



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

April 2008

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| CONTENTS |
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| | <u>TITLE</u> | <u>PAGE</u> |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| | Foreword | 2 |
| (1) | Statistics and Overview | 3-4 |
| (2) | Pre-decision Scrutiny | 5 |
| (3) | Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 6-10 |
| (4) | Call-in and Holding Cabinet to Account | 11-14 |
| (5) | Budget and Performance Panel | 15-19 |
| (6) | Task Groups | 20-25 |
| (7) | Media and Public Relations | 26-27 |
| (8) | Training and Development | 28-29 |
| (9) | Joint Working and Networks | 29-30 |
| (10) | Performance Review | 31 |
| (11) | Conclusions and Future Direction | 32 |
| (12) | Acknowledgements and the Officer Team | 33 |
| | <u>Appendix A</u> - How the Scrutiny process has contributed to Lancaster City Council's Corporate Objectives. | 34 |

Foreword from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

I am very pleased to introduce the annual report for Overview and Scrutiny at Lancaster City Council. The report outlines the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Budget and Performance Panel and Task Groups over the last year.

At a recent Overview and Scrutiny conference we were asked what made for good scrutiny. The list included that it should be member led, have its own budget, be a critical friend, should not be subject to party politics and should provide value for money for the people of the district. I was pleased to see that scrutiny at Lancaster City Council is already doing this. We know that we can always improve - and that we can always learn from others; but our positive approach to scrutiny at this council has made for interesting and engaging work for councillors and our partners.

A particular focus for this year has been the scrutiny of partnerships. We have come to realise that much of what the council does involves us working with other councils, organisations and voluntary groups. Just how councillors can scrutinise what is going on in these partnerships is a question that is absorbing much time across the country. However, I believe we have made huge strides in this area this year.

The Grants Task Group report was accepted by Cabinet in the summer. This has allowed for positive engagement with the voluntary sector and a real understanding, by members, of what the groups we support are adding to the District. The North Lancashire PCT and Morecambe Bay Acute Hospitals have visited the committee and we welcome the positive relationship we are building up with them. Blackburn Diocese has also begun to work with us - and the chairmanship of the public meetings in the Anti-social task group by Rev Tim Horobin demonstrates the way in which we can work together.

Overview and Scrutiny has also taken the lead on the Council's response to two of the biggest issues to affect the district this year. The successful School's Review Task Group saw its recommendation to support the Hornby, Skerton High School federation. It remains to be seen what the report of the Post Office working group achieves.

Scrutiny of the Council's services has continued. Cemeteries, assets, parking and housing have all featured this year. In particular the committee has monitored closely the forward plan and questioned how it is working.

We have had four task groups this year - and one working group: these groups are established in response to requests from members. They have all been engaging and I know members enjoy this way of working. If you have an area you think is ripe for a task group then please let the committee know.

Finally can I thank all the members, officers, outside agencies and in particular members of the public who have been involved in Overview and Scrutiny work this year. Without your help none of our achievements would have been possible.

Councillor Stuart Langhorn
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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|--------------------------------|
| 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 2007/08. The Act also places a duty on local authorities' Overview and Scrutiny functions to produce an Annual Report which this document represents.

Key Achievements

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a reduced number of Call-ins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in response times to Overview and Scrutiny requests |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in Task Group reporting time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved monitoring of SLAs and voluntary sector grants |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of Members involved in Task Groups including new Members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater support from Service departments to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater public involvement in Overview and Scrutiny | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Group scoping improved |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased press coverage. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work programme developing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a scrutiny web page | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved monitoring of recommendations |

Key Areas for Improvement

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scrutiny of Partnership working. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Further development of pre-decision Scrutiny. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reducing the response times to Overview and Scrutiny requests | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved Scrutiny of budget and voluntary sector grants. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Further development of scrutiny web page | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintaining public and media interest |

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.

Statistics 2007/08

| STATISTIC | TOTAL 2004/5 | TOTAL 2005/6 | TOTAL 2006/7 | TOTAL 2007/8 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| No. of Meetings (incl. Budget and Performance Panel and Task Groups) | 31 | 41 | 53 | 39 |
| No. of Site Visits | Not collected 2004/5 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| No. of Call-ins | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| No. of Issues for Pre-Decision Scrutiny | 2 | 2 | 12 | Not collected |
| No. of Referrals from Cabinet | Not collected 2004/5 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| No. of Referrals to Cabinet/Council | 22 | 15 | 11 | 12 |
| No. of Cabinet Members held to account | Not collected 2004/5 | 1 | 8 | 6 |
| % Recommendations adopted from Scrutiny Reviews and Task Groups | 91% | 86% | 88% | 84% |

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.

*"The Forward Plan is a way of arranging the work of the council in an organised way according to the Council's Priorities.
It gives members a chance to look at and discuss items of business before a final decision is taken thus allowing changes to the decision in the best interests of the council and the public
Officers are usually able to satisfactorily answer members queries regarding the items on the forward plan which might previously been subject to call-in"*

(Councillor Susan Bray - Pre-decision Scrutiny Champion)

This year the Committee raised concerns regarding the functioning of the Forward Plan and the Chief Executive was invited to a later meeting to inform Members of the measures taken to address concerns, with particular regard to inadequately completed notices. Members suggested that in future an explanation for any slippage of items should be included on the notice and welcomed the improvements that had been made.

In addition to the Pre-decision scrutiny Champion meeting with officers to discuss items on the Forward Plan, Committee Members have engaged with Directors, Service Heads and Officers to obtain clarification, progress updates and identify areas where Overview and Scrutiny could add value or should maintain an interest.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Stuart Langhorn
(Chairman)



Cllr Emily Heath
(Vice Chairman)



Cllr Susan Bray



Cllr Ken Brown



Cllr Mike Greenall



Cllr Roger Plumb



Cllr Robert Redfern



Cllr Peter Robinson
(until September 2007)



Cllr Rebekah Gerrard
(from November 2007)



Cllr Jude Towers

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.

"Hearing from local and national groups and organisations and scrutinising their position and proposals in relation to the Lancaster District is an incredibly important and worthwhile task. Utilising open meetings to ensure local people have their say is, for me, the most important element of this work. Participating in the O&S committee has been an enjoyable privilege and a fantastic learning experience"
(Councillor Jude Towers - Overview and Scrutiny)

Overview and Scrutiny at Lancaster City Council is fortunate in having a budget of £4,000 to support the work of the whole Overview and Scrutiny process. Due to the differing resource requirements of the annual Overview and Scrutiny work programme, spend against this budget varies. This year the budget has been utilised to provide scrutiny training including securing the services of a freelance trainer on two occasions, undertaking site visits for task groups and to enable attendance of Members and officers at various scrutiny seminars and conferences.

This year an Overview and Scrutiny web page has been developed. This 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 2007/08 the Committee has called-in 1 decision, scrutinised a number of Council decisions and issues, and has established 4 Task Groups and 1 Working Group. More information with regard to the task groups can be found on page 20, whilst Appendix A provides an indication of how the Scrutiny function in Lancaster has contributed to the Council's Corporate Objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan.

The Call-in by the Committee is listed in the 'Call-in' section of the report on page 11. An indication of the Committee's Work Programme for 2007/08 is set out below and further information can be found in the Overview and Scrutiny minutes available on the Council's website.

Modernisation of City Council (Direct) Services

Following on from the reorganisation of City Council (Direct) Services, the Service Head provided Members with an insight as to how the reorganisation had started to achieve its objectives with significant improvements in cleanliness and waste management and clear lines of accountability for service delivery and financial performance. Members noted that the service had been recognised as an 'Investors in People Employer' and DEFRA was using the Bulky Matters service as an example of best practice.

Presentation from Lancaster and Morecambe Fair Trade Group

The Chairman of the Lancaster and Morecambe Fair Trade Steering Group delivered a presentation highlighting the 65% increase in cafes and retailers offering fair trade products since the district was awarded 'Fair Trade District' status in March 2004. Following on from this presentation the Committee recommended that fair trade be promoted further through the Council's websites and the website has been subsequently updated. Moreover the spring 2008 edition of "Your District Council Matters" included a feature highlighting Lancaster district as a Fair trade district.

Progress report on implementation of Cemetery Task Group recommendations

The Public Health and Safety Officer provided the Committee with a progress report on the implementations of the recommendations made by the Cemeteries Task Group. This included improvements to maintenance, signage, path repairs and the establishment of a friends group. The Cabinet Member with responsibility commended the efforts of the small dedicated team of staff within the Cemeteries Service and it was noted that an application would be made for a green flag award for Torrisholme Cemetery as it was felt that the necessary criteria was now being met.



Example of the new signage erected in Torrisholme Cemetery

Recognising that scrutiny was 'contributing effectively to service improvement', the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment report maintained, 'cemetery has improved as a direct result of task group involvement.'

Domestic Violence Strategy

The Community Safety Officer delivered a presentation on the Domestic Abuse Strategy which outlined the rationale for the development of the strategy together with an explanation of the methodology used. This stemmed from concerns raised regarding the level of domestic violence within the district which was highlighted in the report of the Homelessness Task Group. Members asked a number of questions with regard to safe house provision, conviction rates and requested that further information be circulated regarding domestic violence 'hotspots.'

Allotments Review

Members considered a report commissioned by the Association of Lancaster and Morecambe Allotments which provided an objective assessment of the City Council's approach to managing allotments. The report identified the need for significant capital investment and, in order to be sustainable, consideration regarding future management and funding arrangements was essential. In order to assist with taking forward these recommendations it was agreed that the Allotments Working Group be reconvened in the new municipal year.

In addition, the view of the Committee has been sought with regard to several consultations including the **Consultation on Corporate Priorities** and the **LSP Sustainable Community Strategy Consultation**. The Leader of the Council presented the draft corporate priority proposals to the Committee and the Committee made a number of suggestions in relation to neighbourhood management, partnerships, the LSP, re-wording and re-phrasing which was submitted to Cabinet for consideration. Similarly following on from a presentation by the Head of Corporate Strategy, the Committee's views regarding the LSP Sustainable Community Strategy Consultation on objectives, duplication and clarity were fed into the consultation process.

Presentation on the Recycling of Trade Waste

Following a request from a Councillor regarding opportunities for recycling of trade waste, the Chief Operating Officer for JD Wetherspoons, Paul Harbottle accepted an invitation to deliver a presentation to the Committee outlining the recycling policies undertaken by his organisation. Members were informed that through a distribution centre provision had been made for recycling trade waste from their 670 public houses. Trade waste recycled included cardboard, paper, plastic, cans, cooking oil and glass. In view of the City Council's interest in developing trade waste recycling the Head of City Council (Direct) Services was invited to the meeting.

Presentation on the Care and Provision of Inpatients Mental Health Services

Helen Bingley and Shirley Saunders from Lancashire Care Trust delivered a presentation providing Members with the background, key principles and an outline of the proposed schedule with regard to the development of mental health services in Lancaster, and in particular, Inpatient Re-provision. A number of questions were answered with regard to care in the community, criteria for sites and secure bed sites and they welcomed the opportunity to discuss developments with the Committee at a future meeting.

Presentation – Older People’s Concerns

June Greenwell (Older People’s Partnership Board), Clare Mattinson (50 Forward) and Mark Luraschi (Adult and Community Services, Lancashire County Council) delivered a presentation with regard to the agencies and services for older people. Members asked a number of questions regarding the work of 50 Forward, the aim of which was to encourage people to remain independent and active with access to information and services. It was agreed that the OPPB and 50 Forward would work with officers to produce a scoping document prior to the possible establishment of an Older People’s task group.

Post Office Network Changes

In view of the consultation proposing the closure of 8 post office branches within this district as part of the network change programme, representatives from the Post Office and Postwatch were invited to discuss the consultation and proposals in some detail and members of the public were given the opportunity to express their concerns. As a result of this meeting, a Post Office Working Group was established to provide further evidence on the possible effects of these closures; the findings were forwarded to the Council Business Committee to assist in formulating the Council’s response to the consultation. (see page 25)

Presentation on Health and Wellbeing in North Lancashire

Dr Frank Atherton, Director of Public Health North Lancashire PCT delivered an informative presentation on Health and Wellbeing in this district which indicated that whilst health and well being were improving there were a number of significant challenges facing the PCT including issues of health inequalities in some areas. Consideration was being given as to how local authorities could be involved in future developments. As a result of the presentation the Committee agreed to devote a future meeting to how the council was contributing to the health and wellbeing agenda and Dr Atherton accepted an invitation to attend this meeting.



Officers join local children - an example of how the City Council is promoting ways to contribute to improved health and well being within the district

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 has only been one request to Call-in a decision. This is detailed below.

Call-ins 2007/08

Capital Programme Receipts – Minute 53, Resolution 2

Members called in a Cabinet decision on the grounds that it had not been made in accordance with four of the principles of Decision Making, in particular due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers, a presumption in favour of openness, that the aims and desired outcomes would be clearly expressed and the options that were considered and the reasons for arriving at the decision would be explained. Signatories to the Call-in were concerned that there had not been an opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny of the proposals to sell Council owned land at Lawson's Bridge.

After some discussion the following recommendations were agreed by the Committee:

- (1) That the Chief Executive be requested to review procedures for placing items on the forward plan and remind officers of the importance of it as a document for pre-scrutiny and the need for transparency.
- (2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that the draft tender brief for the Lawson's Bridge site appears before this committee before the Cabinet makes its decision.
- (3) That Budget and Performance Panel be requested to investigate the robustness of the financing of the Council's Capital Programme.

In response, Cabinet agreed for the draft tender brief to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to Cabinet making its decision and an additional meeting of the Committee was held in Lancaster Town Hall for this purpose. Furthermore the Budget and Performance Panel considered a report regarding the robustness of the capital programme at its February meeting, and the Chief Executive discussed the functioning of the Forward Plan at an additional Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in March.

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 2007/08 are set out below:

| Cabinet Member | Cabinet Liaison Member |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Councillor Mace | Councillor Langhorn |
| Councillor Histed (until Dec 2007) | Councillor Plumb |
| Councillor Johnson (from Dec 2007) | |
| Councillor Blamire | Councillor Heath |
| Councillor Bryning | Councillor Towers |
| Councillor Maia Whitelegg | Councillor Mike Greenall |
| Councillor Archer | Councillor Robinson (until Sept 2007) |
| | Councillor Gerrard (from Sept 2007) |
| Councillor Gilbert | Councillor Redfern |
| Councillor Barry | Councillor Bray |
| Councillor Kerr | Councillor Robinson (until Sept 2007) |
| | Councillor Gerrard (from Sept 2007) |
| Councillor Ashworth | Councillor Ken Brown |

The value of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continuing to appoint Members to liaise with Cabinet Members is reflected in an article submitted by the Committee's Vice-Chairman, Councillor Emily Heath which was selected for inclusion in the Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS) 2007 publication entitled, 'Scrutiny Frontiers – Experiences from the Scrutiny Frontline.'

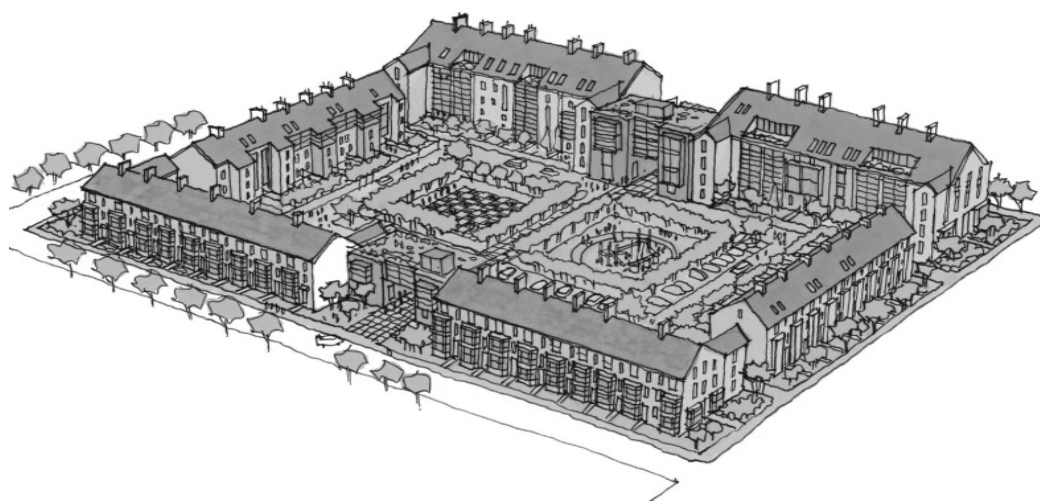
"We have a semi-formal system whereby each scrutiny member is paired up with an executive member in order that there is one person keeping track of each executive member. With the right attitude, systems like this can work, irrespective of political party backgrounds."

Cllr Emily Heath (Vice Chairman) quoted in 'Scrutiny Frontiers - Experiences from the Scrutiny Frontline,' CfPS publication, 2007.

This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided against making any appointments to the Cabinet Liaison groups, although Overview and Scrutiny Members are able to attend these meetings in the capacity of an observer rather than a contributor.

As Cabinet Members with responsibility for Housing, Councillors Gilbert and Kerr attended December's meeting to discuss issues within their portfolios. As a result of these discussions the Committee made a number of recommendations:

- ❑ A request for progress reports in relation to the West End Exemplar Project and the Neighbourhood Management project in Ellel.
- ❑ Clarification for Members outlining the differences between Strategic Housing and Council Housing.
- ❑ Referrals to the Budget and Performance Panel regarding non-priority council housing repairs, budgetary issues regarding funding of conversions in the west end and that the Panel consider the adequacy of social rented housing provision in the district.
- ❑ To invite the Leader of the Council to a future meeting to provide clarification on cabinet portfolios in view of concerns raised in relation to split portfolios.



Exemplar Housing - West End - a briefing note was requested regarding this project following on from discussions with the Cabinet Members with responsibility for Housing

At a subsequent Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mace, explained the factors which had influenced his allocation of cabinet portfolios as well as informing the Committee of issues within his own portfolio with particular reference to the LSP. As a result of these discussions the Committee resolved to be kept informed of progress with regard to the development of the LSP constitution.

The Committee values the opportunity to discuss portfolio issues with Cabinet Members and in developing the future work programme consideration will be given to ensuring that Cabinet Members are invited to meetings where items relate to their portfolio area.

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 both agree that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances, and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.

Statistics

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 6 occasions:

- Invitation to Twin Town Perpignan
- Salt Ayre Cycling Centre
- Election of Cabinet Member
- Health and Strategic Housing Fees and Charges 2008/09
- Traffic Management Act 2004 Penalty Charge Notices – Charging Levels (though with some concern)
- Concessionary Travel

On 1 occasion the Chairman did not agree to waive the right to call-in. This was with regard to the Maritime Festival 2008 and the Chairman subsequently requested that the Festivals Innovation Fund be added to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme with particular reference to its effectiveness in delivering a festival programme for the district.



Salt Ayre Sports Centre - the acceptance of an offer from the British Cycling Federation of a project capital grant to develop cycling facilities at Salt Ayre was considered as an item of urgent business

Budget and Performance Panel



Cllr Jim Blakely
(Chairman)



Cllr Mike Greenall



Cllr Tony Johnson
(Member & Vice Chairman
Until Dec 2007)



Cllr Sarah Fishwick



Cllr Tina Clifford



Cllr Jean Dent



Cllr Keran Farrow



Cllr Ian McCulloch



Cllr John Whitelegg
(Vice-Chairman from Jan 2008)



Cllr Peter Williamson
(from January 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.

This year the Terms of Reference of the Panel have been revised to provide a more detailed outline of the role and powers of the Panel. Underpinning the roles of the Panel is consideration of risk management issues in reviewing and scrutinising performance. An indication of the role of the Panel is detailed 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 consider risk management issues in reviewing and scrutinising performance.

In addition, the Budget and Performance Panel is responsible for monitoring and reviewing exception reporting within the Performance Review Teams, partnership monitoring, scrutinising policies and procedures for securing value for money (economy, efficiency, effectiveness), with particular regard to procurement practices, income management and collection arrangements, asset management practices and insurance arrangements.

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.

A number of revisions have been 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.

The most important development in performance management reporting has been the continued development of the Escendency system developed with Lancaster University. This system provides 'real time' performance figures across the Council providing Members with a clearer interpretation of the Council's up-to-date performance and also providing additional comparison material with the BVPI data, which is close to 12 months out of date when received by Members.

The CPA assessment report referred to the 'consistent and open approach to performance management by officers and councillors' and 'good use' of performance monitoring information. Overview and Scrutiny Officers aim to continue to build on this approach to performance management through additional training to Members charged with assessing performance data. External training professionals have been used to provide strategic approaches to Members' roles in performance management and additional training is provided on the systems used by the Council for Members' benefit.

At the end of each quarter, the Budget and Performance Panel receive PRT information which highlights any area of concern:

Following consideration of the corporate performance monitoring reports the Panel have requested the attendance of several Service Heads to provide further clarification regarding under-performing or failing indicators. Following concerns regarding the level of overspends for 2006/07 highlighted in the 4th quarter performance monitoring report in June 2007, the Head of Property Services informed the Panel at their subsequent meeting that the overspend figure had in fact been based on estimated figures and that there was indeed currently an under spend within his service.

In addition, the Head of Democratic Services attended the September meeting to advise the Panel of the measures taken to address an under-performing local indicator within the service relating to the publication of minutes within a 5 day period. The Service Head was able to confirm that having dropped to 50%, this figure now currently stood at 89%; an indication that this had been effectively addressed.

Briefing notes have also been requested by the Panel after considering the corporate performance monitoring reports. These have been regarding issues such as:

- Proposed systems of monitoring and recording of licensing complaints.
- Measures taken to ensure regular letting of Council accommodation.
- Delays in obtaining court hearing dates for non-payees of Council Tax.

In accordance with the Panel's terms of reference to monitor the delivery and effectiveness of Service Level Agreement (SLA) targets, the Panel appointed a sub-panel as recommended by the Grants Task Group to assist with this process.

Members visited each non-housing voluntary organisation with a current SLA in addition to several organisations that had expressed an interest in obtaining future SLA funding. This provided Members with an insight into the services which the recipients provided and feedback from these visits assisted the sub-panel in formulating their recommendations.

It was necessary to convene an extraordinary additional Budget and Performance Panel meeting to agree to the recommendations and they were then forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

As a result of this process the Panel have requested a further piece of work to improve the administrating, monitoring, reporting and allocating of SLAs and grant monies to non-housing voluntary organisations to ensure the Council receives value for money. In addition, the Panel requested a report regarding free and subsidised parking permits authorised by the City Council.

In addition to reviewing non-housing SLAs, the Housing Policy Officer has advised the Panel of progress regarding the 5 SLAs with homeless service providers.

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Cllr McCulloch suggested, "The monitoring site visits proved to be a particularly useful way to assess the value of the work carried out by the organizations working under SLAs with the Council. Meeting people in their workplaces helped the Councillors see the work in context, and also meant that the people applying for continuation of their SLAs were more relaxed than if they had been making a formal presentation at the Town Hall."

Cllr Whitelegg adds, "The visits made it possible for councillors to see what fantastic work is being done by hundreds of volunteers across the district. We are very fortunate indeed that we have so many dedicated people working to improve the quality of life of everyone in the district."

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Following on from this, the Panel requested that annual reports from the homeless service providers should be forwarded to the Panel.

Throughout the year the Panel received a number of suggestions for topics to be included in the work programme; details of these are provided below:

- An update on the homeworking pilot scheme and hot desking.
- A report regarding the collection of vehicular fines.
- A report regarding legal fees charged to tenants for new and renewed leases.
- A report detailing a six month review on the usage and cost efficiency of the new Customer Services facilities.

In response to concerns regarding increased costs in relation to the Storey Institute Project, the Head of Economic Development and Tourism presented a report to the Panel at their November meeting. Members requested further information regarding the contractual status and this was provided to the Panel by the Service Head at a later meeting.

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"This has been a busy year for Budget and Performance Panel, members and officers have worked hard to fulfil the panel's role for the council and I thank everyone involved for their efforts."

Cllr Jim Blakely (Chairman Budget and Performance Panel)

.....

A number of items have been referred to the Budget and Performance Panel from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further scrutiny, if deemed necessary by the Panel, as outlined on the next page.

| Topic Referred from Overview & Scrutiny | Action taken by Budget and Performance Panel |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Council tax within static caravan parks - June 2007</p> <p>Recharging with particular regard to CC(D)S & Information & Customer Services - September 2007</p> <p>Pricing of car parks and possible barrier installation - September 2007</p> <p>The robustness of the Council's Capital Programme - October 2007</p> <p>Non-priority repairs in council housing - December 2007</p> <p>Budgetary issues regarding funding of building conversions in the West End - December 2007</p> <p>The adequacy of social rented housing provision in the district - December 2007</p> | <p>Briefing note requested from Head of Revenue Services and circulated to members - June 2007</p> <p>Joint report by the Heads of CC(D)S & Information & Customer Services considered - February 2008.</p> <p>Report of Head of Property Services considered - February 2008</p> <p>Report of Head of Financial Services considered - February 2008</p> <p>Briefing note requested - January 2008</p> <p>Briefing note requested - January 2008</p> <p>Briefing note requested - January 2008</p> |

In addition, the Budget and Performance Panel have requested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee establish a task group to investigate issues surrounding parking affecting members of the community. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is due to review the Parking Strategy at its June meeting and has agreed to consider this recommendation at that time.



Customer Service Centre at Morecambe

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 Grants 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.

It was intended that the majority of the Task Groups would operate for three months and produce one Final Report during their lifetime. However, due to the complexity of some of the tasks that have been taken on, this time-scale has had to be extended and, on occasions interim reports have been produced in order to meet other external factors such as the budget process.

In last year's Annual Report reference was made to the emerging recommendations of the Grants Task Group and the Pollution in Morecambe Bay Task Group. Whilst the work of both of these task groups was completed before April 2006, the district elections in May resulted in a delay in the submission of these final reports (Grants to July's Cabinet and Pollution to September's Council).

Grants Task Group

Members: Councillors Stuart Langhorn (Chairman), Roger Mace, Sarah Fishwick, David Kerr, Tina Clifford, Emily Heath and David Whitaker

This Task Group first met in November 2006 in order to consider ways to implement the recommendations from the Draft Discussion Document on Non-Housing Voluntary Organisations Service Level Agreements which had been produced in order to examine the Council's role in supporting voluntary organisations with a view to clearer guidelines and rationale for support. Representatives from many of the organisations with service level agreements with the Council attended and contributed in discussions at the meetings. The final meeting of this task group was held in February 2007.

Recommendations agreed by Cabinet included:

- Downloadable application forms for grants
- Revision of Council's Funding WebPages
- A review of the Local Compact
- Budget and Performance Panel to appoint a sub-panel to monitor SLAs and undertake site visits to those in receipt of funding (see page 18)

Pollution in Morecambe Bay Task Group

Members: Councillors Keith Budden (Chairman) Anne Chapman, Tina Clifford, John Day, Sarah Fishwick, Paul Gardner, David Kerr, Tony Johnson, Rob Smith and David Whitaker

Established in April 2006 in order to investigate the impact of abandoned vehicles and fishing/cockling debris on pollution, the terms of reference of this Task Group were amended in order to focus on the long-term pollution/navigation/public safety problems posed by plastic fishing/cockling debris and the impact of this on the environment. Last year's Annual report detailed how the Chairman and supporting officer of this task group delivered a presentation at a Marine Litter Awareness Day arranged by the Isle of Man government and the widespread media interest generated by this.

Recommendations agreed by Council included:

- ❑ Lancaster City Council taking a lead in recognising the impact plastic has not only on marine life but the whole environment and signs the Plastic Pollution Declaration.
- ❑ That the Council ensures clear guidance on sanitary disposal is displayed in public toilets and all council buildings.
- ❑ That Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor cockling activity and request regular updates on the draft regulation order to control cockling activity.



The Pollution in Morecambe Bay task group was originally established to consider the impact of abandoned vehicles in the bay

The following task groups/working groups have been established 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 suggestion for this formal task group which first met in October 2007 came from a scrutiny training session when Members were encouraged to provide ideas for possible future topics for scrutiny. 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 has generated a great deal of media interest and representatives from British Waterways, the Inland Waterways Association, Carnforth Area Regeneration Partnership

and Lancaster Canal Trust have participated in the meetings. The Final Report is likely to be agreed by the task group at the end of March.

Recommendations include:

- A review of the status of the canal within the City Council's policy framework and that it be acknowledged as a recreational resource with future plans focussing on widening and improving access to benefit the whole community.
- Consideration being given to methods to prevent littering at the side of bridges.
- That the Council recognises the potential and current economic impact that the canal represents in terms of tourism and as such supports the restoration of the canal head and northern reaches.
- That the City Council work with British Waterways to clear up fly tipping adjacent to the canal on the Ridge Estate.



The task group explored the canal between Carnforth and Lancaster on a canal boat during their investigations

It is also worthy of note that task groups provide Members with an opportunity to further develop their chairing skills as well as broadening their knowledge of Council services as the following comment indicates:

"I have found chairing the Canal task group a rewarding experience. It has been beneficial talking with partners on and off the council and bringing together evidence required for the final report and recommendations. It has given me a better understanding on how different services within the council impact on others and how the council can work with other partners to ensure better services are provided in the district." (Councillor Tina Clifford - Chair of Canals Task Group)

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 first met in October 2007 and 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). Discussions have been held with the Lancaster Archaeological and Historical Society and the Lancaster Civic Society and the task group have visited the County Records Office and Conservation Centre in Preston during the course of their investigations.

Emerging recommendations are likely to include:

- Encouraging the establishment of a 'Friends of the Town Hall' to coincide with the centenary
- That consideration be given to future storage of the City's historic charters

.....
• "It has been interesting to
• hear the views of local
• societies and being given a
• tour of the county record
• office and conservation
• centre in Preston. It was
• great to see the tombstone
• that was discovered in
• Lancaster several years
• ago!"
•
• (Councillor Rebekah Gerrard
• - Chairman Council Assets
• Task Group)
•
•.....



Members of the Council Assets task group and colleagues from Lancashire Locals observed the Roman tombstone discovered in Lancaster several years ago currently located at the Conservation Centre

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 will gather evidence in four public meetings at various locations within the district. The Reverend Tim Horrobin has agreed to chair these public meetings. The recent establishment of this task group received coverage on the BBC website: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lancashire/7303982.stm>

Post Office Working Group

Members: *Councillor Stuart Langhorn, Mike Greenall and Roger Plumb*

This informal working group was established following discussions at January's Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting with representatives from Post Office Ltd and Postwatch regarding the consultation proposing the closure of 8 of the district's post offices. The Committee agreed to establish a working group to provide further evidence regarding the effects of the proposals on post offices which were part of a shop, impact on business needs in the community, disabled access and transport issues. Members of the public who had attended the Overview and Scrutiny meeting were invited to the Working Group meeting to provide further information which assisted with formulating a response to the consultation. One Glasson resident clearly welcomed the Council's involvement as the following extract indicates, "I really appreciate your interest in this, and that the Council is adding their weight."

The City Council's response to the consultation has been made available on the Council's website and a press release notifying interested parties of this was issued. The response can be viewed at: www.lancaster.gov.uk/scrutiny



Glasson Dock - Proposals to close the village post office have led to widespread concern

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| Media and Public Relations |
|-----------------------------------|

Over the year, approximately £ 7484.00 worth of free publicity has been generated through the use of Press Releases circulated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This is a notable increase on last year's figure of £4618.00.

The Press Releases itemised below were issued to the *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.

The figures have been generated by 'Newsflash' which is a media monitoring software operated by Council's Communications Services and relate to the period 1st April 2006 to 22nd January, 2007.

| Date | Title | Local Media Take up | Equivalent Advertising Value | Website hits |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| 14.9.07 | Overview and Scrutiny Committee seeks views on proposed school closures | 4 | £752.00 | 61 |
| 21.9.07 | Scrutiny committee encourages public participation on council priorities | 1 | £680.00 | 39 |
| 19.10.07 | Task group to debate school closure proposals | 4 | £946.00 | 41 |
| 19.10.07 | Task group seeks help to examine role of the Lancaster Canal | | £230.00 | 3 |
| 09.11.07 | Parents and teachers invited to task group meetings | 2 | £ 80.00 | 65 |
| 19.11.07 | Task group meeting moved | 4 | £434.00 | 43 |
| 21.12.07 | Secondary education task group releases final report | 3 | £1864.00 | 136 |
| 18.1.08 | Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss Post Office proposals | 5 | £ 1202.00 | 37 |
| 11.3.08 | Response to post office closures | 2 | £304.00 | |
| 18.03.08 | Antisocial behaviour task group to hold public meeting | 6 | £992.00 | |
| | | | £ 7484.00 | |

Public Relations

Last year's report highlighted that despite the difficulties of engaging the public in Overview and Scrutiny nationally, there had been a marked increase in the media coverage and public attendance at both Overview and Scrutiny meetings and task group meetings. This trend appears to have continued with members of the public attending the Call-in and the extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting convened to consider the draft tender brief relating to Land at Scotforth.

Post Office proposals regarding network change also generated considerable public interest with at January's meeting and encouraged wider participation of interested parties in the Post Office Working Group which was established as a result of the issues raised at the meeting.

In addition the meetings of the Review of Secondary Education task group encouraged public involvement in the well-attended meetings which were held at various locations and an impressive response to questionnaires circulated to Year 5 and 6 parents at a number of 'feeder' schools within the district.



Noise Nuisance an example of antisocial behaviour - The establishment of the Antisocial Behaviour Task Group has generated great interest in the local media and amongst members of the public

Training and Development

As indicated earlier in the report, in the summer of 2007, the CfPS published a leaflet entitled 'Scrutiny Frontiers – Experiences from the Scrutiny Frontline' which included an article submitted by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Emily Heath. The article outlined developments regarding the member led agenda

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) once again attended the CfPS Annual Scrutiny Conference in London which included a presentation on Developments in Scrutiny and Accountability together with workshops relating to Community Cohesion and the Community Call for Action.

This year officers were successful in securing a place on the CfPS Parliamentary Seminar Series which included a presentation on the workings of Select Committees and the opportunity to question the Chairman of the Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Committee on Parliament's scrutiny system.

A scrutiny taster session was held following on from the May elections to provide new Members with an overview of scrutiny at Lancaster. As a result of this taster session several topics for further possible scrutiny were identified including Canals as a community asset (see page....). In addition, the possibility of barriers to becoming councillors was raised. This has also been carried forward as a possible task group and Councillor Towers and Liz Bateson attended seminar entitled "Strengthening local democracy: recruiting, retaining and supporting councillors" which will assist in the preparation of the scoping template.

The services of Frances Taylor (formerly of INLOGOV and Head of Scrutiny, Cumbria County Council and now a freelance trainer), were secured to provide an introduction to scrutiny. Although aimed primarily at those new to scrutiny, this training day in June also provided a useful refresher course for some members. A number of places were offered to members from neighbouring authorities who expressed an interest in the training day. Feedback from the training day was positive. One external attendee suggested it was: 'a useful means of putting scrutiny in context and demonstrating its possibilities.'

In view of the positive response to this training arrangements were made for Frances Taylor to provide a further scrutiny training session in March 2008. The focus of this was on budget and performance from a scrutiny perspective. A number of places were again offered to neighbouring authorities with Lancashire County Council, Wyre Borough and Blackpool Borough Councils sending attendees. Officers from Financial Services and Corporate Strategy attended and assisted with discussions and group work.

•••••
• ***"I have done O&S training***
• ***before and Frances Taylor***
• ***has made it come alive. I***
• ***now feel I know what O&S***
• ***really means."***
•
• **(feedback from Cllr Sylvia**
• **Rogerson on the introduction**
• **to scrutiny training session)**
•
•••••

July's Budget and Performance Panel meeting was utilised to deliver training to the Panel with Panel substitutes and Cabinet Members also invited to attend. The training delivered included a Data Quality presentation from the Audit Commission and a presentation on the City Council's Performance Management Framework provided by the Head of Corporate Strategy.

A number of Budget and Performance Panel Members attended a training session on Local Government Finance and Budgeting provided by the Head of Financial Services in September 2007. This session included an outline of finance background and basics, the budget process and timetable and tax setting. Arrangements are now in hand for training on Efficiency/VFM Strategy.

In addition a Member Development exercise undertaken by Democratic Services has highlighted a number of areas with regard to scrutiny where Members would like to receive further information or undertake training. This includes chairing task groups, and questioning techniques. Arrangements are being made to ensure that these areas identified for further support are addressed.

The recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment report recognises the effectiveness of scrutiny training provision within the authority and suggests this training has 'enabled councillors to fulfil their role.'

One to One Support

Many Councillors have taken up the offer of meeting with Scrutiny Support Officers to discuss Overview and Scrutiny and their role within it. These discussions have included successful Call-ins, questioning approaches, how to scrutinise different issues, setting up Task Groups, Pre-decision Scrutiny, Performance and Financial Scrutiny and one-to-one support for Councillors in carrying out various Scrutiny activities. This approach continues to be effective and has been used for the Forward Plan, Call-in preparation and Task Group development.

Health Scrutiny

At the request of full Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee appoints a representative to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. With the vacancy arising in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the year and the timing and location of the meetings, it has not been possible for the Committee to appoint fill this vacancy. The Committee have therefore agreed to ask full Council to appoint a non-executive Member to this position.

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 public participation, and community engagement. A network meeting in February hosted by Wyre Borough Council comprised a training session on the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act and Implications for Scrutiny, presented by Dr Andrew Coulson from INLOGOV. The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny

and Councillor Fishwick from the Budget and Performance Panel accompanied officers to this.

Northwest Scrutiny Officer Network

Unfortunately due to work commitments it has only been possible for officers from the City Council to attend one of this year's quarterly meetings of the Northwest Scrutiny Officer Network this year. The 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. The membership of the group includes authorities such as Tameside, Stockport, Liverpool, Cumbria and Lancashire and thus has access to significant expertise and knowledge. Officers attended the most recent meeting which included a presentation on scrutiny at Trafford, an update on the Councillor Call for Action and an exercise on Quality Benchmarking.

Appointments to Other Bodies

At the request of Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to make a number of appointments to other bodies. These appointees have attended meetings and kept the Overview and Scrutiny process informed of developments. These appointments are:

Local Strategic Partnership:

- Community Safety Strategy Group – Councillor Emily Heath
- Health and Well-being Group – Councillor Peter Robinson (until Sept 2007)
- Health and Well-being Group – Councillor Ken Brown (from October 2007)
- Children and Young People Group – Councillor Mike Greenall
- Sustainability Partnership – Councillor Emily Heath
- Equality & Diversity Building Block – Councillor Jude Towers
- Life Long Learning – Councillor Ken Brown
- Lancaster and District Vision Board – Councillor Jude Towers

Other Bodies:

- Homelessness Forum – Councillor Peter Robinson (until Sept 2007)
- Homelessness Forum – Councillor Ken Brown (from October 2007)
- Lancashire County Council Health Equalities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Peter Robinson (until Sept 2007)
- 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 provide regular feedback to the Committee.

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

A report is currently being drafted with regard to the scrutiny of partnership working and this will be considered the Budget and Performance Panel before the end of the municipal year.

Reducing the response times to Overview and Scrutiny requests

Whilst the commencement of the Council Assets Task Group was delayed in order to take account of the limited resources of Property Services in the first half of the municipal year, response times for requests to reports and briefing notes has improved. This is illustrated in the monitoring of implementations of recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny, Budget and Performance and task groups which was noted by Members at January's meeting.

Increased press coverage

As illustrated in the 'Media and Public Relations' section (page...), there has been a noticeable increase in the media interest in the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the various task groups that have been established this year. The establishment of the Canals task group was featured on BBC News Online in October 2007: this can be viewed at the following address:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lancashire/7053068.stm>

Efforts will be made to continue generating high levels of press coverage.

Further development of pre-decision scrutiny

The new system for submitting items for inclusion on the Forward Plan has led to some teething problems including inconsistencies regarding completion of forms and this has been a cause of concern to the Committee. The Committee has advised the Chief Executive of their concern and the Chief Executive will be attending the meeting on 19th March to advise Members of the measures that have been taken to address this. It is anticipated that improvements to the functioning of the Forward Plan will enable further the development of pre-decision scrutiny.

Improved scrutiny of budget and voluntary sector grants

Members have considered a report relating to the robustness of the capital programme and have the new monitoring arrangements including site visits to voluntary organisations have enabled Members to make informed recommendations regarding future SLA funding.

Further involvement of the public in Overview and Scrutiny, particularly with regard to Task Group working

The Review of Secondary Education Task Group was successful in encouraging participation of interested parties during the various formal and informal evidence gathering meetings. In addition, over 250 parents of year 5 and 6 pupils from local feeder schools

forwarded completed questionnaires which greatly assisted the task group in their deliberations.

Similarly the issue of proposed post office closures led to widespread public interest with a number attending the Overview and Scrutiny meeting and subsequent Post Office Working Group meeting, providing useful information which enabled the Working Group to produce a comprehensive evidence-based consultation response.

Conclusion

Lancaster City Council's scrutiny system continues to progress. 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. This year Comprehensive Performance Assessment report suggests that scrutiny arrangements are effective and that scrutiny at Lancaster works in 'an inclusive and non-political way.' Members of Overview and Scrutiny are confident that with continued support and access to information the scrutiny process will continue to deliver further benefits to the Council and residents of the District.

The Committee are continuing to raise the profile of Overview and Scrutiny within and outside of the City Council. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are eager to learn from the best practice methods adopted in other authorities and, where possible, to share best practice with other authorities.

Future Direction

Both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Budget and Performance Panel have begun to consider items for their Work Programmes for 2008/09.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The possible establishment of Task Groups in relation to:

- Barriers to individuals standing as Councillors
- Community Cohesion with particular regard to equality and diversity
- Older People's Task Group
- Joint work with representatives from the Blackburn diocese
- Reconvening the Allotments Working Group
- Parking

Other areas on the future work programme relate to:

- Update on Cemeteries Service following Internal Audit report
- Review of the Parking Strategy
- Neighbourhood Management Project in Ellel
- Update regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the Fly Tipping task group including discussions with Network Rail
- Presentation from the Bat Conservation Society

Budget and Performance Panel

- Partnership Scrutiny
- Local Environment Quality Pilot Study Results
- Progress report on Customer Services Centres

Acknowledgements

Overview and Scrutiny Councillors and Officers would like to thank the following for their contribution to the Scrutiny process during 2007/8:

- 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.

Special thanks to:

- James Doble, Principal Democratic Support Officer with responsibility for overall management and development of the Overview and Scrutiny process who left this authority in March 2008 to take up the post of Democratic and Scrutiny Services Manager at Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire.

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 |
| Liz Bateson Senior Democratic Support Officer | Responsibility for day-to-day management of Overview and Scrutiny (including Call-in), and Task Group support | (01524) 582047 ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk |
| Jon Stark Democratic Support Officer | Budget and Performance Panel and Task Group support | (01524) 582132 jstark@lancaster.gov.uk |

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

How does the Scrutiny function contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?

| Issues Considered | Corporate Objectives | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Meeting essential needs | Taking part | Care and Respect for Everyone | Life Long Learning | Travel and Access | Fun Creativity and Leisure | Using Resources Wisely | Protecting Wildlife and Landscapes | Economy and Work | Positive Planning and Development |
| Modernisation of CC(D)S | √ | | | | | | √ | | | |
| Fair Trade Steering Group | | | √ | | | | | √ | √ | √ |
| Cemetery Task Group update | √ | | √ | | | | √ | √ | | |
| Domestic Violence Strategy | √ | | √ | | | | √ | | | |
| Allotments Review | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | √ | | |
| Consultation on Corporate Priorities | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| LSP Sustainable Community Strategy Consultation | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Recycling of trade waste | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| Inpatients Mental Health Services | √ | | √ | | | | √ | | | √ |
| Older People's Concerns | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | |
| Post Office network changes & Post Office Working Group | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | | √ | |
| Health and Well being | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | | √ |
| Star Chamber Process | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Best Value Performance Plan | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Performance Management | √ | | | | | | √ | | | |
| Partnership Monitoring | √ | | √ | | | | √ | | √ | |
| Business Plan Monitoring | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Corporate Finance | √ | | | | | | √ | | | |
| Budget 2007/08 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Corporate Grants Service Level Agreements | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | | |
| Value for Money/Efficiency Strategy | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Review of Secondary Education Task Group | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | | | |
| Council Assets Task Group | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Canals Task Group | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | | |
| Grants Task Group | √ | | | | | | √ | | | |
| Pollution in Morecambe Bay Task Group | √ | | √ | | | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Antisocial Behaviour Task Group | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | √ | √ | | |