

Policy & Service Review Scrutiny Committee



Date	23 October 2006
Venue	Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Committee members	Raymond Norsworthy (Chairman) Martin Taylor (Vice-Chairman) Maxine Chew, John Longstaff, Elizabeth Oades, Dawn Prestwich, John Prestwich, Fabian Wilson
Other Councillors	None
Officers	Paul Norris, Allan Oldfield, Lorraine Charlesworth, Lyndsey Lacey, Annie Womack

At the commencement of the meeting the Chairman, Councillor Raymond Norsworthy, made reference to a recent training session that he and other Chairmen of the various scrutiny committees had attended on Chairing Scrutiny. He indicated that the training was held at West Lancashire District Council and convened by a Professor from the University of Birmingham. The Chairman stated that he found the session very worthwhile and informative. He added that Fylde was well advanced in terms of its scrutiny work than most councils in the North West area.

The Chairman also made reference to a sheet that had been circulated at the meeting detailing the implementation tracking for the Policy and Service Review Committee. He explained that it was proposed to include this as a standard item at future meetings of the committee. This would enable the committee to review progress on decisions taken.

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 Scrutiny Committee held on 30 August 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 John Prestwich for Councillor Elizabeth Clarkson

4. Child Protection Policy

Paul Norris (Community and Cultural Services Business Manager) presented a detailed report of a draft Child Protection Policy for the Council which had been updated and revised to take into consideration best practice.

Members were advised that the policy had been developed as a result of consultation with stakeholders and the Trade Union. It was intended to carry out appropriate training for elected members, staff and volunteers who were in regular contact with children in the course of their duties with the Council.

Mr Norris indicated that the aim of the Policy was to provide a framework, which ensured that policies and practices within Fylde borough were applied, implemented and reviewed by all Fylde Borough staff in line with best practice. It also provided guidance to help prevent child abuse, give support and protect all children who have contact with Fylde Borough Council.

Members commented on the need for the Policy. In addition, clarification was sought on the role of the Member Champion and whether this work should be undertaken by the Portfolio Holder.

Following discussion the Committee RESOLVED:

1. To recommend to Council the adoption and implementation of the Child Protection Policy.
2. To recommend that the Portfolio Holder (Corporate Performance and Development) be responsible for all matters concerning child protection issues relating to the Council.

5. Corporate Equality Policy

Lorraine Charlesworth (Head of Personnel) presented a report on the Council's commitment to delivering equality in employment and service delivery through the Corporate Equality Policy.

Ms Charlesworth explained that the Council was working towards the Local Government Equality Standard as a means of performance managing the equality agenda. She added that that standard was a voluntary process and there were 5 levels of equality standard. The Council was aiming to achieve Level 1 by December 2006.

A copy of the draft Corporate Equality Policy was circulated with the agenda.

The Committee RESOLVED:

1. To support the draft Corporate Equality Policy incorporating the Council's Race Equality Scheme.
2. To support the Council's commitment to achieving the Local Government Standard.
3. To support the action plan and the timetable for achieving the Local Government Equality Standard as outlined in the report.
4. To monitor progress through the Performance and Improvement Scrutiny Committee.

5. Corporate Objectives Review

Allan Oldfield (Policy and Performance Business Manager) presented a report the outcome of a desk top review of the Councils corporate objectives. The report outlined the factors considered in reviewing the corporate objectives and provided evidence to support the recommendations.

Mr Oldfield indicated that the corporate objectives were high level outcomes that the Council intended to achieve for the local community and by their nature were key priorities for the Council

Details of the current corporate objectives / actions agreed in the Corporate Plan and a review report were circulated with the agenda.

The Committee's views were sought on whether there was a need to make significant changes to any of the corporate objectives.

Members commented on reference in the Action Plan to work being undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership. It was suggested that the role of the LSP was unclear and ill defined. Members sought clarity on its role and the role of its Leader and Chairman. It was confirmed that the Community Outlook Scrutiny Committee had been tasked with the responsibility of reviewing the work of the LSP and a report on its findings was expected at its next meeting.

Members asked for an interpretation of HQS05 which referred to the development and implementation of a business process reengineering solution. Mr Oldfield addressed this point. He explained that Wyre council had secured funding through IEG to pilot a project to look at efficiencies within the council. The work had proved to be very successful and worthwhile. He added that subject to the receipt of the requisite funding, the borough council would be looking at operating a similar system in the very near future.

Members asked for clarification on QLF03 and whether this had been implemented. It was confirmed that the intention was for the implementation of this project although to date this had not been done.

The committee expressed its general dissatisfaction at the standard of communications existing within the council. It was suggested that this was still a problem and very little had been achieved to improve the system. A number of examples were given where staff had failed to return calls/ respond to letters. Mr Oldfield acknowledged that this was a challenge for the Council and would be addressed in the very near future.

Following a full debate it was RESOLVED:

1. To support the conclusion that there was no requirement at this time to make changes to the high level corporate objectives at Fylde.
2. To make any appropriate recommendations to officers and/or Portfolio Holders to ensure that emerging issues are monitored or addressed including all aspects of communications as outlined at the meeting.

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