



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

March 2009

CONTENTS

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Foreword	2
Statistics and Overview	3
Pre-decision Scrutiny	4
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	5-10
Call-in and Holding Cabinet to Account	10-14
Budget and Performance Panel	15-19
Task Groups	19-21
Briefing Notes	22
Media and Public Relations	23
Training and Development	24
Joint Working and Networks	24-25
Performance Review	26
Conclusions and Future Direction	26-27
Acknowledgements and the Officer Team	27-28
<u>Appendix A</u> - How the Scrutiny process has contributed to Lancaster City Council's Medium Term Corporate Objectives.	29

Foreword from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Over the last year the focus for Scrutiny has been on improving how we monitor and engage with the Cabinet. At the start of the year we developed a programme that would allow Overview and Scrutiny Committee to interview Cabinet members about their portfolios and their aims for the year. Each member of the Cabinet has attended the committee – usually during the same meeting as we have been discussing something else which is part of their portfolio and we are grateful for their attendance. The discussions have always been interesting and informative. Our focus has been on how Cabinet members are using the Corporate plan and what concerns they have for the future in their areas. These discussions have been productive in that they have led to further areas of scrutiny. The positive approach that all members have to these meetings has aided the development of this ‘critical friend’ relationship. It does not mean that where Scrutiny finds fault we will not say so – and a quick glance at our recommendations will highlight some of our concerns over the year.

Scrutiny of our partners continues to develop. We have been successful, where many authorities fail, in engaging with a wide range of outside bodies. Our autumn meeting on Health issues was particularly interesting. We must make sure that the positive relationship with North Lancashire PCT and University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Acute Trust. We all share aims of reducing the health inequalities in the district. It was sad to see the closure of Hornby High School appear before the committee again; this issue has led to a desire to develop how we do partnership scrutiny with Lancashire County Council.

Encouraging interesting task groups and meetings for non-executive members has been a desire of the Scrutiny. Task Groups are always well attended and it is always good to see that most of our recommendations are accepted by Cabinet. We have had several packed meetings at Morecambe Town Hall, not just for the few call-ins we have had; this suggests that we are successfully engaging public (and councillor!) interest in our work. It has also been good to receive reports on the successful implementation of former task groups – to see the progress in the cemeteries was a joy.

Finally I must thank all those who have been involved in Overview and Scrutiny, Budget and Performance Panel, Task Groups and Working Groups over the past year; without your hard work and commitment to this process it would not work. Particular thanks must go to Liz Bateson and Stephen Metcalfe in Democratic Services for their support, advice and patience!

I hope you enjoy reading our report on the past year.

Councillor Stuart Langhorn
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Statistics and Overview

This report sets out the work undertaken by Lancaster City Council under the Scrutiny powers (as set out in the Local Government Act 2000) during the municipal year 2008/09. The Act also places a duty on local authorities' Overview and Scrutiny functions to produce an Annual Report which this document represents. This Annual Report has been produced on behalf of the whole Overview and Scrutiny process at Lancaster City Council and maps the work of Overview and Scrutiny against the Council's objectives and core values, and highlights where work has been carried out to underpin and support each of these elements.

Key Achievements

Maintaining a reduced number of Call-ins	Reduction in response times to Overview and Scrutiny requests
Attendance of stakeholders / external witnesses	Continued public involvement in Overview and Scrutiny
Further development of pre-decision scrutiny	Greater support from Services for the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.

Key Areas for Improvement

Scrutiny of Partnership working.	Improved response time to enquiries regarding pre-decision Scrutiny.
Further development of scrutiny web page	Maintaining public and media interest

Statistics 2008/09

STATISTIC	TOTAL 2004/5	TOTAL 2005/6	TOTAL 2006/7	TOTAL 2007/8	TOTAL 2008/9
No. of Meetings (incl. Budget and Performance Panel and Task Groups)	31	41	53	39	37
No. of Site Visits	NC	5	5	20	10
No. of Call-ins (Cabinet decisions)	6	2	3	1	4*
No. of Issues for Pre-Decision Scrutiny	2	2	12	NC	17
No. of Referrals from Cabinet/Council	NC	4	2	1	2
No. of Referrals to Cabinet/Council	22	15	11	12	11
No. of Cabinet Members held to account	NC	1	8	6	10
% Recommendations adopted from Scrutiny Reviews and Task Groups	91%	86%	88%	84%	86%

- In addition 9 referrals made to individual Cabinet Members
- * In addition 1 officer delegated decision was called in
- NC – Not Collected

Pre-Decision Scrutiny

Pre-decision scrutiny is the process where, based primarily on study of the Forward Plan (the Council's published plan of all 'Key Decisions' for the year, updated monthly) and information provided by Cabinet Liaison Councillors, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee selects issues that it would like to consider before a decision is taken.

There are many benefits to this process, particularly that it can help to add value to decisions at the pre-decision stage, can widen consultation to include Non-Executive Councillors and it can also help to minimise the use of Call-in (a last resort). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomes the opportunity for the Committee to submit a response during the consultation phase of a decision, and would encourage this approach where appropriate.

Throughout the year Councillor Bray, Pre-decision Scrutiny Champion, has met with officers from Democratic Support to determine whether any further clarification should be sought following on from revisions to the Forward Plan and this has been subsequently reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

An outline of the issues and services requested to provide further details on items submitted to the Forward Plan were:

- ❑ Free Swimming – Cultural Services
- ❑ Chatsworth Gardens, OPUS Housing, YMCA Places of change, Participatory Budgeting - Neighbourhood Task Force
- ❑ Civil Parking Enforcement, Disposal of land, Review of Parking Fees - Property Services
- ❑ Luneside East - Planning
- ❑ Municipal Waste - City Council (Direct) Services
- ❑ Pay & Grading - HR & Legal Services
- ❑ Fees & Charges – Health & Strategic Housing



← Lancaster Market

Following on from officer responses on these issues the Committee agreed to request a briefing note and officer attendance at a later meeting with regard to Lancaster Market.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



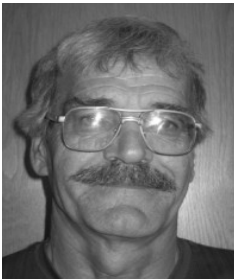
**Cllr Stuart Langhorn
(Chairman)**



**Cllr Emily Heath
(Vice Chairman)**



Cllr Susan Bray



Cllr Mike Greenall



Cllr Karen Leytham



Cllr Jude Towers



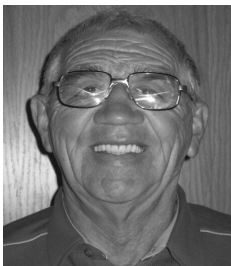
Cllr Roger Plumb



**Cllr Val Histed
(from Sept 2008)**



**Cllr Roger Sherlock
(from Nov 2008)**



**Cllr Ken Brown
(until Sept 2008)**



**Cllr Rebekah Gerrard
Until Nov 2008)**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for the performance of all Overview and Scrutiny functions (under Local Government Act 2000) on behalf of the Council. The Committee has the power to scrutinise all Council functions and decisions that are not within the Terms of Reference of the Budget and Performance Panel. It also has the power to call-in any decisions that Members feel have not been made in accordance with the Council's decision-making principles as set out in Article 13 of Lancaster City Council's Constitution.

Other major functions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee include:

- ❑ Consideration of Cabinet decisions after they have been put into effect.
- ❑ Consideration of the Forward Plan and commenting on Key Decisions.
- ❑ Conduct of reviews of policies, services and aspects of services where there is an identifiable need, by itself or through setting a Task Group.
- ❑ Working with other local authorities and organisations to carry out joint scrutiny.
- ❑ Assisting the Cabinet in the development of the Budget and Policy Framework.
- ❑ Creating Task Groups and setting their Terms of Reference.
- ❑ Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees and appropriate Officers and receiving reports and updates.

The Overview and Scrutiny web page provides an insight into Overview and Scrutiny at Lancaster with quick links to agendas, minutes and scrutiny reports including previous annual and task group reports together with the latest Scrutiny Handbook. The scrutiny web site can be accessed at the following address: www.lancaster.gov.uk/scrutiny

During 2008/09 the Committee has called-in 4 Cabinet decisions, 1 Officer delegated decision, scrutinised a number of Council decisions and issues, and has established 2 Task Groups. More information with regard to the task groups can be found on page 22, whilst Appendix A provides an indication of how the Scrutiny function in the district has contributed to the Council's Medium Term Objectives 2008/2009 as set out in the Corporate Plan.

The Call-ins considered by the Committee are listed in the 'Call-in' section of the report on page 11. An indication of the Committee's Work Programme for 2008/09 is set out below and further information can be found in the Overview and Scrutiny minutes available on the Council's website.

Presentation regarding Protected Species and Planning Applications

The Secretary of the North Lancashire Bat Group delivered a presentation which explained how the presence of bats was indicative of a healthy environment and how the local authority had an important role with regard to biodiversity and conservation. The presentation referred to current legislation relating to protected species and guidance available with regard to effective implementation. A representative from the Planning Service was invited and attended the meeting. Following on from this informative presentation the Committee requested a briefing note from Planning Services to explain how the Local Development Framework encouraged new habitation for protected species.

Review of Parking Strategy

The Head of Property Services presented the draft Parking Strategy to the Committee and it was noted that the strategy needed to be revised to take account of the transfer of responsibility for highways issues to Lancashire County Council. As a result of these discussions it was agreed to invite representatives from the County Council to a future

meeting to discuss issues within the parking strategy for which they were now responsible including residents' parking.

Demonstration regarding Elected Member Information

All Councillors were invited to a demonstration of the examples of information which could be accessed through the dedicated Elected Members page. This included details of road works, crime statistics, census fact sheets, consultations and neighbourhood profiles. Members were requested to notify Democratic Services if they had suggestions as to what further links could be incorporated or required a further demonstration from officers.

Festivals and Events

Following on from an Urgent Business Cabinet Decision for additional funding to support the Maritime Festival, the Head of Cultural Services was invited to July's meeting to provide the Committee with further details. As a result of these discussions the Committee agreed



various recommendations with regard to the revision of the Festivals and Events programme arrangements in addition to suggesting the establishment of a task group to address this issue. In response, Cabinet established a Cabinet Liaison Group. The Committee subsequently requested a briefing note regarding the revised criteria and timetable for next year's Festivals and Innovation Fund.

←Seaside Festival 2008

Allotments

Following on from the Allotments Review presentation reported in the Annual Report 2007/08 Officers from Corporate Strategy were invited to provide a further update. As a result of these discussions it was agreed to establish a formal Allotments Task Group to consider future allotment management. (See Allotments Task Group page 22).

Discussions with Lancashire County Council regarding Parking

The County Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways and Planning and the Area Manager (North) from the County Council's Highways and Environmental Management team attended September's meeting to discuss parking issues which were now within the County Council's responsibility including residents' parking schemes. As a result of these discussions the County Council agreed to come to a future meeting to provide an update on progress on this issue and the Committee agreed to request the Cabinet Member with responsibility to write to the County Council with regard to the implementation of the 4 identified priority schemes.

Discussions with Network Rail regarding Fly Tipping and Littering

The need for clarification as to how incidents of fly tipping and littering were addressed on non-council land and improving communications with stakeholders was highlighted during the work of the Fly Tipping Task Group. To address this, the Community Relations Manager North West together with the Maintenance Protection Co-ordinator from Network Rail attended September's meeting and both the Head of City Council (Direct) Services and the Cabinet Member with responsibility were also present. Recommendations agreed as a result of these discussions included a briefing note on the incidents of fly tipping on Network Rail land reported to the Council.

Discussions with the Head of City Council (Direct) Services

The Head of City Council (Direct) Services was invited to provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations of the Fly Tipping Task Group and it was noted that there had been notable progress in the areas of education, enforcement and service delivery. The possibility of extending recycling within municipal opportunities was also discussed along with kerbside recycling.

Health and Well-Being

Following on from a presentation by the Director of Public Health in March 2008 the Committee agreed to devote a future meeting to discussing Health and Well Being in the district and the contributions made by various City Council's services to this issue. This meeting took place in October and representatives from the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust, Lancashire Care NHS and Lancashire County Council Adult Social Care & Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to discuss concerns and developments in these areas. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Health & Strategic Housing was invited to listen to the discussions, an outline of which is provided below:

(1) Discussions regarding the impact of the transfer of services from Westmorland General to the Royal Lancaster Infirmary

The Director and Deputy Director of Operations and Performance from the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust were invited to October's meeting in view of concerns with regard to the transfer of services from Westmorland General to the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. Questions were asked with regard to bed occupancy rates, implications of the expected population increase, the affect of extended transport times, visitor access problems and parking, supporting the discharge process and return of equipment. The Committee were advised that an analysis of the impact of the closures was being undertaken and would be reported back to Lancashire County Council's Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their November meeting. It was agreed that this report would also be forwarded to members of the City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and was circulated to Members in due course.

(2) Re-provision of Inpatient Mental Health Services

The Assistant Director of Estates & Facilities, the Service Transformation Programme Director (Lancashire Care NHS Trust) and the Integrated Commissioning Manager (Fylde PCT) provided an update on progress with regard to the re-provision of inpatients mental health provision following on from an earlier presentation to the Committee in December 2007. Questions were raised with regard to the commissioning of secure services, the future of Ridge Lea, cross

border issues following on from the dissolution of the Morecambe Bay PCT, likely revision of bed numbers and timetabling. Reference was made to the report of the Lancashire Preferred Site Selection Task Group, which had been established by Lancashire County Council following concern expressed by local residents with regard to the consultation process. As a result of these discussions it was agreed that a copy of the Lancashire Care NHS Trust response to the task group report be circulated to the City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee when available.

(3) Discussions with the Director of Public Health, North Lancashire PCT

Dr Atherton discussed the Healthier Horizons report and Fluoridation of public water following discussions on the latter issued by the Primary Care Trust and the Council's earlier resolution on this. The Committee noted that fluoridation of the public water supply could only be implemented after careful consultation and asked to be kept informed of developments. The Committee agreed to make a request to the Chief Executive that in matters where the PCT consulted with the Council, Dr Atherton be requested to offer his professional advice.

(4) Contribution to Health and Well-Being : Licensing, Air Quality & Planning

The Licensing Manager, Head of Health & Strategic Housing, Environmental Protection Manager and Development Control Manager provided briefing notes for the Committee's consideration and responded to questions in relation to how their areas contributed to health, safety and well being of the public. As a result of these discussions the Committee recommended that the Planning Service considers the possibility of conducting health impact assessments as part of the general Environmental Assessment for major developments.

Presentation on the City Council's Consultation Processes

The Head of Corporate Strategy and the Communications Manager accompanied the Consultation Officer to November's meeting where Members received a presentation outlining the background and legislation which led to the decision to allocate resources to consultations together with an indication of the role and duties of the Consultation Officer. Following on from this the Committee agreed to recommend that the presentation be delivered to a future Cabinet briefing. Budget and Performance Panel Members were invited to the meeting to obtain details regarding the ongoing work to improve the Council's engagement with local residents.

Discussions with Lancashire County Council regarding Highways Issues

The County Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways and Planning and the Area Manager (North) from the County Council's Highways and Environmental Management team attended December's meeting to discuss general highways maintenance issues. Discussions included 20mph zones, zebra crossings, maintenance of drainage in rural areas, grass and verge cutting in parished areas and the County's gritting policy.

Ellel Neighbourhood Management Pilot

The Corporate Director (Regeneration) presented a report on the Ellel Neighbourhood Management Pilot and the Committee were advised that the pilot had been useful in connecting the needs of the community and service providers. The Committee resolved to monitor the recommendations emerging from the Neighbourhood Management Cabinet Liaison Group.

Discussions with County Council regarding Hornby High School

Following Lancashire County Council's decision to consult on a proposal to close Hornby High School representatives were invited to January's meeting. Stephen Mercer from the School Policy and Operations Team and Helen Denton, Executive Director for Children and Young People answered questions from the Committee and members of the public. Following on from these discussions the Committee made a number of recommendations which were forwarded to the Chairman of the Council Business Committee for submission as the City Council's response to the consultation. Among the recommendations agreed by the Committee was to request Lancashire County Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee look at the consultation and consider whether procedures and best practice had been followed.

Lancaster Market

The Head of Property Services provided a briefing note and clarification on a number of issues with regard to Lancaster Market including why the item had been removed from the Forward Plan and contingency plans regarding lease renewal.

Call-in and Holding Cabinet to Account

Call-in is only one of a number of ways in which Overview and Scrutiny can hold the Executive to account.

The choice to 'Call-in' a Cabinet decision is used sparingly at Lancaster City Council, and with care. The procedure ensures that, if necessary, decisions or proposals made by the Cabinet, a Cabinet Member, a Cabinet Committee, an Officer with delegated authority, or under joint arrangements can be thoroughly examined, amendments proposed, and full debate entered into by all Members.

It is the view of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Call-ins are only used in **exceptional circumstances**. 'Exceptional circumstances' are where Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have evidence which suggests that the decision in question has not been made in accordance with the principles set out in Article 13 'Decision Making' of the Council's Constitution.

This year there have been 4 requests to Call-in a Cabinet decision. These are detailed below. 1 officer delegated decision has also been called-in.

Call-ins 2008/09

Community Cohesion – Call-in held on 25th June 2008

Members called in a Cabinet decision in relation to Community Cohesion on the grounds that the decision had not been made in accordance with all of the principles set out in Article 13 (Decision Making) of the Constitution, in particular:

- (b) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers
- (e) Aims and desired outcomes will be clearly expressed
- (f) Options that were considered and the reasons for arriving at the decision will be explained.

After some discussion the following recommendations were agreed and referred to the Cabinet for consideration:

- (1) That Cabinet do not appoint a Community Cohesion officer at the present time.
- (2) That Cabinet consider alternative ways of achieving the aims of the Corporate Plan on cohesive communities, including working with the universities. Overview and Scrutiny draws the attention of Cabinet to priority outcome 16 and highlights that:
 - The Community Cohesion Strategy could be achieved through working with the LSP and voluntary sector. A future programme of spending on Community Cohesion should be based upon this strategy.
 - Area Based Grant money could be used to implement the Children and Young People Strategic Plan.
 - Area Based Grant money could be used to achieve the aim of a civic programme that celebrates our heritage and benefits our communities.
- (3) That Cabinet reconsiders the issue of achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard as an issue separate from the spending of the Community Cohesion Area Based Grant monies.

Cabinet's response to the referral is detailed as follows:

- That Cabinet does not appoint a Community Cohesion officer at the present time.
- That recommendation 2 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.
- That Cabinet reconsiders the way the ABG be spent in November 2008, by which time the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) should have options ready for consideration.

There has been a delay in bringing back options on this matter from the LSP but a report is to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 17th March 2009.

Implications of the Lancashire Municipal Waste Strategy and PFI Funded Waste Disposal Arrangements – Food Waste – Call-in held on 23rd September 2008

Members called in a decision in relation to the Implications of the Lancashire Municipal Waste Strategy and PFI Funded Waste Disposal Arrangements – Food Waste on the grounds that the decision had not been made in accordance with the following:

- (a) Proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome)
- (e) Aims and desired outcomes will be clearly expressed
- (f) Options that were considered and the reasons for arriving at the decision will be explained

After some discussion the following recommendation was referred to the Cabinet for consideration:

“That Cabinet should reconsider its decision to adopt Options 1 and 2 in the light of lack of detailed information from County Waste Management, and that they should look again at the most cost effective and efficient schemes including option 3 and other schemes not yet discussed, for example home composting and using green bins instead of the caddy. Before proceeding with any system it is vital that a rigorous cost benefit analysis be undertaken.”

Cabinet's response to the referral is detailed below:

- (1) Cabinet notes the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- (2) Cabinet notes the objective of diverting food waste from the residual waste stream, so as to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.
- (3) Cabinet notes the unacceptable extent of cuts in services likely to be necessary to achieve targets for the maximum increase in Council Tax in the medium term if options 1 or 2 are selected.
- (4) Cabinet recommends that the costs outlined in the report for the collection of food waste (Option 3) are built into the forthcoming review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for subsequent referral on to Council.
- (5) That, subject to the outcome of the above, a service for the collection of food waste, as outlined in Option 3 of the report is implemented in April 2010.
- (6) That the City Council works with the Lancashire Waste Partnership locally to promote waste minimisation and home composting.

Dome Options – Call-in held on 5th January 2009

Members called in a decision in relation to the Dome Options on the basis that the decision had not been made in accordance with:

- (a) Proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome)
- (b) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers
- (d) A presumption in favour of openness
- (e) Aims and desired outcomes will be clearly expressed
- (f) Options that were considered and the reasons for arriving at the decision will be explained.

After discussions the Committee agreed to uphold Cabinet's decision in relation to the Dome but also recommended:

"That it be recommended to Cabinet that the further report requested with regard to the Dome (Cabinet Minute 97 (3) refers) contains details of the urgent works and financial implications of running the Dome until 1st June 2009."

Cabinet agreed to the recommendation.

However, at a subsequent decision of full Council the 'in principle' decision to close the Dome on 1st June 2009 was not supported and funding was agreed for 2009/10 to allow the Dome to remain open for an additional period of time.

Public Toilet Review – Call- in held 3rd March 2009

Members called in a decision with regard to the Public Toilet Review on the basis that the decision had not been made in accordance with:

- (a) Proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome)
- (b) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers
- (c) Respect for human rights.

When invited to outline the reasons for the Cabinet's decision, the Leader informed the meeting that if the decision was referred back to Cabinet it was his intention to propose that the public toilets remain open with the exception of those at Regent Road and those adjacent to the Dome as there were alternative facilities in those areas. In light of this the Committee agreed to go straight to a proposal.

The following recommendations were agreed unanimously by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and endorsed by a specially convened Cabinet meeting:

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that the toilets remain open with the exception of Regent Road and those adjacent to the Dome.
- (2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that the Parish Councils be consulted as to whether they would be prepared to take over the toilets in the long term.”

Holding Cabinet Members to Account

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to hold Cabinet Members to account. This has taken place both in the course of Call-in and considering items of business at Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Budget and Performance Panel and Task Groups, but also through arranging for Cabinet Members to come to a meeting to discuss issues and developments within their portfolios.

Additionally Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to undertake the role of Cabinet Liaison Member. This helps to keep the Committee informed of issues within individual Cabinet portfolios. Cabinet Members with corresponding Cabinet Liaison Members for 2008/09 are set out below:

Cabinet Member	Cabinet Liaison Member
Councillor Mace	Councillor Langhorn
Councillor Gilbert	Councillor Plumb
Councillor Blamire	Councillor Heath
Councillor Bryning	Councillor Towers
Councillor Fletcher	Councillor Mike Greenall
Councillor Archer	Councillor Gerrard (until Nov 2008)
	Councillor Sherlock (from Dec 2008)
Councillor Burns	Councillor Leytham
Councillor Barry	Councillor Bray
Councillor Kerr	Councillor Brown (until Sept 2008)
	Councillor Histed (from Sept 2008)
Councillor Johnson (until June 2008)	Councillor Langhorn
Councillor Charles (from July 2008)	

The Committee values the opportunity to discuss portfolio issues with Cabinet Members and in developing this year’s work programme every attempt was made to ensure that Cabinet Members were invited to meetings where items for discussion related to their portfolio areas. This is illustrated by Councillor Barry’s attendance at September’s meeting which included discussions regarding fly tipping with Network Rail and discussions with the Head of City Council (Direct) Services. Councillor Barry discussed developments within his portfolio and with regard to corporate recycling agreed along with his Cabinet Liaison Member, Councillor Bray, to assist in the scoping of a possible future task group with regard to recycling in municipal buildings.

Similarly Councillor Burns was invited to July’s meeting when the report on Festivals and Events was considered and again to December’s meeting to discuss the direction of the Festivals and Events Cabinet Liaison Group, Councillor Mace attended the June and December meetings which considered the Draft Parking Strategy and the Ellel Neighbourhood Management Pilot respectively. As rural portfolio holder Councillor Charles was also invited to December’s meeting for that item having also attended September’s meeting to discuss her performance management portfolio.

Following on from discussions with Cabinet Members the Committee have made a number of recommendations to the Leader and/or particular Cabinet Members including:

- ❑ That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Parking be asked to note the progress or lack of progress with regard to residents' parking schemes and ask the County Council to complete the implementation of the 4 identified priority schemes at the earliest opportunity.
- ❑ That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for flytipping/littering be requested to note the discussions with Network Rail and their willingness to work with the City Council.
- ❑ That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for CC(D)S be requested to note the outstanding recommendations from the Fly Tipping task group report.
- ❑ That the Leader of the Council be notified of the recommendations which remained outstanding in relation to the Grants Task Group report.
- ❑ That the relevant Cabinet Member be requested to raise transport issues, including car parking surrounding the Royal Lancaster Infirmary at the relevant LSP meeting.
- ❑ That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that the Leader should impress upon Cabinet Members their responsibilities within the Corporate Plan, and if it is not clear which Cabinet Member is responsible for a certain component that consideration be given to either adjusting the Corporate Plan or adjusting Cabinet portfolios.
- ❑ That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee express its concern to the Leader of the Council that the decision to establish the Festivals and Events Cabinet Liaison Group has delayed the process rather than adding value.

Urgent Business

The Call-in procedure does not apply where the decision being taken is urgent. A decision is considered urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the Call-in process would seriously jeopardise the Council's or public interest. The Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must agree that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances, and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.

Since the last annual report and the writing of this report, the procedure of waiving the right to Call-in decisions as a matter of Urgent Business by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny has been utilised on 7 occasions:



- ❑ Luneside East Regeneration Project
- ❑ Williamson Park
- ❑ YPO Electricity Contract
- ❑ Filling of Vacant Posts in Financial Services
- ❑ Extension of Temporary Contract – Property Services
- ❑ ICON Card Payment Services
- ❑ Heysham Mossgate

The Ashton Memorial at Williamson's Park – Interim operational management support to the Park was agreed as a matter of urgent business following a request by the Williamson Park Board.

Budget and Performance Panel



Cllr Roger Sherlock (Chairman)



Cllr John Whitelegg
(Vice-Chairman)



Cllr Mike Greenall



Cllr Tina Clifford



Cllr Jean Dent



Cllr Sarah Fishwick



Cllr Ian McCulloch



Cllr Keran Farrow



Cllr Keith Sowden
(from Nov 2008)



Cllr Peter Williamson
(until August 2008)



Cllr Stuart Langhorn
(from August 2008 until
Sept 2008)

The Budget and Performance Panel have responsibility for carrying out Overview and Scrutiny in respect of the Council's Budget and Performance at both the Strategic and Service level. In accordance with the Council's objectives and core values, the Panel helps to ensure that the management of financial affairs is efficient, prudent, and works best for the residents of the District and that there is effective monitoring of Council performance that leads to continuous improvement in services.

An indication of the role of the Panel is provided below:

- (1) To scrutinise the Council's arrangements and performance in relation to financial planning, including budget/target setting, e.g. items within the Budget Framework including:
 - Reviewing the effectiveness of the budget setting process
 - Role of Star Chamber
 - Content of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and
 - Capital Investment Strategy and
 - Financial targets in the Corporate Plan
- (2) To review the management of resources by scrutinising the Council's financial performance in year against agreed budgets or other targets, e.g.
 - Capital and revenue spending against approved budgets
 - Specific activities including treasury management, generation of revenue and capital income targets and
 - Monitoring of financial savings/efficiency targets (MTFS/Gershon)
- (3) To monitor and review by exception reporting within the PRTs the performance of the Council's services and contractual arrangements in delivering specific strategic and operational objectives and outcomes, e.g.
 - Receive Performance Review Team reports
 - Monitor the delivery and effectiveness of Service Level Agreement targets
 - Assess performance against key performance indicators and benchmarks
 - Assess whether services are delivering their expected outcomes

The Panel's Terms of Reference have been revised further this year with regard to partnership monitoring as follows:

- To review the effectiveness of the Council's overall performance management arrangements in relation to partnership working and to scrutinise the performance of the Council's major partnerships.

An indication of some of the issues considered by the Panel is provided below:

Performance Management

As a requirement of the Local Government Act 2000 the Council has had a duty to seek to continuously improve its services to the local community by managing its performance through ongoing review. Informed comparison is the basis of performance management and Local Authorities are required to set targets against all national and local indicators, known as Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which allow for comparison work.

Revisions continue to be made to the format of reports to ensure that Members receive relevant and concise information, with an emphasis being placed on drawing Members' attention to areas deemed to be underperforming and outlining the actions being taken to address them. Panel Members can then request additional information on how such matters are being dealt with or suggest additional measures for service improvement.

Outturn Reports 2007/08

This year additional meetings of the Budget and Performance Panel were convened to consider the Outturn Reports with the Panel making a number of recommendations to Cabinet prior to their consideration of this issue, and making further recommendations following a subsequent meeting of the Panel where clarification on variances was provided by a number of Service Heads.

Services requested to explain variances and lessons learnt included Council Housing, Legal & Human Resources, Health & Strategic Housing, Information & Customer Services, City Council (Direct) Services, Property Services, Cultural Services, Planning, and Economic Development & Tourism. Cabinet Members with responsibility for these services were also invited to this meeting.



The adverse variance with regard to Salt Ayre was attributed to a substantial increase in utility charges together with a loss of income due to the renovations to the bar/café taking longer than anticipated. The outcome of the outturn meeting was reported to Cabinet including a resolution that the Panel considered the actions to address adverse variances in relation to Salt Ayre to be inadequate and in need of revision to include improvements to project management and an energy efficiency programme.

Partnership Scrutiny

In order to address a deficiency with regard to performance management in relation to key partnerships noted in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) judgment in 2007, a Partnership Assessment Scorecard (PAS) had been developed by Internal Audit to provide a scoring mechanism based on a high-level assessment of eight fundamental characteristics of partnership working, including consideration of service provision and reputational and financial matters. PAS was designed to establish 'major' partnerships that would be initially subjected to further evaluation. In addition a Partnership Development and Evaluation toolkit has been developed by Internal Audit in consultation with other Services to enable existing partnerships to take stock of how effective their partnership working arrangements are and identify areas where remedial action may be required.

As mentioned earlier in this report the Budget and Performance Panel has now assumed responsibility for overview and scrutiny of partnerships in line with revised terms of reference. The Community Safety Partnership and Museums Partnership have been piloting the evaluation toolkit and the results of these pilots will be considered by the Panel shortly.

Other issues considered by the Budget and Performance Panel this year have included:

- ❑ The Local Environmental Quality Report 2007/08
- ❑ Customer Service Centres Update
- ❑ BVPI Comparison – Exeter Benchmarking
- ❑ Scrutiny of Funding to the Museums Partnership
- ❑ Annual Report (formerly known as Corporate Performance Plan)
- ❑ 2007/08 Annual Efficiency Statement
- ❑ North Lancashire Teaching Primary Care Trust – 5 Year Strategic Plan
- ❑ Scrutiny of Funding to the Dukes Theatre
- ❑ Evaluation of demographic data – Dukes Theatre
- ❑ Results of the Mystery Shopper Exercise
- ❑ MTFs Review & Star Chamber
- ❑ Treasury Management Training by Butlers Treasury Advisers
- ❑ Report to Audit Committee – Review of Investments in Icelandic Institutions
- ❑ Treasury Management Framework
- ❑ Budget and Policy Framework Proposals

An indication of the briefing notes requested by the Panel this year is provided on page 23.



←The Duke's Theatre –

Following on from discussions with the Chief Executive of the Duke's in April 2008 regarding the funding allocated to this theatre, the Panel requested a further report with regard to demographic data of the users of the Duke's. This additional information was reported to the Panel in November 2008.

Budget and Policy Framework

Following consideration of the draft Budget and Policy Framework proposals 2009/10 on 27th January 2009, the Panel requested the opportunity to consider the budget proposals agreed by Cabinet (17th February 2009) at their meeting on 24th February and made the following recommendation to Budget Council:

“That, in consideration of the Panel's recommendation at its meeting on the 27th January 2009 that the budget process fully recognises the need to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged and those groups most likely to suffer from the credit crunch and recession, the Panel recommend to council that the proposed cut of £20,000 to the funding of the two Citizens Advice Bureaux be withdrawn.”

Note – in agreeing the budget for 2009/10, Council at its meeting on 4th March 2009 deleted the proposed cut in funding to the CABx for 2009/10 and reduced the cut to £10,000 in future years.

Task Groups

Task Groups are established to undertake specific project work, policy development, a specific task, consultation, review, investigation or similar activity.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee decides whether a Task Group should be formal and report directly to the Cabinet or Council such as the Allotments Task Group or informal and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Task Groups normally consist of nine Councillors on a Proportional Representation basis.

In last year's Annual Report reference was made to the emerging recommendations of the Canals Task Group, Council Assets Task Group and the Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group. The final reports of these three task groups were considered by Cabinet during this municipal year.

Canals Task Group

Members: *Councillors Tina Clifford (Chairman), Shirley Burns, Chris Coates, Jane Fletcher, Mike Greenall, Tony Johnson (until December 2007), Karen Leytham, Joyce Pritchard and Malcolm Thomas.*



The task group was established to develop an understanding of issues surrounding the Lancaster canal and to explore its usage as a community asset. The task group generated a great deal of media interest and representatives from British Waterways, the Inland Waterways Association, Carnforth Area Regeneration

Partnership and Lancaster Canal Trust participated in the meetings. The report was well received and Cabinet agreed that all the recommendations as far as they are capable of being taken forward within the current budget, be approved and that a report be brought to a future meeting identifying possible funding for other recommendations within the Canals Task Group report.

Following on from publication of the Canals Task Group final report on the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) website a request was received from the Scrutiny Officer at Hyndburn Borough Council to meet with former task group members to assist with evidence gathering for their own review on canals. Councillors Clifford and Thomas together with an officer met with three Hyndburn councillors and an officer in early December and in a letter of appreciation Councillor Doug Hayes, Chairman of the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee referred to the 'interesting and informative discussion.'

Council Assets Task Group

Members: Councillor Rebekah Gerrard (Chairman), Susan Bray, Janice Hanson, Geoff Knight, Janie Kirkman, Geoff Marsland, Ian McCulloch, Sylvia Rogerson, and Catriona Stamp.

This task group was established following concerns regarding the maintenance/condition of the Council's fixed historic assets (eg. the Grade II* Queen Victoria Statue) and non-fixed historical assets (eg. City Charters).

A number of recommendations were made by the task group with regard to relocating the City's historic Charters, records management and future maintenance of the Council's assets. Resolutions agreed by the Cabinet included prioritising the works identified in the conditions survey within the Capital Programme and requesting a report setting out the resource implications of taking forward a number of the recommendations.



The Council Assets Task Group highlighted the importance of maintaining, protecting and promoting the district's assets for all to enjoy and to safeguard them for future generations.

Cll Rebekah Gerrard - Council Assets Task Group Chair

Antisocial Behaviour Task Group



Members: Councillors Joyce Pritchard (Chairman), Roger Plumb, Mike Greenall, Catriona Stamp, Morgwn Trolinger, Robert Redfern, Janice Hanson, Peter Williamson and Val Histed.

Established to highlight the main themes surrounding antisocial behaviour and produce a report with recommendations to improve the Council's internal approach to this issue, the task group held public

meetings at various locations within the district including the Visitor Centre at Carnforth Station. The Reverend Tim Horrobin chaired the public meetings. Among the recommendations of the task group, considered by Cabinet at their January meeting, were investigations into the possibility of providing PCSOs with the powers to issue parking tickets in particular with regard to areas outside schools and the development of a policy for locating areas for young people (over 14 yrs) to frequent in agreeable locations, in light of their exclusion from local playing areas.

"I think task groups work well because they give an opportunity for us to look at the way we do things now, and see if it can be done better, and sometimes at no extra cost to the Council, it just means we alter the way we do something. I enjoyed the Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group and felt it gave the residents of our district a chance to bring their views and concerns to the Council and to be fed into the report, it also gave our own officers a chance to have some input into the report, going out into the community to have public meetings was a good idea,"

Cllr Joyce Pritchard -Anti Social Behaviour Task Group Chair

Allotments Task Group

Members: Councillors Emily Heath (Chairman), Jim Blakely, Ken Brown, John Day, Roger Dennison, Karen Leytham, Ian McCulloch, Bob Roe & Malcolm Thomas

The terms of reference of this formal task group include the identification of a preferred future management model for the City Council's allotments, to investigate current and future demand for allotments within the district and make recommendations on how the City Council can respond to requests for allotments as a consequence of the Allotment Act.

Older People's Task Group

Members: Councillors Jude Towers, John Barnes, Mike Greenall, Janie Kirkman, Ken Brown, Sylvia Rogerson, Anne Chapman, Ron Sands & 1 other Labour

The idea for this task group stemmed from a presentation on Older People's Concerns in December 2007 when it was agreed to scope a task group to commence when capacity permitted. The views of the Older People's Partnership Board and the Valuing People Thematic Group have been sought in producing the terms of reference which were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 10th December 2008. Terms of Reference include the development of an Older People's Strategy for the Lancaster District in partnership with the private, statutory, voluntary and faith organisations as well as older people themselves, including the Forum for the Older Person and at the time of writing arrangements are underway for the first meeting.

Capacity issues have limited the number of task groups that it has been possible to establish this year although a number of possible future task groups have been scoped including Barriers to becoming a Councillor and a Review and Audit of Parish Council Funding, the latter being a request from Full Council.

Cabinet's response to the recommendations of the task groups which have reported this year have highlighted the financial implications of a number of the recommendations and the Committee recognise that the current financial climate is likely to have an adverse effect on implementing task group recommendations with significant financial implications.

Briefing Notes

This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Budget and Performance Panel have requested a number of briefing notes. An indication of the topics covered by these briefing notes is outlined below:

Requested on	Topic	Requested from
O/S 5.3.08	Health benefits of town and county planning decisions	Head of Planning
O/S 5.3.08	Licensing and public health & test purchasing	Head of Legal & HR
O/S 5.3.08	Air quality and public well being	Head of Health & Strategic Housing
O/S 4.6.08	LDF & encouragement of habitation for protected species	Head of Planning
O/S 4.6.08	Capacity within Corporate strategy to Support allotments task group	Head of Corporate Strategy
O/S 4.6.08	Equality Standard Level 2	Head of Legal & HR
O/S 9.7.08	Surface Water Flooding	CD(CS)
O/S 5.11.08	Update on Lancaster Market	CD(Reg)
O/S 5.11.08	West End Regeneration Programme	Head of Planning
O/S 5.11.08	Targets for commercial developments	Head of Planning
O/S 5.11.08	Economy Thematic Group	CD(F&P)
O/S 10.12.08	Revised criteria and timetable for Festivals and Innovation Fund	CD (Reg)
B&P 15.7.08	Household paying council tax by direct debit	Head of Revenues
B&P 15.7.08	Increase in planning appeals	Head of Planning
B&P 29.4.08	Non priority repairs in Council housing	Head of Council Housing
B&P 29.4.08	Provision of social rented housing	Housing Policy Officer
B&P 29.4.08	West End Conversions	
B&P 29.4.08	Response to questions with regard to land contamination, pollution, noise complaints, air quality	Head of Environmental Health & Strategic Housing
B&P 15.7.08	Poor performance of local indicators ED01 & ED02 physical & financial performance of Economic Development Zone - also forwarded to O/S (3.9.08)	Head of Economic Development & Tourism
B&P 16.9.08	Terms of reference regarding mystery shopper exercise	Head IS & CS

Media and Public Relations

Over the year, approximately £2974 worth of free publicity has been generated through the use of Press Releases circulated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Press Releases itemised below were issued to the *Morecambe Visitor*, *Lancaster Guardian*, *Lancaster and Morecambe Citizen*, LEP, *Bay Radio*, *Radio Lancashire* and a local news website, *Virtual Lancaster*. However, it should be noted that the value does not take into account the cost of air time given by the two local radio stations and the space taken up by the website Virtual Lancaster.

Furthermore the figures do not take account of additional coverage given to these issues in subsequent follow up articles with the Council Assets and the Canals Task Group both generating considerable coverage in the local press. Moreover the Communications section have confirmed that there were 10 media enquiries generated from the closure of the Dome for which EAV was not received.

The figures have been generated by 'Newsflash' which is a media monitoring software operated by Council's Communications Section and relate to the period 18th March 2008 to 10th February 2009.

Date	Title	Local Media Take up	Equivalent Advertising Value (EAV)	Website hits
18/03/2008	Antisocial behaviour task group to hold public meetings	6	£992	Not collected
02/04/2008	Carnforth the next stop for antisocial behaviour group	2	£230	Not collected
02/04/2008	Lancaster City Council disappointed at Post Office closures	2	£260	Not collected
16/04/2008	Heysham the next stop for antisocial behaviour group	0	-	Not collected
16/09/2008	Call-in of 'food waste' decision	4	£712	162
25/11/2008	Highways on the agenda for next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny	2	£188	56
30/12/2008	Call-in Dome Options		£144	136
14/01/2009	Allotments Task group	1	£ 96	Not collected
10/01/2009	Hornby High Consultation	3	£352	Not collected
			£ 2974	

- Between 15 January 2008 and 14th January 2009, 348 'hits' on the Overview and Scrutiny web page were recorded.

Public Relations

It was reported in last year's report that a number of topics discussed by the Committee generated considerable public interest and this trend has continued. This is illustrated by the attendance of a large number of members of the public at the meetings of the

Allotments Task Group, the Call-in with regard to the Dome and discussions with the County Council regarding highways issues and the consultation on the future of Hornby High School. The Budget and Performance Panel meeting which considered the budget policy and framework was also well attended by interested parties.

Training and Development

Lancaster City Council continues to contribute its scrutiny reports to the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) database where they can be accessed and downloaded by others. Councillor Stuart Langhorn and Liz Bateson (Senior Democratic Support Officer) attended the CfPS Member Development and Officer Development Day respectively, following on from the Annual Scrutiny Conference in London in June.

The Principal Democratic Support Officer attended an Inlogov seminar on Scrutiny Principles and Practices in June with the Senior Democratic Support Officer attending a subsequent Inlogov seminar in Birmingham entitled Scrutiny and the New Legislation which focused on local area agreements, calls for action and joint working.

This year officers have again been successful in securing a place on the CfPS Parliamentary Seminar Series which included a presentation on the workings of Select Committees and a presentation on effective questioning techniques. Arrangements are also in hand to provide a Questioning Skills training session for Members. Councillor Trolinger attended an Overview and Scrutiny Chairing Skills training course at Blackpool in October.

Treasury Management Training from Butlers Treasury Advisers was provided to Budget & Performance Panel members in September and Cabinet and Audit Committee Members were also invited to attend.

In addition Councillor Sherlock attended the Lancashire Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (Team Lancashire) event in July whilst Councillors Fishwick and Greenall from the Budget and Performance Panel attended the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership roadshow.

This year the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Budget & Performance Panel have met with supporting officers to discuss issues/developments and it is anticipated that such meetings will continue on a more regular basis in the new municipal year.

Networking

This year a request was received from Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council to observe December's Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting as they were in the process of reviewing their scrutiny structure and were interested in how scrutiny was undertaken at Lancaster. Councillors and Officers met prior to the meeting and following on from the visit the scrutiny officer wrote to express the chair's 'heartfelt thanks' for the 'hospitality, time and sharing of ideas.'

Health Scrutiny

It was reported in last year's Annual Report that in view of difficulties in appointing a representative to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee from within the Overview and Scrutiny Committee due to the timing and location of the meetings it had been agreed to ask full Council to appoint a non-executive Member to this position. Councillor Keran Farrow (a Member of the Budget and Performance Panel) was appointed to this post and has provided feedback to the Committee throughout the year.

Lancashire Scrutiny Network

Lancaster representatives have been regular attendees at the Lancashire Scrutiny Network. The network was founded in 2004 to aid the development of Overview and Scrutiny in Lancashire authorities. These meetings provide a networking opportunity and help clarify the role of Councillor and Officer. Providing an opportunity to share best practice, the partnership exists to share work programmes and highlight where joint working could take place, the meetings improve links between District and County Council. Among the issues discussed this year has been 'What is Good Scrutiny?' and 'Scrutiny of Partnerships', with an extended session held at Preston in February relating to the new guidance on the scrutiny of LAAs and the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Bill presented by Andrew Coulson from Inlogov. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee accompanied officers to this extended session.

Northwest Scrutiny Officer Network

This group comprises of officers who support the Overview and Scrutiny function (representing all the local authorities in the North West of England). The group exists to share best practice issues, to avoid duplication and maximise the resources available to assist in the development of Scrutiny and meets on a quarterly basis. Membership of the group includes authorities such as Tameside, Stockport, Liverpool, Cumbria and Lancashire and thus has access to significant expertise and knowledge. This year Lancaster hosted the February meeting which included discussions with Ed Hammond from the CfPS who was invited to talk about the Good Practice Guide he is preparing for the Councillor Call for Action.

Appointments to Other Bodies

At its meeting in June 2008 the Committee agreed that in view of the widening scrutiny powers of the Council, it was no longer appropriate for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make appointments to the restructured LSP and thematic groups but noted that the LSP constitution allowed for the Partnerships to be approached to issue an invitation to Overview and Scrutiny Members to attend in the capacity as 'observer.'

At the request of Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to make the following appointments to other bodies.

- Homelessness Forum – Councillor Ken Brown (until September 2008)
- Homelessness Forum – Councillor Val Histed (from September 2008)
- Lancaster, Morecambe and District Fairtrade Steering Group – Councillor Stuart Langhorn
- Museums Advisory Panel – Councillor Susan Bray

Joint Scrutiny

Following the decision of Lancashire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to establish a task group to look at the issue of Extra Care Housing in Lancashire, the City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to participate in this joint review. The decision to establish a joint task group stemmed from concern about the level of provision of Extra Care Housing in Lancashire as a number of proposed schemes have failed due to lack of support from the Housing Corporation or as a result of the planning process. Councillor Robinson, a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee until September 2007 and former Chairman of the Homelessness Task Group

agreed to represent the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in this project and provided regular feedback to the Committee with regard to the site visits and meetings which he attended. The final report of the Extra Care Housing Task Group was published in August 2008.

Performance Review

Progress with regard to the key areas for improvement outlined in last year's Annual Report is detailed below:

Scrutiny of Partnership working

This has progressed and the results of the pilots undertaken with the Museums Partnership and Community Safety Partnership will be reflected in next year's Annual Scrutiny Report.

Reducing the response times to Overview and Scrutiny requests

In general response times to requests for briefing notes and reports continues to improve.

Further development of the Scrutiny Web Page

Capacity issues within Democratic Services have hindered the development of the web page but this is now being addressed.

Further development of pre-decision scrutiny

This has been progressed with the collated responses / clarification from officers on issues identified by the Pre-decision Scrutiny Champion now circulated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee electronically.

Improved scrutiny of budget and voluntary sector grants

At the request of Panel Members and in view of the exceptional financial difficulties this year provision was made for the Budget and Performance Panel to scrutinise the revised Budget and Policy Framework including the recommendations agreed by Cabinet.

Maintaining public and media interest

As mentioned earlier in the report, a number of topics considered by the Committee/Budget and Performance Panel have attracted public and media interest.

Conclusion

This report has illustrated how the key principles of scrutiny including providing a 'critical friend,' considering the concerns of the public and communities and positively impacting on the delivery of services have been effectively implemented during the last year.

Future Direction

Officers will be preparing a report on the new Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) requirement in due course. Amendments to the Constitution will be required and a procedure developed following the issue of guidance from the Secretary of State. It is anticipated that guidance regarding Councillor CCfA will be provided later in the year, most likely in September/October 2009.

Section 119, Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, provides for CCfA. This will give members the opportunity to ask for discussions at scrutiny committees on issues where local problems have arisen and where other methods of resolution have been exhausted. It is intended to help Councillors resolve issues and problems on behalf of their residents.

There will be a number of exclusions, which will be dealt with through the guidance.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) has recently provided best practice guidance. They have advised that to enable for successful operation the following broad principles should be relied on:

- ❑ transparency in decision making;
- ❑ a willingness to identify mistakes and shortcomings;
- ❑ an understanding of the role that scrutiny can play to help the Council improve services;
- ❑ an understanding and a wish to bolster and support the role that Ward Councillors play as champions and leaders in their communities.

Both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Budget and Performance Panel have begun to consider items for their Work Programmes for 2009/10.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The possible establishment of Task Groups in relation to: Municipal Recycling, Barriers to Becoming a Councillor and Review and Audit of Parish Funding.

Other areas on the future work programme relate to:

- ❑ Consultation on Corporate Priorities
- ❑ Progress on the implementation of residents parking schemes
- ❑ Update on recommendations of task groups including Canals, Council Assets and Anti-Social Behaviour
- ❑ Presentation on LINK
- ❑ Development of Cultural Services in view of budgetary cuts

Budget and Performance Panel

- ❑ Partnership Scrutiny
- ❑ The effectiveness of Council's policies e.g. climate change
- ❑ Implementation of general efficiency targets
- ❑ Corporate Property Strategy – energy efficiency
- ❑ Use of Resources Judgment
- ❑ Effectiveness of Service Business Plans

Acknowledgements

Overview and Scrutiny Councillors and Officers would like to thank the following for their contribution to the Scrutiny process during 2008/09:

- Cabinet Members who have appeared before Overview and Scrutiny bodies;
- All members of the Democratic Services team;

- Staff who have participated in Overview and Scrutiny reviews;
- Members of the public who have attended meetings or submitted evidence as part of the ongoing work of Scrutiny.
- Councillor Robinson for attending the Extra Care Housing Task Group
- Reverend Tim Horrobin for chairing the public meetings of the Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group;
- Jon Stark, Democratic Support Officer who left the authority in September to undertake a teacher training course.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer Support Team

To contact the Overview and Scrutiny Support team, or to make suggestions for issues you would like to see included in the Overview and Scrutiny Work programme, e-mail scrutiny@lancaster.gov.uk

Name and Position	Responsibility	Contact Details
Mark Cullinan Chief Executive	Overall responsibility for Overview and Scrutiny	(01524) 582011 chiefexecutive@lancaster.gov.uk
Roger Muckle Corporate Director (Finance & Performance)	Corporate Director with responsibility for Budget and Performance	(01524) 582022 rmuckle@lancaster.gov.uk
Stephen Metcalfe Principal Democratic Support Officer	Responsibility for overall management of the Overview & Scrutiny function	(01524) 582073 sjmetcalfe@lancaster.gov.uk
Liz Bateson Senior Democratic Support Officer	Day-to-day management of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (including Call-in) and Task Group support	(01524) 582047 ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk
Jane Glenton Democratic Support Officer	Budget and Performance Panel and Task Group support	(01524) 582068 jglenton@lancaster.gov.uk

Appendix A

MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES 2008/09 – CORPORATE PLAN

Issues Considered	Cost effective services – good value for money	Customer focused, accessible	Make district cleaner & healthier	Contribute to a safer society	Lead regeneration of the district	Support sustainable communities & action on climate	Give communities more influence & involvement in way services delivered /decisions affecting
Protected Species & Planning issues	√	√	√			√	
Parking Strategy	√	√			√	√	√
Festivals and Events	√	√			√		√
Network Rail – Fly tipping/littering	√	√	√	√		√	
Consultation processes	√	√					√
Highways	√	√		√	√	√	
Ellel Neighbourhood Management Pilot	√	√	√		√	√	√
Hornby High School - consultation	√	√				√	√
Lancaster Market	√	√			√	√	
Update Grants Task Group	√	√					
Customer Services/Mystery Shopper	√	√			√	√	√
Health and Well being	√	√	√		√		√
Star Chamber Process	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Best Value Performance Plan	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Performance Management	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Partnership Monitoring	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Business Plan Monitoring	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Corporate Finance	√					√	
Budget 2009/10	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Scrutiny of Funding to the Dukes	√	√			√		
Local Environmental Quality Report	√	√	√	√		√	√
Parish Council Funding Task Group	√	√				√	√
Council Assets Task Group	√	√			√		√
Canals Task Group	√	√		√	√		
Antisocial Behaviour Task Group	√	√	√	√	√		√
Older People's Task Group	√	√		√			√
Allotments Task Group	√	√	√			√	√