

BOROUGH OF BARROW-IN-FURNESS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting:- 23rd May, 2013
at 2.00 p.m. (Committee Room No. 4)

A G E N D A

PART ONE

1. To note any items which the Chairman considers to be of an urgent nature.
2. To receive notice from Members who may wish to move any delegated matter non-delegated and which will be decided by a majority of Members present and voting at the meeting.

3. **Admission of Public and Press**

To consider whether the public and press should be excluded from the meeting during consideration on any of the items on the agenda.

4. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations by Members and/or co-optees of interests in respect of items on this Agenda.

Members are reminded that, in accordance with the revised Code of Conduct, they are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests or other registrable interests which have not already been declared in the Council's Register of Interests. (It is a criminal offence not to declare a disclosable pecuniary interest either in the Register or at the meeting).

Members may however, also decide, in the interests of clarity and transparency, to declare at this point in the meeting, any such disclosable pecuniary interests which they have already declared in the Register, as well as any other registrable or other interests.

5. Apologies for Absence/Attendance of Substitutes.
6. Confirmation of Minutes of the meeting held on 14th March, 2013 (copy attached).
- (D) 7. Work Programme.

**NOTE (D) – Delegated
(R) – Referred**

Membership of Committee

Councillors Roberts (Chairman)
Cassidy (Vice-Chairman)
Derbyshire
Hamilton
Husband
Johnston
McClure
Maddox
Opie
C. Thomson
M. A. Thomson
Wall

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BOROUGH OF BARROW IN FURNESS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting, Thursday, 14th March, 2013
at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillors Roberts (Chairman), Doughty (Vice-Chairman), Biggins, Hamilton (Minute Nos. 36-38), Husband, Johnston (Minute Nos. 36-46), Opie, C. Thomson and M. A. Thomson.

36 – Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hamilton declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7 – Tenants’ Participation (Minute No. 39) as he was the Chairman of the Housing Management Forum. He left the meeting during consideration of the item.

37 – Apologies for Absence/Attendance of Substitute Members

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Derbyshire, R. McClure and Murphy.

38 – Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31st January, 2013 were taken as read and confirmed.

39 – Tenants’ Participation

The Policy Review Officer reported that at the last meeting of this Committee, Members had agreed that the Housing Manager’s report should be considered by the Work Group and be reported to the Housing Management Forum and then the Executive Committee. He had since discussed that decision with the Monitoring Officer and had been advised that to comply with the Constitution, the Housing Manager’s report needed to be sent to this Committee and once agreed by Members would be sent to the Executive Committee on 20th March, 2013 with the recommendations from this Committee.

The Housing Manager’s report had been appended to the agenda. The purpose of his report was to summarise the discussions by Members of the Scrutiny Committee into the current arrangements for Tenant engagement in the governance of the Housing Service. It was noted that in order to aid consideration of the matter, reference had been made to:-

- A presentation by Lancaster City Council regarding their approach to engagement;

- A background paper on Tenancy Engagement including recent changes to the regulatory requirements for Tenant Participation in the governance of such services; and
- Open discussion between Councillors, Tenant representatives and Officers from the Housing Service.

In undertaking the scrutiny review, Members had met with the Housing Manager, the Community Involvement Manager and a representative from Lancaster City Council to discuss their approach to engagement.

The review focussed on six key points as follows:-

1. Membership of the Housing Management Forum

Members had been concerned that a number of representatives on the Housing Management Forum were not Tenants and were making recommendations regarding the use of monies which were raised through Tenants' rents. Members supported resident representation but believed that the Housing Management Forum should only include Council Tenant Representatives and Elected Members. Members agreed that the Council should try to encourage more Tenants to become involved in decisions that may affect their property.

The Membership of the Housing Management Forum was of equal numbers of Tenant Representatives and Councillors. Concerns had been raised that whilst Tenants would operate as one voice, political membership would be dictated by the political make-up of the Council. As a result Tenants would have greater influence over the recommendations made by the Housing Management Forum. Members did not think that was appropriate because ultimately it was the Members who would be held to account.

2. Chairman of the Housing Management Forum

The Council appoints a Housing Chair, however, the Council Constitution allows for the Housing Management Forum to appoint a Chair for the 'purpose of management of the meeting' who may be a different person. Historical evidence suggested that because of the membership of the Housing Management Forum, the Chair at the meetings was typically a Tenants' or Residents' representative. Members felt that the Chair of the Housing Management Forum meetings should be the Chair that was appointed by the Council. Members had raised concerns that when Housing Management Forum reports were presented to the Executive Committee that the Chair of the Housing Management Forum should be present to clarify any issues.

3. Scrutiny Function

Under the new arrangements, the Tenants should both shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold Councillors to account. The principle role in scrutinising Landlord services and intervening where consumer standards were not met would fall to Tenants'

Panels. Members felt that under Barrow's current arrangements Tenants would be scrutinising themselves.

4. Tenant Compact Training Budget

Currently the Tenants Compact had a budget of £10k for training which was used for supporting training events and for expenses incurred when attending. Members supported retaining the training budget but had been concerned that it may be excessive and it was noted that currently the training budget for all Elected Members was only £5k. Members had suggested that the value of the training budget be reviewed in 2013/14.

5. Area Improvement Budget

Currently there was a £25k budget for environmental enhancement. The budget was used for small scale improvements. Many Members had been unaware that these budgets were available and were concerned that some areas didn't access the funding. They felt that there should be more Member involvement in the use of this budget so that it could be used to attract match-funding. Members expressed that they would like to be informed of potential projects for which the budget would be used so that they could have some input into those projects.

6. Tenant Involvement Generally

Members had been concerned regarding the lack of Tenant involvement and would like to review how that could be improved.

RESOLVED:- To recommend to the Executive Committee the following:-

- 1. Membership of the Housing Management Forum:** The Council should encourage more Tenants to take an active role in Tenants' Participation. The number of Tenant Representatives on the Housing Management Forum should be reduced from eight to two and those must be Council Tenants;
- 2. Chairman of the Housing Management Forum:** The Council's Constitution should be changed so that the Council's appointed Chairman of the Housing Management Forum was the sole Chairman of the Forum. The Chairman should also be appointed to be a Member of the Executive Committee to provide a Members view on the Housing Management Forum reports that are submitted to the Executive Committee;
- 3. Scrutiny Function:** The remit of the Tenant Compact Working Party should be changed to carry out scrutiny of current policy and practices;
- 4. Tenant Compact Training Budget:** The budget should remain at £10k for 2013/14;

5. **Area Improvement Budget:** The budget should remain at £25k for 2013/14 but Members should be made aware of the funding opportunity. The Housing Department should identify a mechanism for keeping Elected Members involved regarding the use of the budget;
6. **Tenant Involvement Generally:** Consideration should be given to enabling nominated individuals to be attend the Tenants' Forum; and
7. Points 4 and 5 above should be scrutinised again in twelve months' time.

40 – Allotment Review Recommendations

The Policy Review Officer reported that himself and Councillor Doughty had met with the Assistant Director of Community Services to review the implementation of the recommendations made by this Committee following the allotment review in 2011. This had been reported to this Committee on 31st January, 2013 (Minute No. 31 refers) and at that meeting Members had requested that the Assistant Director of Community Services be invited to today's meeting to provide a detailed report on the progress on the recommendations from the scrutiny review so that this Committee could be satisfied that the recommendations had been followed through. Full details of the recommendations had been appended to the report and the Assistant Director of Community Services had attended the Committee to present the report to Members.

Members had also requested the figure of the number of Tenants paying by direct debit. The Policy Review Officer advised that he had been informed by the Client Accountant that currently there was 107 Tenants paying by direct debit which was 16% of the total number of Tenancies.

RESOLVED:- (i) To note the information; and

(ii) To note that the Assistant Director of Community Services would provide updates on the progress of the recommendations as well as updates on the number of Tenants paying by direct debit to this Committee as and when required.

41 – Street Cleansing

The Policy Review Officer provided Members with an update of the scrutiny review into Street Cleansing. He reported that the Streetcare Team had worked in partnership with Cumbria Police to undertake an exercise to reduce the amount of dog fouling on streets and public land. It was noted that the exercise had been quite effective. A Member had raised a concern regarding the number of dog fouling bags which had been deposited around the Cavendish Dock/Salthouse Mills area as there was no bin in that area. The Policy Review Officer had advised that he would inform the Streetcare Department of the situation in that area.

It was reported that the Council was currently exploring the use of technology to help reduce the number of bins being replaced. The Council had recently ordered 1,000, 120 litre bins which had been chipped which would allow them to be monitored to

ascertain whether the bin was being used by the property for which it was ordered. The cost of replacement bins was in excess of £40k per annum.

The Policy Review Officer reported that the Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) plant was now up and running and that he would liaise with Members of the Committee via e-mail to ascertain a suitable date to arrange a visit to the plant.

RESOLVED:- To note the information.

42 – Performance Management

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with the Council's performance management report for Quarters 1-3. The Policy Review Officer advised the Committee that in recent years, performance management information had been reported to the Audit Committee; however, the Executive Director had agreed that it would be more appropriate for the information to be presented to this Committee as Members would be better placed to initiate a performance review if required.

It was reported that the Council's Key Priorities for 2012/15 were as follows:-

1. Provide good quality efficient and cost effective services while reducing overall expenditure;
2. Continue to support housing market renewal including an increase in the choice and quality of housing stock and the regeneration of the Council's oldest and poorest housing;
3. Work to mitigate the effects of the recession and cuts in public expenditure and their impact on the local economy and secure a sustainable and long term economic recovery for our community; and
4. Continue to improve and enhance the built environment and public realm, working with key partners to secure regeneration of derelict and underused land and buildings in the Borough.

The proposed actions for 2012/13 (although some actions would take longer than one year to complete) along with details of any progress made had been reported as follows:-

KP 1:

- Complete the all-weather soccer centre. **This was due to have been completed in December 2012 but had been subject to delays and would be completed in the first quarter of 2013/14.**
- Renegotiate the Council's catering contract. **New contract specification was being drafted.**

- Carry out a Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) survey to understand the expectations and aspirations of our Tenants. **This had been completed and results had been published.**
- Review recycling collections to maximise recycling income and mitigate the impact of a reduction in the value of recycling rewards.
- Actively encourage all Members to access the Modern Councillor online e-learning facility. This facility was no longer available and had been replaced by the Ashridge Virtual Learning Resource (VLRC) accessible via the LGA website, www.local.gov.uk.

KP 2:

- A two year project to carry out Group Repair Work to 240 properties in sub areas A and E including:
 - Chimney stack repairs;
 - Door and window replacement;
 - Rendering and new rain water goods; and
 - Cavity wall insulation.
- Identify appropriate sites in partnership with Accent Housing to build 27, 3-bedroom social houses.

KP 3:

- Transfer management of Waterside House to BAE Systems as part of the lease agreement. **Completed.**
- Complete refurbishment at Phoenix Park Business Centre. **Completed.**
- Agree local arrangements to mitigate the impact of the Council Tax reduction scheme, which replaces the current Council tax Benefits. **This had been completed and had been covered in the budget.**

KP 4:

- Complete the external refurbishment of 102 Abbey Road. **This project had been completed.**
- Two year project to construct a roof on level C of the multi storey car park. **This was currently being reviewed and it was unlikely that it would continue.**

Key Performance Indicators

Table 1 below shows performance against a selection of existing indicators and Table 2 shows income against budget for Quarters 1-3 and provides a comparison with the figures from the same period in 2011/12.

Table 1 - Local Indicators

Indicator	Description	Q3 2011/12	Q3 2012/13	Change
9	Percentage of Council Tax collected	83.42	83.31	↓
10	Percentage of NNDR collected	88.19	86.97	↓
12	Average number of days sick per member of staff	6.03	9.44	↓
NI 191	Residual waste per household	401	388	↑
N1192	% of waste recycled, composted	38.1	37.7	↓
	Weight of waste recycled and composted	8255	7827	↓

The Council Tax and NNDR figures had been low at the end of the quarter but have since recovered.

The sickness figure was worse than the Council typically saw in the third quarter and should be monitored closely.

The percentage of waste recycled was marginally lower and the tonnage was 5% lower and this would impact on the value of the recycling rewards.

Table 2 - Income (Quarters 1-3)

		2011/12	2012/13
Service		£s	£s
Crematorium	Budget	264,600	450,000
	Actual	276,949	369,497
Cemetery	Budget	74,423	67,560
	Actual	50,668	61,940
Parking	Budget	609,000	489,233
	Actual	469,655	462,193
Recycling	Budget	573,750	573,750
	Actual	424,333	574,085
Bulky waste	Budget	27,000	58,500
	Actual	34,710	52,625
PLC 1	Budget	562,800	483,930
	Actual	438,991	457,723

The income was subject to seasonal variation which distorted the figures but despite this the income was lower than expected.

RESOLVED:- (i) To agree to accept that the Performance Information be presented to this Committee in future; and

(ii) To note the report.

The meeting closed at 3.15 p.m.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	(D) Agenda Item 7
Date of Meeting: 15th May, 2013	
Reporting Officer: Policy Review Officer	
<p>Title: Work Programme</p> <p>Summary and Conclusions:</p> <p>To provide Members with the current work programme.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Members are invited to consider the work programme and prioritise the reviews to be undertaken in 2013/14.</p>	

Report

I have attached the current work programme below, items 1-3 are complete and we need to prioritise the work programme for 2013/14.

Item	Topic	Scope of the review
1	Allotments.	<p>To review the Council's arrangements for managing tenancies and the waiting list.</p> <p>Ensure the allotment service is financially sustainable</p>
2	Street cleanliness.	<p>To review to Council's arrangements for working with the contractor to deliver a higher standard of street cleanliness.</p> <p>To ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to manage external factors the impact on street cleanliness e.g. seagulls and fly tipping.</p>

3	Coastal protection.	The implementation of phase four of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy has resulted in changes to way in which coastal defence projects are funded. The review will focus on our medium term project plan and how it will be funded.
4	Estates and asset management.	To review arrangements for maximising income from our assets and the potential for the disposal of redundant assets.
5	Town centres development and supporting local traders.	Review arrangements for supporting local traders in the current economic climate.
6	Highways and car parking	Review the provision of highways maintenance by Cumbria County Council. Review street lighting and on-street parking arrangements.
7	Economic Development, planning and development control.	Review arrangements for planning and economic development in light of the reduced funding as a result of the Governments deficit reduction programme. Ensure the Council still has appropriate arrangements in place to access development funding
8	Cultural Services	Review the impact of the Council's service review on cultural services. The review will consider events, distribution of funding and service charges.

9	Policy and strategy	Monitor the development of and performance against the council's key priorities.
10	Housing strategy	Review availability of private sector and socially housing and consider partnership arrangements to ensure that the availability of housing in the borough meets demand.
11	Localised flooding	Collect information from other agencies to determine whether appropriate action is being taken to minimise the impact of localised flooding

Background Papers

Nil