

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

6.00 P.M.

24TH NOVEMBER 2009

PRESENT: Councillors Roger Sherlock (Chairman) (for Minute Nos. 24 to 28 (part) only), Emily Heath (Vice-Chairman), Roger Dennison (substitute for Bob Roe), Keran Farrow, Tony Johnson (substitute for Sarah Fishwick) (for Minute Nos. 24 to 28 (part) only), Keith Sowden (for Minute Nos. 27 (part) to 30 only) and John Whitelegg (for Minute Nos. 24 to 28 (part) only)

Also in Attendance:

Phil McGrath, Nick Marsdin and Sue Crabb - Morecambe and Lancaster and District YMCA; Suzanne Lodge, Head of Health and Strategic Housing Services and Patricia Preston, Principal Homelessness Officer – Lancaster City Council (for Minute Nos. 24 to 27 only)

Councillor Stuart Langhorn, Leader of the Council (for Minute Nos. 28 (part) to 30 only)

Councillors June Ashworth (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Abbott Bryning (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Opportunities), Roger Mace (Cabinet Member for Internal Services) and Malcolm Thomas (Cabinet Member for Finance) (for Minute Nos. 24 to 28 only)

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Tina Clifford, Bob Roe and Sarah Fishwick

Officers in Attendance:

Roger Muckle	Corporate Director (Finance and Performance)
Andrew Clarke	Accountancy Services Manager
Elizabeth Stokes	Corporate Performance Manager
Jane Glenton	Democratic Support Officer

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2009 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

26 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

Councillor Sowden arrived mid-way through the following item.

27 REPORT ON THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION WORK OF THE DOORSTEP PROJECT APRIL - OCTOBER 2009

In a detailed presentation, Phil McGrath, Secretary of Morecambe and Lancaster and District YMCA, told Members that the Lancaster and District YMCA, in partnership with Signposts, had submitted a successful tender for Homelessness Prevention Services, and the service had been running for 6 months.

Members were advised that access to the Doorstep Project had been a major focus for the first 6 months of the Homelessness Prevention contract, and Doorstep bases and access points had been established throughout the District, including substantive bases at Signposts Multi-Agency Resource Centre in Morecambe, and Lancaster and District YMCA's base in Lancaster.

Access to the service had been increased and the service was being offered at other venues, 5 days a week from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. It was intended that the service be further expanded as resources were identified and secured. The service was also available and frequently accessed via the internet through the websites of the Lancaster and District YMCA and Signposts Multi-Agency Resource Centre, and by telephone. Internet access also included a translation, which enabled the text on the website to be translated into a range of languages, and British Sign Language interpreters had been utilized to work with service users accessing the Project.

The Doorstep Project had worked with Lancaster and District Women's Aid, where Domestic Abuse had caused potential homelessness, with the Lancaster National Offender Management Service in working with offenders and ex-offenders, and a range of other support services wherever homelessness prevention had become an issue for the service user.

The Project had strong links with services to ensure that alcohol/drugs/substance misusers, those with mental health problems, rough sleepers and the long-term homeless had access to the Doorstep Service and sustainable tenancies. The Project was working with British Minority Ethnic Communities, including gipsies and travellers, and the Polish community, through interpreters and specialist support for those for whom English was not their first language.

The Doorstep Project's pre-crisis work and had been successful in preventing service users from becoming homeless through a range of inputs, including liaison with landlords, supporting tenants in knowing their rights as a tenant and ensuring that relevant authorities were involved in cases of legal eviction, that the correct benefits were being claimed and by ensuring that the root causes of tenants' housing difficulties were tackled through using a range of services, both in-house and externally, which also ensured that recurring homelessness was reduced.

The Accommodation Officer had worked with accommodation providers to ensure access to a wide range of accommodation and, through liaison with Lancaster University Students Union, to access former student only accommodation. Through local lettings agencies, the impact of the Deposit Guarantee Scheme had been widened. A central register of accommodation, available to the Private Sector, had been developed with Lancaster City Council.

During the 6 month period, the Project had assisted 7 people in gaining council houses and secured accommodation for 87 properties with Private Landlords (40 of these being through the Deposit Guarantee Scheme).

Doorstep Project staff had worked to ensure that the needs of homeless young people were constantly monitored and appropriate accommodation sought, with direct access to Portland Street Emergency Accommodation Project and referral to 2a High Street, the Morecambe Foyer and Council Housing. A schools programme had been commissioned for senior and junior schools, linking directly to the National Curriculum, and work had been delivered at Lancaster and Morecambe College Freshers' Fair and presentations given to the Homelessness Forum in April 2009 and the Young Peoples Housing Forum and Mental Health Housing Forum. A Housing Roadshow was currently being delivered and taken to 6 venues and other venues were being considered.

Members were advised that 167 referrals had been made to other agencies to give added value to the service, and the Project had exceeded expectations from a Council perspective.

A question and answer session followed the presentation.

Resolved:

That the Doorstep Project Team be thanked for their report.

Phil McGrath, Nick Marsdin, Sue Crabb, the Head of Health and Strategic Housing Services and the Principal Homelessness Officer left the meeting at this point.

Councillor Langhorn arrived mid-way through the following item.

28 CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORTS

The following Cabinet Members were present to report, in detail, on options identified within their portfolios for making savings and efficiencies in areas of service activity, and to answer questions from the Panel:

Councillor June Ashworth – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Councillor Roger Mace – Cabinet Member for Internal Services
Councillor Malcolm Thomas – Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor Abbott Bryning – Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Opportunities

The following papers were provided in support:

- (1) Medium Term Strategy: Finance and Performance – Report of Corporate Directors (Finance and Performance and Regeneration) and Head of Financial Services.
- (2) 2010/11 Budget Update – Report of Corporate Director (Finance and Performance) and Head of Financial Services.
- (3) CCTV – Minute from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved:

That Cabinet Members be thanked for their reports.

The Chairman and Councillors Johnson and Whitelegg left the meeting towards the end of the Cabinet Portfolio Holder reports.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Heath, took the Chair.

Cabinet Portfolio Holders, Councillors Ashworth, Bryning, Mace and Thomas, left the meeting at this point.

29 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS - QUARTER 2

The Panel received the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and Performance) to receive the Leader's highlight report in respect of the second quarter of Performance Review Team meetings for 2009/10 recently undertaken by individual Cabinet Members.

The report provided a strategic summary of how the Council was performing in delivering its Corporate Plan targets using the information from the Quarter 2 Performance Review Team meetings with individual Cabinet Members, and monitored progress against the action sheets drawn up for the previous round of meetings.

The Leader advised that, with regard to the actions outstanding from Quarter 1, recruitment to posts in Human Resources had taken place to progress the capacity to deliver an effective service in delivering major restructurings, but that no progress had been made in reviewing the Council's occupational health provision in terms of addressing long-term sickness absence. A review had been requested of the existing provision of occupational health, and Human Resources policies relating to sickness absence to make them more effective.

Recommendations were being awaited from KMPG before an action plan was developed in regard to the Equality Framework for Local Government. Other councils had been approached, in order to learn from best practice, and help had been received from Team Lancashire and North Western Local Authorities' Employers' Organisation (NWEO). Other actions were outstanding, including the Dance Strategy and an options paper to reduce staff to address the income drop in search fees. The costs for the Legal library would be taken forward as part of the Budget process.

With regard to the public realm design proposals for Morecambe urban centre and the promenade, wider proposals for Morecambe centre would emerge through the Area Action Plan. A briefing had been requested from officers for the Leader and portfolio holder. Initial discussions with land owners of Luneside West regarding the development site survey for the wider Luneside area were taking place and a briefing had been requested from officers for the Leader and portfolio holder.

The Corporate Financial Monitoring Report set out expenditure and income for 2009/10 and an indicative picture of the Council's current financial performance for the period ending 30th September 2009, including a summary of the variances reported through Services' quarterly Performance Review Team meetings and identified omissions, updates or required.

The 2009/10 Treasury Management Progress Report to 30 September 2009 advised that the authority had started to see the full impact of interest rate reductions on investment returns, but that performance against budget was good due to interest from the last remaining fixed term investments. The information currently available regarding Icelandic investments indicated that the Council would get back the majority of principal invested.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

30 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Panel received the report of the Head of Democratic Services, which updated Members regarding the Work Programme.

It was reported that two items would be presented to the Panel at its meeting on the 26th January 2010, namely:

1. Presentation of the Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2010/11 by the Leader of the Council.
2. Presentation of Lancashire County Council's budget proposals by the County Council's Director for Resources, in accordance with Minute No. 23 2009/10.

It was reported that the update report of the Corporate Director (Finance & Performance) on the evaluation of the Council's major partnerships would be presented to the Panel's meeting on 23rd February 2010.

As none of the Chairs of the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP) had been available to attend the Panel's meeting on the 24th November, arrangements would be made for future attendance.

In addition, Members noted the training that had been arranged, and that presentation of the extended work programme had been deferred until 2010.

Resolved:

That the work programme details and training provision be approved.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.47 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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