



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

**OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY:
THE ANNUAL REPORT
2011/12**

March 2012

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Foreword from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
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This report outlines the many different issues which affect Lancaster City Council within its Scrutiny Role. The Executive function of this Council should always be in consultation with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and its Members. This is accepted as an opportunity for non Executive members to engage any process or decision which may affect their community or across our district as a whole.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members have been very keen to get involved with many issues which are detailed within this report. The Rural Broadband programme with Lancashire County Council seeking to deliver super fast broadband across the whole of Lancashire is still moving forward. Overview and Scrutiny Members have made their views known to the County Council and that they wish to be consulted at every opportunity.

In October last year Lancashire County Council gave 6 weeks notice to this Council that they would be no longer be providing the bus information display boards service at Lancaster Bus Station. This decision did not affect Lancaster alone - five other local authorities were affected. Repeated requests for a meeting with Members have not been honoured as yet. Recently an officer meeting was held which re-affirmed the County Council's position.

This year has proven to be very challenging both for the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The current financial climate nationally has driven forward some really difficult issues and we must respect any Member in taking those decisions which are difficult.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Vice Chairman Cllr Dennison and all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their hard work and commitment to this Council's Scrutiny Process. I also want to thank Cllr Susan Sykes, Chair of Budget & Performance Panel and all the members of the Panel. I find the Budget and Performance Panel to be a valuable asset to this Council's Scrutiny process. I have enjoyed meeting with Cabinet Members as well as working alongside an excellent officer team, Stephen Metcalfe and Jenny Kay.

Councillor David Kerr
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 2011/12. 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	Attendance of cabinet members throughout the municipal year
Attendance of stakeholders / external witnesses at task group meetings	Continued public involvement in Overview and Scrutiny
Further development of pre-decision scrutiny	Development of new procedures/processes to deal with new legislation
The continuation of themed meetings	Holding special themed meetings in the area of the issue being considered

Key Areas for further Improvement

Scrutiny of partnerships	Performance management
Crime and Disorder Scrutiny	Maintaining public and media interest

Statistics

STATISTIC	TOTAL 2004/5	TOTAL 2005/6	TOTAL 2006/7	TOTAL 2007/8	TOTAL 2008/9	TOTAL 2009/10	TOTAL 2010/11	TOTAL 2011/12
No. of Meetings (incl. Budget and Performance Panel and Task Groups)	31	41	53	39	37	35	22	20+
No. of Site Visits	NC	5	5	20	10	2	3	1
No. of Call-ins (Cabinet decisions)	6	2	3	1	4*	2	2	0
No. of Issues for Pre-Decision Scrutiny	2	2	12	NC	17	17	6	1
No. of Referrals from Cabinet/Council	NC	4	2	1	2	1	3	2
No. of Referrals to Cabinet/Council	22	15	11	12	11	11	5	1
No. of Cabinet Members held to account	NC	1	8	6	10	10	6#	7+
% Recommendations adopted from Scrutiny Reviews and Task Groups	91%	86%	88%	84%	86%	82%	88%	100%

- NC – Not Collected.
- * 3 Cabinet decisions and 1 Officer delegated decision.
- # There were 2 vacancies on Cabinet and 2 Cabinet Members resigned throughout 2010/11.
- + Includes issues to be considered up until and including the March 2012 meetings.

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.

This process 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. 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 Dennison, Pre-decision Scrutiny Champion, has met with Officers in Democratic Support to determine whether any further clarification should be sought following on from revisions to the Forward Plan and the Committee have been advised of any updates/clarification at subsequent Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

One issue that arose that caused concern was the Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy. It was felt that it was significantly Lancaster weighted. These concerns were raised with Cabinet Members rather than calling-in the decision.

Many of the issues highlighted by the Pre-Scrutiny Champion over the last year were the lateness of items being submitted to the Forward Plan and the lack of detail contained within the Plan. The Pre-Scrutiny Champion has brought this to the attention of the Chief Executive.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership: Councillors David Kerr (Chairman), Roger Dennison (Vice-Chairman), Mark Bevan, Ceri Mumford, Jane Parkinson, Ian Pattison, Pam Pickles, Emma Smith and David Whitaker.

There have been a number of changes in membership throughout the municipal year.

Introduction

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for the performance of all Overview and Scrutiny functions (under the Local Government Act 2000) on behalf of the Council. The Committee has the power to scrutinise all of the City 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.
- ❑ Make suggestions on the development of policies and suggest new policies where appropriate.
- ❑ Being the Council's designated crime and disorder committee in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006 and Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

The Overview and Scrutiny web page provides an insight into Overview and Scrutiny at Lancaster with quick links to agenda, minutes and scrutiny reports, together with the Scrutiny Handbook. The scrutiny web page can be accessed at the following address: www.lancaster.gov.uk/scrutiny.

During 2011/12 work has either been considered, commenced or has been ongoing on 3 Task Groups. The Older People's Task Group was established in the previous municipal year and has now completed its work producing an Interim Report. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also requested that an Affordable Housing Task Group be created, however, this was initially delayed as the Government did not issue any clear information on affordable housing. Following the formation, by Cabinet, of a Housing Regeneration Liaison Group it was decided to withdraw the creation of this Task Group from the Committee's Work Programme to avoid any duplication. More recently a Commissioning Plan Informal Task Group has been created. The Commissioning Plan Informal Task Group will commence work in March 2012. More information with regard to the Task Groups can be found on page 25.

An indication of the Committee's Work Programme for 2011/12 is set out below and further information can be found in the Overview and Scrutiny minutes available on the City Council's website: www.lancaster.gov.uk

North Lancashire Enterprise Festival

In June Jez Hall and Michael Hallam attended the Committee meeting. Jez and Michael advised that the Enterprise brought together charities and organisations from around the district. The network was arranging its third annual conference and festival, which was to take place on 1st July 2011. A DVD of the North Lancashire Social Enterprise Festival held in 2010 was also shown.

After receiving the presentation the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested an update report be provided on feedback from the festival and also funding bids after the festival had taken place.

In October the Committee were provided with an update report on Feedback from the North Lancashire Enterprise Festival 2011. Jez Hall and Michael Hallam were welcomed back to the October meeting to provide an update and feedback on the festival. Since the festival taking place in the summer the Lattice Works Programme, the social enterprise initiative funded by the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership, had been launched. Lattice Works offered a range of different support mechanisms for social enterprises such as one to one support and advice, learning and a participatory investment programme.



The Committee was advised that, rather than award grants to social enterprises, the participatory budgeting model was going to be used. Support would be offered to all organisations to prepare for a 3 minute presentation to seek investment.

Michael Hallam provided details of the Festival that had taken place which had been a great success.

A number of questions were asked regarding the participatory budgeting programme, the possibility of duplication, availability of legal advice, involvement of Councillors as part of their role as community leaders and the inclusion of rural areas.

The Committee agreed that Officers liaise with Michael Hallam regarding Councillor involvement with organisations within their wards with a view to involving them in the participatory investment programme.

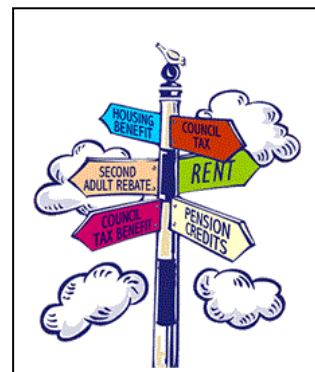
Future Legislation on Revenues and Benefits

Officers from Revenues and Benefits, together with the Homelessness Officer, provided a presentation and answered questions upon proposed legislative changes in relation to welfare reform.

Proposals included localisation of Council Tax Benefit from April 2013 and the introduction of Universal Credit from October 2013, which will unify a range of welfare benefits with housing benefit into one benefit scheme.

A major impact from January 2012 will fall upon single housing benefit claimants under 35 who will incur restrictions to their room rate allowances, previously applicable to under 25's.

The Committee raised concerns over the impact this would have on homelessness within the district.



A number of questions were asked regarding the changes and the impact on the district. It was agreed that it was too early in the process to realise the full impact of these changes and the Committee requested regular updates on this issue.

Playgrounds in the District

In August the Committee held a special meeting at the Lune Park Children's Centre, Ryelands Park in Lancaster. The special meeting was in response to a request to provide playground equipment for disabled children and was included in a review of playgrounds that was going to take place in Lancaster.

It had previously been agreed that the special meeting should take place in the school summer holidays at a venue in Lancaster, but not in the Town Hall itself. A questionnaire was prepared for distribution at the Council's summer play schemes on playground provision, with this information being fed into the special meeting.



Prior to the special meeting starting Councillors discussed issues that had been raised with members of the public.

After hearing and considering the issues raised both by questionnaire made available before the meeting and also issues raised at the meeting it was agreed:

- That Officers be requested to consider the information obtained prior to and at the meeting including the questionnaire circulated to play schemes to inform the allocation of the district playground improvement programme.
- That Officers report back to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on how the results of the Special meetings had fed in to the playground improvement programme.
- That the Crime and Disorder meeting scheduled for November be themed around anti-social behaviour and diversionary activities.



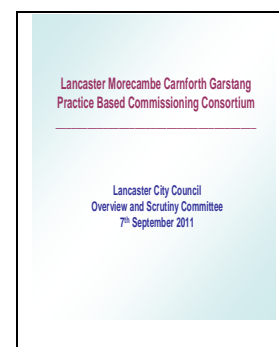
At the January meeting the Head of Environmental Services provided the Committee with an update report. Work has been undertaken in the past on this issue which has resulted in a Playground Strategy being produced.

The Committee agreed a number of recommendations, including, that:

- a further update report be given in the next municipal year and that this be included within the Committee's future Work Programme.
- the Head of Environmental Services provide information on the Members' specific queries.

GP Consortia

At the September meeting the Committee received a presentation from Dr Alex Gaw, Dr David Wrigley and Tom Pickering. The presentation provided information on the Lancaster Morecambe Carnforth Garstang Practice Based Commissioning Consortium (LMCG PBC Consortium), and explained the role of GP Consortia, and outlined the LMCG PBC Consortium's Business Plan.



After receiving the presentation and asking a number of questions, the Committee agreed:

- That Councillor Newman – Thompson, as the Council's representative, provide updates to future meetings of the committee regarding the issues considered by the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee.
- That the LMCG PBC Consortium provide further information regarding ways in which the Council can assist the Consortium, and that this be fed back to the Committee.

Shared Services Programme

The Chief Executive attended the September meeting and updated the Committee on the progress made in developing a shared services programme for the City Council.

He advised of the current position regarding shared services for each of the following areas of service activity:

- Property;
- City Council/One Connect;
- Environmental Services;
- Waste Collection Cost Sharing.

The Committee noted the report of the Chief Executive and have asked for this issue to be included on its Work Programme for further report at future meetings.

Locality Working

At the October Committee meeting, Members were advised that the County Council would shortly be rolling out a new informal process for Councillors representing County, District and Parish Councils to get together to discuss issues of mutual interest and influence the priorities and forward planning of all three tiers of local government. Called "Three Tier Forums", these meetings had already been trialled for 12 months in three districts of the County and officer level discussions were taking place to set up the first meeting of the Lancaster Forum in November. Items for the agenda included the Environment Directorate Commissioning Plan and a discussion of what Councillors would like to bring to future meetings as the Forum developed.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who are also members of the 3 Tier Forum are able to act as a link between the two bodies to raise issues with the Forum and feed back at Committee meetings under the "Locality Working" standing item.

Rural Broadband

In September the Committee held a special meeting at the Hornby Institute. The item had been added to the Committee's Work Programme, following a number of requests from members of the public. This was after the Committee's press release inviting the public to submit their ideas on which local issues should be considered at the beginning of each year.

The meeting was held in Hornby in view of the impact of this issue on that locality and also the number of people likely to attend the meeting from the area.



The Committee was advised that the cabinet member with special responsibility had taken an individual cabinet member decision in February 2011 to support the rural broadband bid submitted by the County Council. This was conditional on the County Council confirming that the outcomes anticipated from the City Council's Rural Development Programme England (RDPE) broadband project would be delivered under the first phase of the County project.

The provision of high bandwidth broadband infrastructure to many rural areas was not commercially viable. Officers had been working with rural communities to develop a bid to secure Rural Development Programme England (RDPE) funding for a project targeted at making a step-change in broadband provision and availability to homes and businesses in Abbeystead, Arkholme, Melling, Wennington, Wray and Caton. The Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband project was intended to be a pilot project with a view to extending an approach to delivering NGA broadband to rural areas throughout the County.

In early January the County Council had announced plans to lead a wider rural broadband project with the intention of improving broadband provision across the whole County and concentrating on those areas not currently adequately served in terms of broadband provision by the market. The intention was to secure £20m in North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) funding and appoint a major telecoms delivery/investment partner to kick-start the project.

Discussions at senior officer level had revealed that the County Council was prepared to include and deliver the City Council's anticipated outcomes from the RDPE project under a first phase of their wider scheme. It was appropriate to consider whether to continue with the smaller RDPE pilot bid or whether to direct officer and community energies to work with the County Council on the wider project.

In view of this information the cabinet member with special responsibility had taken his individual cabinet member decision in February 2011.

At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting a number of queries were raised at the meeting and responses were requested. The Committee also agreed:

- That, once details of the project bids are received by officers, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be advised of any issues arising regarding the Lancaster District Network Requirements as set out in the Lancashire Superfast Broadband Project Descriptive Document.
- That Officers provide regular update reports throughout the project and if any further decisions are required to be undertaken by Cabinet/Cabinet Members with responsibility, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be consulted as part of the pre-scrutiny function to enable the comments of the Committee to be fed into the process.

Rural broadband was again considered at the March 2012 meeting, and it was agreed that an Officer from the County Council be invited to attend the June meeting to advise further

on the pilot project and inform the Committee at that meeting on a number of issues. The Committee was informed of the County Council's appointment of BT for the contract and heard about possible issues arising from the project with the existence of BARN.

Crime and Disorder



As in the previous year in November the Committee met in its capacity as the Council's designated crime and disorder committee in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006 and Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Community Safety, Councillor David Smith, was invited to attend the meeting.

The Committee was provided with a presentation on the work of the Community Safety Partnership, the Lancaster District Community Safety Plan 2011/12 and the Lancaster Strategic Assessment 2010/11.

There was a statutory duty for local authorities to have a Community Safety Partnership which brought together district/County Councils, Police, Fire Authorities, Probation Service and the NHS.

It was reported that the Council took the lead in the Community Safety Partnership which was a strategic body that set priorities for the year after undertaking an annual Strategic Assessment. Sitting under this was Multi-Agency Problem Solving group (MAPS) which met weekly to discuss issues arising within the District. This was the operational mechanism where agencies could discuss specific issues and use a multi-agency approach to tackle problems.

The Head of Environmental Services gave details of the 5 priorities set out in the Lancaster District Community Safety Plan for the year. These were:

- Domestic Violence/Abuse;
- Violence against the person;
- Road Safety;
- Anti Social Behaviour;
- Serious Acquisitive Crime.

It was noted that, with the current economic climate, some types of crime could be expected to rise and at the same time the agencies dealing with them would have less resources.

With the introduction of Police Commissioners in 2012, it was not clear how the relationship between them and the Community Safety Partnership structure would work.

Councillors asked a number of questions relating to fly tipping, Street Pride, domestic violence, enforcement legislation regarding landlords/tenants of rented properties, street drinking and the total family approach of agency working. Concern was raised over support for men who were victims of domestic violence.

The issue of enforcement of the new 20mph speed limit that had been introduced in the district was raised. With regard to the priorities that were set by the Community Safety Partnership each year, it was felt that it would be useful to chart where the affected areas were in the district.

Members also discussed PACT (Police and Communities Together) meetings and how they ran differently across the district. It was suggested that a joined up approach should be introduced to PACT meetings and information such as the priorities agreed should be linked across the district. The Committee made a number of recommendations, including:

- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that the Police look at the current structure of PACT meetings to see if they can link in with each other to share and set priorities.
- That the Police be requested to encourage Community Beat Managers to work closely with Ward Councillors at PACT meetings to ensure all ward issues are being considered not just police issues, and the possibility of electing community led chairmen.
- That the Community Safety Partnership communicates any changes in funding or responsibilities within the City Council's scrutiny process.

In March the Committee agreed to include an item on Community Safety policies and strategy and the impact that there may be upon these with the introduction of the new Police and Crime Commissioners in the district in its future Work Programme.

Empty Properties

Councillors were provided with a presentation on the current position regarding empty homes within the District. It was reported that at the end of September 2011, there were 1,075 empty over 6 months and 571 empty for over 2 years within the Lancaster District.

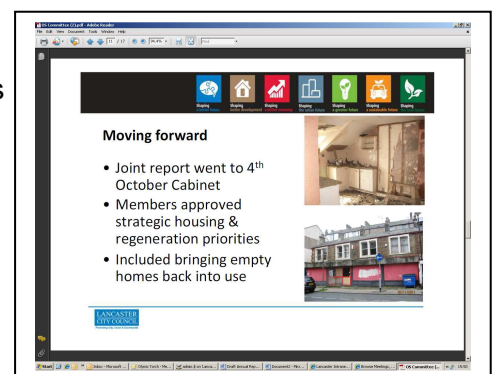


The key drivers to introduce these properties back to the housing stock included increasing the housing supply, improving the local environment which would prevent community decline, reducing the risk of crime and also saving energy compared to new build. Currently, there was no dedicated officer to deal with empty properties and action taken was largely reactive to complaints from the public.

The Committee was informed of the process that was undertaken when a property was reported as empty and the action that could be taken against the owner. It was anticipated that a report would be considered by Cabinet in 2012 on this issue to determine a way forward to deal proactively with empty homes.

A number of questions were asked regarding empty homes relating to enforcement and the quality of the homes brought back to housing stock as rented homes.

It was agreed that Officers would circulate information regarding the assessment standards of the accredited landlords scheme and the number of enforcements that had been undertaken in the West End of Morecambe.



Lancaster Bus Station Information Board

At the December meeting the Committee considered the County Council's decision to switch off the Bus Information Board at Lancaster Bus Station.



Picture taken prior to switch off

It was noted that, at the Chairman's request, the County Council had been invited to attend a Special Meeting of the Committee to discuss this further. The County Council had, however, declined this invitation on the basis that its decision would not be reviewed.

Members of the Committee expressed their concern over this decision and went on to discuss how the bus information signs could be maintained. It was suggested that the five affected district councils could work together to provide a replacement system.

It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Leader and Chief Executive of the County Council.

This issue continues to be considered regularly by the Committee. Joint meetings continue to be held with Burnley and Pendle Councils and it is hoped that a future meeting between these Councils and the County Council can be arranged in the future.

The Committee, at its March meeting, has asked for representatives of Stagecoach and also Lancaster University to attend a meeting to discuss any other possible options for the retention or replacement of the Lancaster Bus Station Information Board.



Picture taken after switch off

Consideration of Referral from Council - Address from Councillor Ian Pattison - Lancaster Bus Station Information Board

The Committee also considered an address of Councillor Ian Pattison at its January meeting. It was reported that Council, at its meeting held in December 2011, had, in line with the Council's Constitution, referred Councillor Ian Pattison's address to the Committee regarding the Lancaster Bus Station Information Board for consideration and report back to Council in due course.

The Chief Executive provided an update on the latest position regarding the Information Boards that were switched off by the County Council in five locations across the County in November 2011.

- The Committee agreed, amongst other things, that officers establish what equipment is used at other bus stations across the County and ascertain if the other participating affected local authorities, Burnley and Pendle, would want to arrange a Member led meeting rather than an officer meeting.

Lancashire County Council's Commissioning Plan

A report was presented by the Head of Environmental Services which gave details of the County Council's Commissioning Plan. Cabinet had referred the Commissioning Plan to the Committee to consider how best to develop the Plan for the City Council.

The County Council's Environmental Directorate had produced the Plan which detailed their public realm services and the resources allocated to these services. The intention was that the Plan would be constantly developed incorporating input from both District and Parish Councils.

The Committee agreed it was a significant piece of work that could not be considered in sufficient depth at the meeting and, amongst other things agreed:

- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the County Council's vision and priorities as set out in the Commissioning Plan but notes that the Plan does not necessarily reflect the City Council's priorities for the public realm.
- That an informal Task Group be set up to consider the Commissioning Plan in more detail and report back to the Committee in due course.
- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives regular updates on the developing Commissioning Plan and that this be included within the Committee's future Work Programme.

The informal Task Group commenced its work in March 2012.

Update from the Health Scrutiny Representative

Councillor Newman - Thompson, the Council's representative on the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee attended the January meeting of the Committee. He gave Members an update on the issues that the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee had been considering.

The Health Scrutiny Committee had considered a report detailing the recent problems at the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust. These included poor maintenance of patients records, maternity deaths, concerns over the whistle blowing policy, issues with the appointments system, waiting room facilities at the fracture clinic in Lancaster and ambulance turn around times.

A further report was going to be considered by Cumbria County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee and Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee would also be requesting the report.

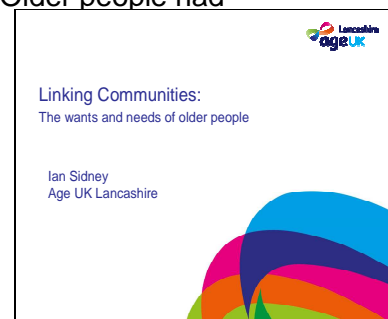
Information was given on the progress of GP Consortia and the Commissioning Groups that had been established and also self directed support (adult social care) which had been introduced.

Members asked Councillor Newman - Thompson a number of questions relating to health care in the District and asked him to provide further regular updates on Health Scrutiny to the Committee.

Outcomes of the Age Concern Project - Linking Communities

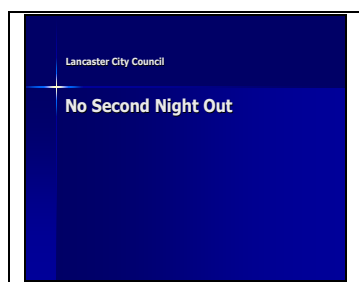
Ian Sidney, Senior Research Officer, Age UK Lancashire, attended the March Committee meeting. He provided a presentation on Linking Communities, a three year lottery funded project being undertaken by Age UK. Three towns across Lancashire had been chosen for the project, Skelmersdale, Nelson and Carnforth. The project's aim was to build on earlier work that sought the views of older people on services and examined whether the involvement of local communities resulted in better provision. Older people had been consulted for their views on existing services in their communities and how these could be improved upon.

The Committee agreed that a representative from Age UK be invited to attend the annual scrutiny meeting to consider older people's issues along with other agencies dealing with older people.



Homelessness Monitoring

At the March meeting the Head of Health and Housing and the Principal Housing Options Manager attended and gave a presentation on the 'No Second Night Out' scheme that was being introduced within the District. The project aimed to help homeless people sleeping on the street after just one night, working together with the Council's partners. There was a deadline to have the scheme implemented by August 2012 although it was not a regulatory duty to have such a scheme in place.

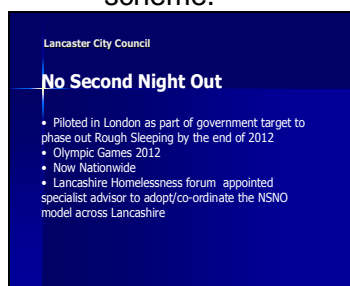


Information was given on how the scheme would prevent people returning to the streets, how it would deal with those who refused to engage, what would happen in extreme weather conditions and how the project was to be implemented.

A number of questions were asked about the implementation of the scheme relating to resources, provision for over 25s, the proposed bond scheme, monitoring the Christian organisations and how the scheme would be tested/mystery shopped and include other agencies

The Committee agreed:

- That a visit be arranged for Members of the Committee to some of the district's supported housing accommodation.
- That the Committee receive regular monitoring reports on the implementation of the 'No Second Night Out' scheme.
- That Officers be requested to produce a process to test the 'No Second Night Out' scheme.



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.

There have been no call-ins in this municipal year at the time of writing this report.

Holding Cabinet Members to Account

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to hold Cabinet Members to account. This has taken place through the Call-in process 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.

At the first meeting of every municipal year Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree who will undertake the role of Cabinet Liaison Member for each member of cabinet although committee members are not permitted to 'shadow' a cabinet member of the same political group. The purpose of this appointment is to help keep the Committee informed of issues within individual Cabinet portfolios. Cabinet Liaison Members have provided regular feedback at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

Cabinet Members with corresponding Cabinet Liaison Members for 2011/12 are set out below:

Cabinet Liaison Members	Cabinet Member
Councillor David Kerr	Councillor Eileen Blamire
Councillor Ceri Mumford	Councillor Janice Hanson
Councillor Roger Dennison	Councillor Abbott Bryning
Councillor Emma Smith	Councillor Ron Sands
Councillor Jane Parkinson	Councillor Karen Leytham
Councillor Ceri Mumford	Councillor David Smith
Councillor Mark Bevan	Councillor Jon Barry
Councillor David Whitaker	Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox

The Committee values the opportunity to discuss portfolio issues with Cabinet Members and in developing the work programme every attempt is made to ensure that Cabinet Members are invited to meetings where the agenda items are relevant to their portfolio areas. It is hoped that each Cabinet Member will attend at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the end of the municipal year. Cabinet Members have also attended Budget and Performance Panel meetings.

With regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Leader of the Council attended September's meeting to discuss developments in her capacity as the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Relationships with other Councils, Communications and Performance Management. The Committee discussed various issues including renewable energy for social housing, apprenticeship schemes, Police Community Support Officers, support for the arts, and engagement with the local community. In a response to a query Councillor Blamire advised that she would advise the Committee if there were any areas which she believed could benefit from work undertaken by the Committee and/or the establishment of a Task Group as and when any issues arose.

Councillor Barry attended the October meeting of the Committee. He gave a breakdown of his current portfolio which included responsibility for Markets, Connecting with Communities, Voluntary Sector and Older People. It was noted that, with the exception of Lancaster Market, this was a new area of Cabinet responsibility for Councillor Barry. Members were informed of the outside bodies that received funding from the Council that fell under Councillor Barry's portfolio including the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The Committee noted Councillor Barry's ongoing work with Lancaster Market, which had resulted in a report to Council in November (deferred from the September meeting).

A number of questions were asked relating to Councillor Barry's portfolio including Service Level Agreements (SLAs), reviewing the procedure and criteria of allocating funding to local organisations, Young People's Services, cuts to older people's services, infrastructure of the voluntary sector, pop up art galleries and Lancaster Market.

November's meeting was dedicated to Crime and Disorder issues which Councillor David Smith (Community Safety) attended as Cabinet portfolio holder. Councillor David Smith also attended the January meeting of the Committee. He advised of his current portfolio which included Community Safety and Clean and Green. Details were given of the work undertaken by Environmental Health, the Community Safety Partnership and the Street Pride projects. The importance of the work undertaken by Environmental Services by the Council's own labour force was stressed as efficiencies could be found which would not be possible if the work was contracted out. Members asked a number of questions relating to fly tipping particularly by students, litter on non-Council land, litter strategy, rodent issues, plans for the flowerbeds during the Olympics and food waste.

Councillor Hanson attended the December meeting of the Committee. She gave a breakdown of her current portfolio, which included responsibility for Economic Regeneration and Planning. Members were reminded of the impact of the current economic climate on regeneration in the district. With regard to housing regeneration, it was noted that the 2011 Housing Needs Survey, completed earlier in the year, highlighted a demand and need for new housing in the district and this was the equivalent of around 800 market and affordable homes in total. The Local Development Framework's Core Strategy, adopted in 2008, set a housing requirement that was equivalent to an average of 400 new homes per year. The recent local evidence from the Housing Needs Survey therefore illustrated the scale of the extent of the demand and need for more housing. The Committee was updated on the Centros proposals, Luneside East and West projects, Morecambe Area Action Plan, Frontierland site and the M6 link.

A number of questions were asked relating to sustainable planning applications, affordable housing, the future of the Frontierland site, Morecambe Area Action plan, working in partnership, Chatsworth Gardens, Lancaster Castle, student accommodation and the Community Infra Structure Levy.

Councillor Karen Leytham attended the March meeting of the Committee and answered questions on a number of issues within her portfolio. Questions were raised regarding the apprentice scheme that was being introduced and how it would work, private landlords and bringing empty properties back into use. At this meeting it was also suggested that an outstanding item on the Committee's Work Programme, the Affordable Housing Task Group, be withdrawn in order to avoid duplication with the newly created Housing Regeneration Cabinet Liaison Group as affordable housing was to be included in the remit of this Group.

Councillors Bryning and Hamilton-Cox have been requested to attend the April meeting of the Committee to inform of issues within their portfolios. Due to timescales more detail can not be provided at the time of writing this report.

Unfortunately, Councillor Sands was unable to attend a meeting in the current municipal year and will be asked to attend a meeting early in the new municipal year.

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 four occasions:

- Storey Creative Industries Centre.
- Climate Change Invest to Save Projects.
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Social Enterprise Initiative.
- Winding up of Local Enterprise Partnership.



Climate Change Invest to Save Projects

On two occasions, the requirement to include five working days notice of the decision in the forward plan, in accordance with Access to Information Procedure Rule 16 was also waived, in order that the decision could be taken without delay. These decisions were taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The two decisions were 'Climate Change Invest to Save Projects' and 'Storey Creative Industries Centre'.



The 'LDLSP Social Enterprise Initiative' decision was agreed via urgent business procedure, and approved the allocation of £15,000 towards the employment of a part-time Social Enterprise Manager by Help Direct to offer 1:1 advice and support, as well as £20,000 as a fund that the initiative can draw on to provide financial assistance to projects and organisations.

Budget and Performance Panel

Membership: Councillors Susan Sykes (Chairman), Alycia James (Vice-Chairman), Tony Anderson, Dave Brookes, Janet Hall, Richard Newman-Thompson, Richard Rollins, Elizabeth Scott, and Keith Sowden.

Foreword from the Chairman of Budget and Performance Panel

This year the Budget and Performance Panel has scrutinised a wide range of issues which I have considered an important part of the Overview and Scrutiny process.

The Budget and Performance Panel has 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.

This report examines a summary of the Panel's work from the past year. The Panel has received regular reports from the Leader of the Council in respect of Performance Review Team meetings undertaken by individual Cabinet members, as well as Corporate Financial Monitoring reports from the Head of Financial Services.

The Panel has looked closely at accountancy data, and taken a particular interest in financial reports. Of particular interest to the Panel have been the carry forward of underspends from the 2010/11 budget, treasury management, and the planned maintenance of council housing, with Councillor Brookes drawing on his experience in construction to consider the latter of these issues closely.

At its meeting on 21 February 2012 the Panel recommended that Council Business Committee accept a revised annual timetable of committee meetings for municipal year 2011/12 that will allow the Panel to scrutinise corporate performance, prior to Cabinet, so that recommendations could be made for their consideration. This was accepted by Council Business Committee at its meeting on 15 March 2012. I hope that this will have a beneficial effect on the scrutiny process as the role of the Panel develops in its second year.

Six of the nine Panel Members this municipal year were new Councillors, first elected to the council in May 2011. As such there has been a steep learning curve for the Panel, and a number of training sessions have been arranged for members.

I as chairman have been pleased by the varied work experience backgrounds of the new Panel, with a number of members from business and financial budgeting backgrounds. I feel, therefore, that the new members can make a valuable contribution to the work of the Panel. I have also been pleased to note the good attendance at meetings of the Panel throughout the entire year, and the keen participation and discussion from all members of the Panel on the agenda items before us. I would like to thank the members of the Panel for their contribution and dedication.

I would also like to thank officers from Democratic Services for their continuing support, and Anne Marie Harrison and Andrew Clarke for their support and advice. In addition I would like to thank Councillors Eileen Blamire and Councillor Abbott Bryning for their regular attendance and support at Panel meetings.

Councillor Susan Sykes
Chairman Budget and Performance Panel

Corporate Performance Monitoring

As required by the council's Performance Management Framework, the Panel received regular reports on performance as part of the Performance Review Team cycle of meetings, and quarterly corporate performance monitoring reports, comprising strategic summaries of how the council was performing in delivering its corporate plan targets, using exception information from the Performance Review Team meetings with individual cabinet members. Over the year, Members were advised of the work being undertaken to achieve and monitor target delivery for corporate priority actions and savings. Areas of concern raised by the Panel were reported to Cabinet Portfolio Holders, and Service Heads were requested to respond regarding failing targets.

Member Training

As there were a large number of new councillors on the Budget and Performance Panel in 2011/12, the Panel agreed that it would be beneficial for a training session relating to performance management be arranged for a meeting of the Panel.

As such, at its meeting in July, the Assistant Head of Community Engagement (Partnerships) gave a presentation which outlined the process of performance management and gave an overview of the strategic framework and the terminology used; members were also advised of the Performance Review Team (PRT) timetable.

The presentation outlined the role which the Panel was expected to play in the scrutiny of performance management in detail and explained the Red/Amber/Green system used in performance review reporting.

The Accountancy Services Manager also provided training to the Panel, introducing them to the budget book, and advising as to the process for considering the council's quarterly performance monitoring reports. The Panel was also advised of the process for requesting service heads to attend meetings to respond to specific concerns which the Panel might have relating to areas within their service.

Planned Maintenance of Council Housing

At its November meeting, Budget and Performance Panel considered a request from Councillor Brookes that the Panel consider including an issue on its Work Programme relating to Planned Maintenance of Council Housing. In order that members had as much information as possible when considering this request, a briefing note had been produced by the Head of Environmental Services, who was also in attendance at the meeting to offer advice and to answer questions.

The Panel was advised that the issue was also scheduled to be considered by the Council's Cabinet and Audit Committee. It was agreed that the Panel should defer consideration of whether to include the issue in its Work Programme until after it had been considered at these meetings. It was considered that this would prevent unnecessary duplication of work.

The issue was considered by Audit Committee at its meeting on 15 February 2012, and was then considered by the Panel as part of its work programme report on 21 February 2012, and resolved the following:

- (2) That a meeting be arranged to discuss the Planned Maintenance of Council Housing, and the answers to Councillor Brookes' questions which had been presented to the Audit Committee, and that the Internal Audit Manager and the Head of Environmental Services be invited to attend.

This meeting was held on 27 February 2012, and Councillor Brookes had advised that he was satisfied with the answers provided to his questions.

Partnerships

The Panel has scrutinised the Performance of the Council's partnership working in the district, in line with its terms of reference.

This included consideration of a Cabinet report which set out background information and the resolution of Cabinet on 8 November 2011 in respect of the Council's future approach to working in partnership in the district, including the use of uncommitted Performance Reward Grant (PRG) funds.

The Panel received this report at its meeting in November, asking extensive questions regarding a number of the Council's partnerships.

The proposed Health and Well Being Partnership was also discussed, and the Panel was advised as to how the council would be represented on this body. The Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was also discussed, and the Panel emphasised their desire that the council should be actively involved in such a scheme. The Panel was advised as to how the LEP was expected to operate.

Public Sector Engagement

The Panel had been advised of the outcomes of public sector engagement exercises which had taken place towards the end of 2011 in order to ascertain the views of local people and organisations regarding the future of public services in the district. The Panel was advised that these exercises had been carried out as it was recognised that the issues facing this district could best be addressed by public services working even more closely together with local communities.

The engagement programme had included a mixture of presentations, workshops, and information for a range of groups, which had included:

- Residents.
- Lancashire Association of Local Councils (Lancaster District).
- Voluntary sector representatives.
- Community Leaders Group.
- Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Management Group.
- Lancaster (District) Arts Partnership.
- Business Sector.

The Panel received an overview summary of the feedback which had been received through the public sector engagement exercise. It was advised that a number of overarching themes had emerged, which were outlined to the Panel as follows:

- Firstly, there was broad recognition of the need for public services to join together and to share assets.
- There was a need to acknowledge that at a very local level, individuals, families, voluntary groups and communities would request more in the way of support from the public sector.
- Finally, the landscape was already changing quickly and unpredictably, not only for individual public sector organisations, but also others who rely heavily on public expenditure, such as community, voluntary sector and arts organisations.

Treasury Management

At its February meeting, the Panel received the report of the Head of Financial Services to seek the Panel's views regarding the treasury management framework proposals for 2012/13, prior to their consideration by Council.

In advance of the meeting the Chairman had submitted a number of questions relating to treasury management to the Accountancy Services Manager, who had provided oral responses to the questions, and the treasury management report covered a number of these issues.

It was advised that in line with the updated (2011) Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Budget and Performance Panel had been explicitly named as responsible for scrutiny of the treasury management function, including review of the annual strategy.

Due to the timing of meetings it had unfortunately not been possible to provide for scrutiny of the treasury management proposals prior to them being considered by Cabinet. However recommendations which arose from the meeting were reported to budget council on 29 February, when members had formally approved the framework.

The Panel considered the Treasury Management Strategy 2012/13 to 2014/15. The key elements and assumptions feeding into the budget proposals were outlined to members. The investment aspects of the strategy were outlined to the Panel.

The Investment Strategy 2012/13 to 2014/15 was also outlined to the Panel.

Members asked detailed questions regarding the following areas:

- Investment rates for fixed term accounts with Lancashire County Council.
- The council's current levels of investments with different banks.
- The proposed move away from banks which were not part-nationalised UK institutions.
- Scenarios relating to the sale of land located at South Lancaster being sold in 2012/13.
- Proposed investments with Lancashire County Council, and the level of risk.
- The situation regarding cash being returned from Icelandic banking investments.

The Panel recognised that Treasury Management was a very specialised field requiring specialist knowledge, and as such the council would rely on advice from financial advisors. However it was noted that the credit rating process could be flawed, as it had been over Icelandic banks.

It was agreed that despite the low rates of return, caution and fluidity were the best approaches in regards to the council's investment strategy, and also noted that significant progress has been made in relation to the return of cash from Icelandic bank investments. The Panel was also assured that by the Head of Financial Services that any capital invested by the council with Lancashire County Council would be preserved in full.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

At its meeting on 21 February 2012, the Panel received a report of the Assistant Head of Community Engagement (Partnerships) relating to SLAs. The issue had been considered by Cabinet previously that month, and the Panel was advised in detail of the implications of each of the resolutions agreed by Cabinet, and answered detailed questions from the Panel.

The Panel was advised that economic pressures were having an impact on many organisations in the district as well as the council. Many organisations had suffered a loss of

funding and had needed to restructure their organisations and service delivery. It was assumed that current pressures would continue into the future.

The report primarily related to SLAs with voluntary and community services, it was reported that changes to the way in which the council invested in such services in the future would have implications both for individual organisations and for the services they delivered.

The Panel was advised regarding the following areas:

- Joint approach with partners.
- Welfare Grants.
- Commissioning framework and the key principles for commissioning.
- Future levels of council funding to support services delivered by local organisations.

The Panel was also advised that a new commissioning process was currently being developed, and requested that more information be provided regarding this process in due course.

Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2012/13

At its annual stakeholder meeting in January, the Panel and stakeholders received a detailed presentation from the Leader of the Council, and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance, on the Cabinet's Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2012/13. The Head of Financial Services assisted with the presentation and helped answer Members' questions.

The Panel was advised that the starting point in developing the proposals had been the Council's existing priorities, which were economic regeneration, climate change, statutory duties, and partnership working and community leadership. Cabinet had also noted the intention to protect the most vulnerable in society as a thread running through all its priorities. The proposals had taken into account a variety of engagement exercises with the community and partners which had taken place in October and November 2011.

The draft priority areas for 2012-15, which had been identified following this consultation process, were:

- Increased provision for social housing.
- More allotments.
- Renewable energy on council houses.
- Protection of heritage on the Canal Corridor site.
- Support for the arts in the District.
- Continued funding for PCSOs.
- Look at levels of street cleansing and improvement of open spaces.
- Diversionary activities for young people.
- Housing regeneration.
- Council housing opportunities – new regulations.
- Council tax benefits localisation and grant reduction.
- Implications of business rates changes.
- Apprenticeships.
- Working with the voluntary sector to reduce the amount of rough sleeping in the district.

The Leader also answered extensive questions from the Panel and stakeholders on the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2012/13.

Presentation of Budget Proposals for 2012/13 and 2013/14 by Lancashire County Council

At its Budget meeting in January, the Panel and stakeholders received a report and verbal presentation from Lancashire County Council's treasurer on the Council's budget proposals for 2012/13 and 2013/14. The Panel was invited to include any comments on the proposals in the Leader's consultation response which would be fed back to Lancashire County Council's Cabinet at its next meeting.

The County Treasurer reminded the Panel of the context in which the budget proposals had been considered, in 2011/12 the Council had identified £171m in savings. As with any three year period, many things had changed, however, the Council's priority remained to maintain stability for services, especially those which affected vulnerable people.

The Panel was advised that there were two parts to the proposals, budget pressures and investment opportunities. There were three main areas of budget proposals which were waste costs, council tax freeze grant 2012/13, and below the line savings within the three year financial strategy. These were outlined in detail in the presentation. The Panel was advised that the County Council's Management Team had identified below the line savings totalling £7.245m in 2013/14 to ensure the budget position was balanced, these were as follows:

- Reduction in travel costs.
- Property rationalisation.
- Rationalisation of facilities management and conferencing.
- Transforming finance through oracle release 12.
- Reductions in management costs.
- Operating model.
- Reduction in members costs.

It was advised that these savings would not affect service delivery.

It was reported that the proposals set out in the report would create a one off headroom of £10.0m in 2012/13. On top of the treasury management extra-ordinary savings of £40.0m, and less £15.0m funding for the 2014/15 capital programme, this created £35.0m total resources available for investment in the council's key priorities. The Cabinet was consulting on proposals for one-off investment in the following priorities:

- Promoting sustainable employment for young people.
- Support for travel costs for young people to assist them in education, employment and training.
- Strategic economic development and infrastructure to develop employment opportunities across Lancashire.
- Armed forces veterans – mentoring services for secondary school young people.
- Libraries regeneration.
- Further support for the programme of youth zones.

This created the opportunity for one-off investment in priorities.

The County Council's Treasurer answered extensive questions from the Panel and stakeholders.

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.

The Older People's Task Group submitted its final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn of 2012.

For quite some time there had been an item on the Committee's Work Programme referring to a possible Task Group to look into Affordable Housing.

In March 2012 Cabinet agreed to set up a Cabinet Liaison Group to examine housing regeneration in the district including affordable housing. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that it would be sensible to refer this work to the Cabinet Liaison Group to prevent duplication of work.

Older People's Task Group

Members: *Councillors, Morgwn Trolinger (Chairman), Susan Bray, Anne Chapman, Sheila Denwood, Janie Kirkman, Mike Greenall, Geoff Marsland, Sylvia Rogerson and Ron Sands*

The Task Group was set up in summer of 2009 to consult with the Older People's Partnership Board who had commissioned the production of a Strategy for older people for the Lancaster district. The Task Group considered the Strategy in its draft form and felt it needed more work.

Progress on this Task Group was very slow, and at the last meeting of the Task Group, the Chairman of the Older People's Partnership Board advised Members that the Partnership Board would cease after its next meeting.



Members of the Older People's task group went on a site visit to the Rainbow Centre - pictured are some of the regular attendees of the centre's choir group.

The Board had agreed that it could no longer fulfil its Terms of Reference and should therefore come to an end. The Chairman advised that the Draft Strategy which had been amended to a more readable shorter form would be amended to reflect this change. The Task Group was advised that the Council could not take ownership of the Draft Strategy but it could refer it to the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership to conclude.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendations of the Task

Group and agreed to stand the Task Group down.

The most important strategic recommendation was to refer the appointment of an Older People's Champion to Council. At its meeting in December, Council appointed its first non executive Older People's Champion. The role will see the Champion liaise with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Older People and raise the profile of older people within the district.

Other recommendations were referred to the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP) to action.

Commissioning Plan Informal Task Group

Members: *Councillors, Roger Dennison, Tony Johnson, Ceri Mumford, Keith Sowden and David Whitaker*

The Task Group was set up in early 2012 after Cabinet requested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out some work on the County Council's Commissioning Plan.

The Plan has been produced by the County Council's Environment Directorate to set out what they are committed to provide in the Lancaster district and the resources to undertake it. It had been produced in consultation with local County Councillors and was a document that would evolve with input from both City and County Councils as time went on.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the best way forward to consider the document was to establish an informal Task Group to meet two or three times to consider the detail of the document and report back to the Committee.

The Informal Task Group should complete its work by Easter 2012.

Media and Public Relations

Nearly £500 worth of free publicity has been generated through the use of Press Releases circulated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The figures below have been generated by our media monitoring software “newsflash” from 1st February, 2011 – end February 2012.

Date	Title	Local media take up	EAV
-	PR 2912 - Lancaster City Council seeks topics for discussion.	2	£104
-	PR 2975 – Playgrounds to come under scrutiny	2	£368

Total EAV = £472.

The above press releases were issued to the local media (Visitor, Lancaster Guardian, Bay Radio, Radio Lancashire and a local news website, Virtual Lancaster). It must be noted that the total equivalent advertising value indicated above does not take into account the cost of air time given by the two local radio stations and the space taken up by the local website Virtual Lancaster.

Take up will not include mentions on Bay Radio and Radio Lancashire unless we have received an indication of its interest either via a media enquiry or request for interview.

For information all press releases are published on the home page of our website and links to these sent to city council followers and fans via Twitter and Facebook.

Training and Development

Lancaster City Council continues to contribute its scrutiny reports to the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) database although this year we did not send any representatives to the CfPS Annual Conference.

In 2011 the City Council held Elections for all of its 60 seats. A full Member Induction was provided to both new and returning City Councillors. In order to make the most of the scrutiny function, Democratic Services arranged a number of sessions over the year to help members understand their role on the committee, and how scrutiny can influence the council's decision making process.

Directly following the 2011 local elections, Stephen Metcalfe presented an overview and scrutiny taster session at induction meetings for new councillors in Lancaster and Morecambe. This gave members a potted history of local authority scrutiny, and an idea of how the committee acts as a critical friend to the Cabinet and takes an active role in policy development.

Once members had been appointed to the Committee, Democratic Services arranged for councillors to attend a day of scrutiny training organised by Lancashire County Council. Aimed squarely at those new to scrutiny, the session gave a basic overview of the subject

before discussing the implications for scrutiny of the Localism Bill, Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill, and Health and Social Care Bill.

Not all members were able to attend the County's event, and it was felt that further training was necessary for all members on how the scrutiny process works, specifically in Lancaster.

Subsequently, Stephen Metcalfe and Peter Baines from Democratic Services led a session prior to the Committee's meeting of 13th July 2011 which discussed the procedure, function and potential of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. To aid this process a Scrutiny Handbook has been circulated to all Overview and Scrutiny Committee members.

Finally, Alex Sangster was commissioned to provide an in-depth session on advanced skills for effective scrutiny in autumn 2011. Alex is a professional trainer as well as a councillor on Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, and provided a very popular session on skills such as learning to listen, planning reviews and questioning and influencing skills.

Training opportunities will be made available to the committee going into the new municipal year, and councillors are encouraged to raise any aspects of the committee's work which they would benefit from further training on.

Health Scrutiny

As noted earlier in this report Councillor Newman - Thompson is the City Council's representative on the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee and has been asked to provide regular updates to the City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, particularly with regard to recent issues at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary.

Lancashire Scrutiny Network

Representatives from this Council continue to attend the quarterly meetings of the Lancashire Scrutiny Network. 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 also improve links between District and County Council. The meetings have been held at Lancashire County Council and South Ribble. Issues discussed have included new scrutiny powers including crime and disorder, petitions, partnership scrutiny and the possible implications of the Localism Act.

Northwest Scrutiny Officer Network

This group comprises 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 Blackpool, Tameside, Stockport, Liverpool, Cumbria and Lancashire Councils and thus has access to significant expertise and knowledge. Most recently Blackpool and Wyre have hosted the network meetings and the issues discussed have included updates from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and the Localism Act.

Appointments to Other Bodies

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

Outside body	Overview and Scrutiny Membership
Homelessness Forum	Councillor Roger Dennison
Lancaster and District Vision Board	Councillor Roger Dennison
Lancaster and Morecambe Fairtrade District Steering Group	Councillor Mark Bevan
Museums Advisory Panel	Councillor Pam Pickles

Members are asked to report back regularly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of these bodies.

Joint Scrutiny

In October the Committee agreed to nominate Councillor Ceri Mumford as the Committee's representative on the County Council's Arts Development Task Group, as a voting member of the Group. It is anticipated that the Task Group will report either later in this municipal year, or at an early stage of the new one. Councillor Mumford provides regular updates on the work of the Task Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Please also see the Health Scrutiny section of this report.

Performance Review

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

Scrutiny of Partnership working

This continues to progress with reports on partnership working being provided to the Budget and Performance Panel.

Reducing the response times to Overview and Scrutiny requests

Response time to requests for briefing notes and reports continue to be monitored.

Further development of the Scrutiny Web Page

The Scrutiny web page has been developed to include links to all task group reports include information on current task groups.

Conclusion

This report has highlighted 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

There are a number of issues that have been unable to be considered this municipal year in view of the amount of work that has been included on the Committee's Work Programme. There are also a number of issues that will remain on the Work Programme for the new municipal year.

These include:

- Lancaster Bus Station display board;
- Wind Energy - Presentation;
- Report back on Shared Services developments;
- Lancaster Prison;
- Community Safety;
- Homelessness;
- Rural Broadband

Also update reports have been requested on the agreed recommendations of the following former Task Groups:

- Update on the implementation of recommendations of the Council Assets Task Group;
- Update on the implementation of recommendations of the Canals Task Group.

Work on the Commissioning Plan Informal Task Group will start work in March 2012 and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has asked for a briefing note on the electrification of the Lancaster to Morecambe rail line prior to considering the creation of a Task Group.

As in previous years both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Budget and Performance Panel will commence considering items for their Work Programmes for 2012/13.

Consideration will also need to be given to other issues resulting from new legislation, particularly the Localism Act 2011.

Acknowledgements

Overview and Scrutiny Councillors and Officers would like to thank the following for their contribution to the Scrutiny process during 2011/12:

- Cabinet Members who have appeared before Overview and Scrutiny bodies;
- Representatives from the organisations which have delivered presentations to the Committee/Panel this year;
- Staff who have attended meetings and 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;
- Councillors and Officers from other local authorities involved in joint working;
- Training and development provided both internally and externally;
- All current members of the Democratic Services team.

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

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