

Report from Overview and Scrutiny

Lead Members: Cllr Mrs A Bradshaw; Mrs Y Clarkson
P Connolly; Mrs M Woodburn

Lead officer: T Capper

March to April 2007

Since Overview and Scrutiny last reported:

1. Cumbria County Joint Scrutiny Overview Group

The Cumbria County Joint Scrutiny Overview Group met on 3 April in Carlisle and was attended by Councillor Anne Bradshaw. The meeting considered two key issues:

(i) The Cumbria Local Area Agreement – Members considered in some detail how scrutiny across the county should play a role in reviewing implementation and delivery of the targets in the Cumbria Local Area Agreement. The issue has particular relevance in view of the Government's recent announcement that all areas in the UK will need new Area Agreements in place for April 2008 based on a revised common template. There will be a new set of 200 national indicators from which each partnership will be expected to choose 35. There will be a new Comprehensive Area Assessment in place from 2009 for each LAA area. This will replace CPA and other current inspection regimes.

There are a number of ways in which scrutiny could have a role in delivery of the LAA. These include:

- Monitoring implementation of the current LAA in 2007/2008
- Looking at the governance framework and roles and responsibilities for the current LAA, in preparation for 2008/2009
- Monitoring development of the Sustainable Community Strategy for Cumbria
- Scrutinising decisions made by bodies developing and/or delivering LAA
- Monitoring delivery of the new LAA and performance in meeting targets
- Scrutinising plans and objectives being developed to deliver the Community Strategy

The Joint Scrutiny Group has appointed a small working group of Members and officers to consider these potential activities in more detail and report back to the next meeting in October.

(ii) Review of Parking Policies - The County Council proposes to review its parking policies for the County and the County Council Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and the Environment has suggested that this review presents an opportunity for all authorities in the county to work together to establish a set of policies that enable more effective joint working in parking management. The Joint Overview group has appointed a Task and Finish Group consisting of scrutiny members from each authority to conduct this review for completion by October 2007. Appropriate officer support for the review will be identified by the Scrutiny Practitioners' Network at its next meeting.

2. Kerbside Collections

OSC Environment has considered a report by the consultant acting on behalf of WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), which evaluates the kerbside collection of dry recyclables since the service was taken over from Doorstep Collections in 2006. The report examines the costs and benefits of providing the service on an in-house basis as against an alternative provider.

The report recommends (inter alia) that the kerbside collection service is retained in-house as this offers better value for money than an alternative provider, and the Committee has supported this conclusion. The report will be considered by Executive in April.

3. Community Law Services

OSC PR has received presentations from the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Community Law Service on their activities in Copeland, which have expanded significantly in recent years. There will be a need for a new SLA between the Council and both organisations as a basis for continued revenue support from the Council. Negotiations on the terms of the new SLA will be overseen by a sub group of OSC members to be appointed early in the new municipal year.

4. Sports and Leisure

OSC Social received a presentation from the Chief Executive and other representatives of North Country Leisure on recent developments in sports and leisure service provision in Whitehaven and Cleator Moor.

5. Haig Pit

OSC Economic has considered a report and presentation from representatives of West Lakes Renaissance on proposals for the redevelopment of Haig Pit. The redevelopment proposals as they currently stand contain a funding gap of some £25,000 and it is possible that the Council will be asked to make a contribution to this in future years.

6. Customer Satisfaction Survey

The OSC PR considered a preliminary report on proposals for a customer satisfaction survey in spring 2007. The survey is being conducted with 600 customers drawn randomly from across all the Council's service areas. 200 customers will be contacted by telephone, the remainder by post or e-mail. The survey covers situations where customers have contacted us in person, by telephone, e-mail or letter in the last 12 months. The results of the survey will be reported to OSC PR in June 2007.

7. Information and Communications Strategy

OSC PR considered the draft Information and Communications Strategy for the next 5 years. The purpose of the Strategy is to define the Copeland Borough Council Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy to be used for the next 5 years (with annual review).

It continues to build upon the principles and activities stated in earlier policies and proposals, and places even greater emphasis upon the key messages identified earlier, all of which have relevance to those who have responsibility for directing ICT, be they elected Members, Chief Executives, Heads of Service or other senior managers:

- There must be a real partnership between all those who manage, use and develop IS/IT.
- ICT must be an integral part of the Council's business planning process.
- There must continue to be a strategic view of the way technology is applied across the organisation.
- The ICT organisation must continue to have real influence within the organisation.
- The delivery of IS/IT must offer, and be seen to offer, value for money.
- There must be a commitment to develop the right IS/IT skills for all employees.
- The risks associated with IS/IT must be properly managed.
- The value from IS/IT must be measured.

Moreover, the ICT Strategy creates the critical link between the Council's Corporate Plans, Central Government initiatives and Information Technology.

8. Gershon Efficiency Savings

OSC PR received a report on progress in the current year on Gershon efficiency savings.

9. Strategic Risk Register

OSC PR considered progress in managing the Council's strategic risks arising from the 2006/7 Corporate Plan.

10. Health Scrutiny

The Health Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Joint Care of Older People with Complex Needs in the Community will be reporting to the County Council Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee shortly with 13 recommendations.

The Health and Well Being Task Group response to the PCT/County Council Consultation on Short break Services for Children with Disabilities will be reported to the PCT Board on 25 April. The Task Group's main conclusions are that this excellent service is of crucial value to families of children with disabilities and there needs to be continuity of this service.

Copies of both reports are available from Democratic Services on request.

11. Scrutiny Support Officer

Neil White, the Council's newly appointed Scrutiny Support Officer, will be joining us on 16 April and will be based in the Democratic Services office.