED:

1. To recommend to Cabinet that subject to a full building survey being undertaken of the St Annes/ Kirkham pools to determine refurbishment costs, consideration be given to both Option 2 (retain in house and invest in new/ exiting facilities) and Option 4 (externalise via part repairing lease with an option to invest in new/ existing facilities)
2. To ensure appropriate budget provision to enable the above to be carried out.
3. That on receipt of the building survey results referred to at 1 a site visit of the facilities is organised for the Policy and Service Review Scrutiny Committee members.

5. Lowther Gardens Charitable Trust

Ian Curtis (Legal Services Manager) presented a progress report on Counsel's opinion to require the registration of Lowther Gardens as a charitable trust.

The report outlined the current status, advantages /disadvantages of the local authority being the trustee and the various options available. A summary of a report /resolution presented to the Executive Committee held on 28 September 2005 on the future of Lowther Gardens/ Pavilion was also included in the report.

Members commented on the precedent that this arrangement might set. Mr Curtis addressed this point

Members asked to explore further the sole trustee route and how to exercise that function and the associated financial arrangements. Mr Curtis reiterated the points made in the report and stressed that this option would debar the Council from obtaining grants/ business rate relief.

Following discussion it was RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet that the finalisation of the registration of the trust be undertaken as soon as possible and that a further report be presented to committee in three months detailing how the various options would impact on rate relief and the ability to attract grants.

6. Public conveniences provision

Dave Jenkinson (Street Scene Business Manager) presented an updated report on the actions and considerations of the Public Conveniences Task and Finish group with regard to the viability of providing a new type of public toilet service at Fylde.

The report detailed the work undertaken by the task and finish group over a 12 month period. It also provided information on the internal and external financial considerations and projected income based on the existing 14 operational toilet facilities.

Members enquired about the proposed charge for use of the new facilities and the projected income. Members also asked about the feasibility of ring fencing the income generated.

It was RESOLVED:

1. To congratulate the officers on the report.
2. To recommend support of the contractual arrangements as outlined in the report.

7. Review of Council assets

The Chairman (Councillor Raymond Norsworthy) presented an interim report on the proposed review of council assets.

It was reported that a review of the council assets was identified in a recent IDeA training session for cabinet and Scrutiny members as an area of concern which needed to be addressed a priority by this committee.

A scoping document was attached to the report for consideration. The document set out the aims and objectives of the review and suggested outcomes.

The Committee RESOLVED:

1. To establish a working group comprising the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Committee together with Councillors Thompson, Oades and Chew.
2. To agree to the following terms of reference for the Group:
 - To consider which assets should fall within each of the 4 categories outlined in the report.
 - To further prioritise the review of each asset within those categories.
 - To establish where there are restrictive covenants attached to any assets.
 - To select an asset (or assets) for scrutiny; to task a Surveyor with valuation of the selected asset(s) and request an in- depth review from the appropriate business units on viability of disposal, improved management or potential for increase income generation.
 - To consider the evidence and make recommendations to the Executive.

3. To recommend that the Forward Planning and Regeneration Business Manager considers the employment of a temporary Surveyor to assist with the breakdown of the 4 categories.
