



**LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL**

*Promoting City, Coast & Countryside*

**OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY:  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2012/13**

*April 2013*



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## **Foreword from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

This report outlines some of the different issues which affect Lancaster City Council within its Scrutiny Role.

The Executive function of this Council should always be in consultation with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and its Members. This is accepted as an opportunity for non Executive Members to engage any process or decision which may affect their community or across our district as a whole.

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

The Committee has successfully secured funding from United Utilities to provide a new Bus Information Board for Lancaster Bus Station after the County Council switched off the existing Boards in November 2011. It has been a long process but the Committee can claim this as a great achievement for scrutiny in Lancaster.

The Committee has also taken a keen interest in the future of the health care provision for the area. We have received updates from Councillor Richard Newman-Thompson, the Council's representative on the County-wide Health Scrutiny Committee and recently we invited University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust to a meeting to hear their pre-consultation ideas for service delivery in the district.

With regard to the provision of rural broadband in some areas of the district the Committee continues to await an update from Lancashire County Council on the roll out of the first phase of the scheme. The Committee has requested a meeting to be arranged again in a rural part of the district where works will be undertaken.

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

***Councillor Jane Parkinson***  
***Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee***

## Statistics and Overview

This report sets out the work undertaken by Lancaster City Council under the Scrutiny powers (as set out in the Local Government Act 2000) during the municipal year 2012/13. This Annual Report has been produced on behalf of the whole Overview and Scrutiny process at Lancaster City Council.

### Key Achievements

Maintaining a reduced number of Call-ins	Attendance of cabinet members throughout the municipal year
Development of procedures/processes to deal with new legislation	Continued public involvement in Overview and Scrutiny
The continuation of themed meetings	Holding special themed meetings in the area of the issue being considered
Lancaster Bus Station Bus Information Sign	

### Key Areas for further Improvement

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

### Statistics

STATISTIC	TOTAL 2005/6	TOTAL 2006/7	TOTAL 2007/8	TOTAL 2008/9	TOTAL 2009/10	TOTAL 2010/11	TOTAL 2011/12	TOTAL 2012/13
No. of Meetings (incl. Budget and Performance Panel and Task Groups)	41	53	39	37	35	22	20+	26+
No. of Site Visits	5	5	20	10	2	3	1	5
No. of Call-ins (Cabinet decisions)	2	3	1	4*	2	2	0	1
No. of Issues for Pre-Decision Scrutiny	2	12	NC	17	17	6	1	##
No. of Referrals from Cabinet/Council	4	2	1	2	1	3	2	0
No. of Referrals to Cabinet/Council	15	11	12	11	11	5	1	4
No. of Cabinet Members attending scrutiny meetings	1	8	6	10	10	6#	7+\$	6\$
% Recommendations adopted from Scrutiny Reviews and Task Groups	86%	88%	84%	86%	82%	88%	100%	100%

- NC – Not Collected.
- \* 3 Cabinet decisions and 1 Officer delegated decision.
- # There were 2 vacancies on Cabinet and 2 Cabinet Members resigned throughout 2010/11.
- ## Legislative changes brought about by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 have had a negative impacted on the number of pre-decision scrutiny items brought to the Committee.

- \$ indicates when there were 8 members of Cabinet. Prior to this Cabinet had consisted of 10 members, unless there had been resignations throughout the year.

## Pre - Decision Scrutiny

Pre-decision scrutiny is the process based primarily on the study of the Council's published 'Key Decisions' for the year. Previously this was known as the Council's Forward Plan, which was updated on a monthly basis. However, in 2012 new Regulations came in to force which has limited the time available for the scrutiny of Key Decisions. More details can be found below.

Pre-decision scrutiny also includes information provided by Cabinet Liaison Councillors. With this information the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can select issues that it would like to consider before a decision is taken.

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

Both this year and in the previous municipal year a different approach has been taken to other years. Rather than the Pre-Scrutiny Champion, Councillor Dennison, meeting with officers to examine the list of Key Decisions, a meeting with the Chairman of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Budget and Performance Panel and the Pre-Scrutiny Champion has taken place with officers.

### **The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012**

As referred to above these Regulations came into force on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012. The significant changes are that the previous Regulations relating to the Forward Plan have been repealed, to be replaced by a new 28 clear days' notice requirement for key decisions. A resolution to exclude the press and public has to be preceded by a 28 day and a 5 day notice, or the agreement of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or in default the Mayor) has to be obtained. It is no longer possible for Cabinet to take an instant decision to go into private session. Background papers for executive decisions made at Cabinet now have to be made available on the Council's website. Overview and Scrutiny members are also given additional rights of access to documents in the possession of the executive.

In September 2012 the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny was requested to agree that the following key decisions were urgent because they contained exempt information and had not given sufficient notice under the Regulations for a key decision.

- Community development initiative;
- Council housing rota painting.

In this area the Regulations have had a negative impact on pre-decision scrutiny with the reduction in the period key decisions must now be published and, therefore, scrutinised.

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **Membership:**

Councillors Jane Parkinson (Chairman), Roger Dennison (Vice-Chairman), Mark Bevan, David Kerr, Ceri Mumford (resigned March 2013), Ian Pattison, Pam Pickles, Emma Smith and David Whitaker.

### **Introduction**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for the performance of all Overview and Scrutiny functions (under the Local Government Act 2000) on behalf of the Council. The Committee has the power to scrutinise all of the City Council functions and decisions that are not within the Terms of Reference of the Budget and Performance Panel. It also has the power to call-in any decisions that Members feel have not been made in accordance with the Council's decision-making principles, as set out in Article 13 of the 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 and commenting on Key Decisions.
- ❑ Conduct of reviews of policies, services and aspects of services where there is an identifiable need, by itself or through setting a Task Group.
- ❑ Working with other local authorities and organisations to carry out joint scrutiny.
- ❑ Assisting the Cabinet in the development of the Budget and Policy Framework.
- ❑ Creating Task Groups and setting their Terms of Reference.
- ❑ Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees and appropriate Officers and receiving reports and updates.
- ❑ Make suggestions on the development of policies and suggest new policies, where appropriate.
- ❑ Being the Council's designated crime and disorder committee in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006 and Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

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

During 2012/13 the Committee set up 2 Informal Tasks Group that reported directly back to the Committee. These were the Informal Festival Market Task Group and the Informal Parks Task Group. More details on these Task Groups can be found on page 27.

Although the Committee did not set up any formal Task Groups, it did carry out a large piece of work regarding a replacement bus information board for Lancaster Bus Station. Further details can be found on page 8.

The Committee has also kept a keen eye on the County Council's Rural Broadband project which affects a large area in the district.

As the Duchy of Lancaster announced its plans for the future use of Lancaster Castle, the Committee undertook visits to the Castle to see the consultation and also the joint County/City Council work on the 'Beyond the Castle' project which focused on public land around the Castle.



An important issue in the district this municipal year was the problems that were being reported at the City's Royal Lancaster Infirmary. The Council's Health Scrutiny Member, Councillor Richard Newman-Thompson, gave a number of updates to the Committee on this issue during the year.

An indication of the Committee's Work Programme for 2012/13 is set out on the following pages and further information can be found in the Overview and Scrutiny minutes available on the City Council's website: [www.lancaster.gov.uk](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk)

## Main Issues considered by the Committee

### Lancaster Bus Station Information Boards

This is an on ongoing piece of work that has been carried over from 2011/12. The County Council switched off the bus information boards at 5 bus stations around the county on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

Initial meetings took place with Burnley and Pendle Council's early last year to work together on a solution for the 3 local authorities. (West Lancashire and Chorley Council's had been approached but did not wish to take part.)

It was agreed that officers in Lancaster would contact suppliers to arrange a quotation for a replacement system. Officers from the County Council provided details of 3 recommended companies for a quotation. The 3 companies were contacted, but only one was willing to provide a quotation at no cost.



The quotation received was higher than expected.

It was then brought to the attention of officers that Lancaster University had installed a number of display boards for the purpose of providing bus schedules on campus. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and officers met with Lancaster University to discuss if the technology being used at the University was fit for purpose and could be used in Lancaster bus station.

Lancaster University had created a system which downloaded the bus schedules from the internet onto display screens. This information was updated every 30 seconds and required virtually no intervention or maintenance.

An application for mobile phones had also been created by the University which gave details of buses times to the nearest bus stop using GPS. This application also provides useful information about Lancaster for students all at no cost. The App, called iLancaster, works on iOS (iPhone/iPad), Blackberry, Android and on mobile phones with a web browser. Guest access allows non university members to take advantage of some of its features, which includes the bus timetable application.

The City Council have, as a goodwill gesture, agreed to promote the iLancaster App.

Officers were then advised to contact United Utilities, who were currently undertaking major works in the City which was causing disruption to traffic. This includes closing half of the bus station for two years. United Utilities have offered funding to mitigate for the disruption that was being caused in the city centre by the work that is being undertaken over the next few years.

United Utilities were then contacted in order for them to consider funding a new bus information board at Lancaster Bus Station to which they agreed.

The information board will be purchased to run with the system provided by the University at no cost to the Council. Lancaster University have procured the equipment and it is funded solely by United Utilities but the University have offered to pay for the monthly cost of a data feed (approx. £10 a month).

At the time of writing this report work has been commissioned and it is hoped the new signs will be in place in April 2013.

### **Future Legislation on Revenues and Benefits**

At the first meeting of the municipal year, Officers from Revenues and Benefits, gave a presentation regarding the Welfare Reform Act, which was due to be introduced in April 2013. The Act would replace Council Tax Benefit with a new Discount Scheme, with responsibility for the scheme being transferred to Local Authorities. Government linked funding would be provided at 10% less than current spending, which was equivalent to a shortfall of £1.112m towards current benefit spend in Lancaster.

The Council Tax Support Scheme developed by the Local Authority was likely to be informed by the following:

- the framework set by Central Government;
- a requirement to mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local area;
- forecast of demand by eligible groups;
- the level of grant available including any other sources of funding, and any estimated impact of council tax yield.

The scheme would be based on three principals:

- pensioners should be fully protected;
- vulnerable groups should be protected as far as possible, as determined locally;
- local schemes should support work incentives.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions relating to the new Council Tax Support Scheme including, details of Consultation to take place, Council Tax rates relating to Empty Properties and Second Homes, and the effect on Business Rates.

### **Draft Local Plan for Lancaster District**

The Committee heard a presentation on the emerging draft Local Plan for Lancaster District which comprised of the Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD), Land Allocations DPD and Morecambe Area Action Plan (MAAP).

The Core Strategy for the district had been adopted in 2008 and since then, Officers had been preparing further key documents in particular the Development Management DPD, Land Allocations DPD which were district-wide. The Morecambe Area Action Plan would compliment these two documents.

Details of the land allocations that were included in the draft Local Plan were given with three significant greenfield sites being identified – Whinney Carr South Lancaster, land at Bailrigg South Lancaster and land at Grab Lane, East Lancaster.

There was a large shortfall in the number of new housing within the district and even with the development of the three greenfield sites there would still be a shortfall.

### **Update on Shared Services**

The Update Report gave details of the current position regarding Museums, Property Services, Grounds Maintenance, Highways Maintenance, Waste Collection cost sharing and the possibility of relocating White Lund Depot.

The Committee discussed the shared service proposals for ICT with One Connect Limited and asked a number of questions in relation to potential future plans now that the shared service was not going ahead at this time.

Members also asked a number of questions regarding the possible relocation of Environmental Services to the Middleton Transfer Station.

## **Rural Broadband**

This issue remains outstanding on the Committee's Work Programme from the previous municipal year.

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

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



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

At the July meeting Eddie Sutton, Assistant Chief Executive, Lancashire County Council attended the meeting to update the Committee on Rural Broadband.

Mr Sutton gave the Committee an update on the current position regarding rural broadband in the district and answered questions posed to the County Council by the Committee in March 2012.

The Committee was informed that at that time, the project had stalled as B4RN had submitted an appeal to the European Commission. There were also issues highlighted with work being undertaken by B4RN causing white areas in the district which were illegible for funding to be converted to grey areas which were not illegible, which would prevent the County Council receiving the funding for the project.

Mr Sutton agreed to attend a further meeting in the rural areas to give an update on the project and allow local people to attend.

Lancashire County Council and BT are now rolling out broadband in certain rural areas of the District. B4RN have also been active in a number of rural areas.

## **Update On Mental Health Inpatient Developments**

Emma Foster and Jeff Warburton from Lancaster Care NHS Foundation Trust attended the Committee meeting in September to give an update on mental health inpatient provision within the district and major changes that were taking place regarding the current provision.

The Committee was advised that mental health inpatient services for the area would ultimately be located at the Pathfinders Drive site in Lancaster. To support these plans the Trust would refurbish a building opposite the Pathfinders Drive site off Ashton Road. The inpatient service in Oaklands would be temporarily relocated to Ridge Lea later this year so that it could undergo a full refurbishment. Towards the end of 2013 Oaklands would re-open and the services from Ridge Lea, Lancaster would transfer back to the Pathfinders Drive site as an all age functional service. At this time Ridge Lea would close.

The Trust, with the support of commissioners, was planning to use the Moss View facility on Plover Drive in Heysham for a mental health in-patient rehabilitation service. This would see services transferring from Daisy Bank and Bowerham Road in Lancaster. The rehabilitation service would admit people who were discharged from mental health inpatient services and were looked after before returning to independent living in the community.

The older adult community team, which was currently located in the lower ground floor of Moss View, would be relocating to Altham Meadows in Morecambe as part of this development.

Members were then given details of proposals for the children and young people provision that were currently being drawn up.

Members asked a number of questions regarding the proposals.

## **Lancaster Castle and the Beyond the Castle Project**



With the closure of Lancaster Castle as HM Prison, the Committee requested an update on future plans for the Castle.

Since the Duchy had taken back responsibility of the Castle, expert heritage consultants had been engaged to evaluate options to take the Castle forward. Officers from the Council, along with the Leader of the Council, had met with the Duchy's consultants to gauge informal opinions about the findings and content before going public.

The concept, which had gone out to public consultation last year, incorporated a museum highlighting judicial and penal history in Britain throughout the last 1000 years, with a boutique hotel offering high quality four star accommodation, luxury facilities including a spa, gym and suites.

Members were given details of the Beyond the Castle project that had been commissioned by the County Council in conjunction with the City Council which was exploring options for the Council owned land between the Castle and the Quay.

Some Members of the Committee visited the Duchy's and the Beyond the Castle exhibitions.

The Committee agreed to have updates on the 2 projects on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.

### **Crime and Disorder**



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

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Community Safety, Councillor David Smith, was invited to attend the meeting. Sergeant Ian Lawrence, Sergeant Lindsey Brown and the Head of Environmental Services also attended.

Members were given details of the Community Safety Partnership's Strategic Assessment which had been produced to set out the priorities for the district which were:

- Domestic Abuses;
- Road Safety;
- Anti Social Behaviour;
- Substance Abuse;
- Violent Crime.

These issues formed the Action Plans the Community Safety Partnership worked to.

Sergeant Lawrence gave the Committee an overview of how Domestic Abuse was dealt with in the district. It was noted that most incidents were alcohol related and 20% of incidents were attacks on men by women. It was reported that the age of offences that were recorded was to be lowered from 18 to 16 years which would potentially see a rise in the figures.



An update was then given to the Committee on the CCTV system that had been installed in 1996 with around 40 cameras placed mostly in Lancaster and Morecambe town centres, but also in the West End of Morecambe, Ridge and Ryelands housing estates. The screens to monitor CCTV were housed at Lancaster Police Station but, as the City Council had had to reduce funding in the previous year, they were not monitored 24 hours a day.

Sergeant Lindsey Brown gave Members details of the importance of CCTV from a police perspective.

The Committee undertook a site visit to the CCTV room in February 2013 to see the cameras in action for themselves.

### **Update from the Health Scrutiny Representative**

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

In June the Committee was updated on the situation regarding the Morecambe Bay NHS Health Trust. It was reported that a new interim Board had been put in place. The new Board had explained their recovery plan to the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, where members had sought assurances from the new Board that the previous problems had been addressed. A multi-agency steering group had been appointed who would monitor progress and would hold the Trust to account.

The services provided by the Trust which were currently under special measures included coronary care, accident and emergency, outpatient care, patient records and maternity services.

At the December meeting, Councillor Newman-Thompson provided a further update to the Committee on the situation with the Morecambe Bay Hospital Trust. It was reported that improvements had been made and a new Management Team was now in place, however it had been announced that £50 million of savings had to be made within the Trust which would see large scale transformation to the service.

A County Council Health Task Group had recently concluded its work into Dementia Care in Lancashire. Details of a consultation had been circulated to all Members.

### **What Issues are Affecting Older People in the District?**

One of the recommendations that came out of the Older People's Task Group was that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should consider on an annual basis issues affecting older people. This took place for the first time in January 2013.

Elaine Robson-Bidmead, Age UK, Austin Staunton, Citizen's Advice Bureaux, the Head of Community Engagement and Councillor Dave Brookes, the City Council's Older People's Champion attended the meeting.

Members were provided with a short presentation on the findings of Age UK's Linking Communities project.



It was reported that the biggest concern highlighted by the work that had been undertaken was that of loneliness. Members were advised that loneliness was a complex issue with many factors having to be taken into consideration such as feeling excluded from the community, lack of transport, lack of confidence, health issues and less contact with family. A standard response to loneliness by increasing people's participation in events was not the complete solution.

Linking Communities had arranged several projects to help overcome this in Carnforth such as a pub club, walks, crafts events at Carnforth station all of which had been greatly publicised but to no avail as no older people had attended.

It was noted that the research had led to the conclusion that a community activist would increase awareness of what people wanted and help to address loneliness.

Austin Staunton then gave the Committee details of issues that the Citizen's Advice Bureau came across relating to Older People. It was noted that life expectancy across the district differed enormously dependent on where people lived for example in parts of Morecambe it was 73 whereas in the Kellets it was 84.

Many older people faced problems now with their pensions, savings and housing with a significant increase in older people getting into debt. Many over 50s could not now plan for retirement as they had debts and large mortgages.

The Committee was advised that officers had met with the Chairman of the Older People's Forum who had raised a number of issues for the Committee to consider. It was noted that the Forum felt there was no communication between the Forum and the City Council, particularly now the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership had ended. The Committee considered the issues raised by the Forum.

The Older People's Forum had raised the issue of the cost of gritting pavements weighed against the cost of hospital care for an older person who may slip on the ice, for example the cost of a hip replacement. It was agreed that the importance of gritting pavements be reiterated to the County Council and the City Council's Environmental Services.

The Older People's Champion then gave an update on the work he had undertaken since being appointed last year.

Members were advised that the role of Older People's Champion was only 2 years old and not fully established yet. It was felt that there was not enough officer support for the role and that the Champion needed to liaise with the Cabinet Member on a more regular basis.



## Call-in

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

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

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

There has been one call-in in this municipal year, at the time of writing this report. Details are provided below.

There has recently been a change to the grounds for call-in. Following consideration of a referral report from the Budget and Performance Panel the Council Business Committee decided to amend the 'exceptional circumstances' for calling-in a decision, as set out in the Council's Constitution, to be amended to allow members to request that a decision be called-in on grounds other than those set out in Article 13 (Decision Making), provided that full reasons for the call-in request are specified on the call-in form.

### **Call-in - Storeys Creative Industries Centre**

The Storeys Creative Industries Centre ran into difficulties late last year. Cabinet, at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July took the decision to:

*“Continue to support the Storey being used as a creative industries centre but under the Council's direct management and control, authorising the Chief Executive to take actions as necessary, prior to reporting back to Cabinet.”*

This decision was subsequently Called-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



A special meeting of the Committee was arranged for the Call-In and Cabinet Members were invited to explain the reasons for the decision.

After hearing the reasoning behind the decision the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that:

*“Cabinet is urged to approve the following 2 points as new recommendations in place of its decision on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012.*

- 1. Council continues to support the vision for the Storey Creative Industries Centre.*
- 2. Council consider removing restrictions on the nature of business carried out by those taking tenancies within the building so as to increase the potential for full occupation of the lettable space in the building.”*

Cabinet reconsidered its decision and also a statement from the Board of Storey Creative Industries Centre Limited, dated the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2012, together with a covering email from the Chairman of the Board, and an officer briefing note. Cabinet was advised that, as indicated in the briefing note, and because of events that had unfolded over the past two weeks, option 2 as set out in the Cabinet report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> July, was now more difficult to achieve and had greater risks and costs than was the case two weeks ago. It was now reasonable to assume that the costs could not be managed within existing budgets, and Council approval would therefore be required for option 2.



The available options were to do nothing (option 1), which would not require any actual decision, or to proceed with option 2, which would now require Council approval.

The matter was therefore referred to the next full Council meeting for consideration.

Council at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July, considered the future of the Storey Creative Industries Centre and agreed:

*“That the Council withdraws support for the SCIC Ltd by seeking forfeiture of the headlease from the company (which would have ceased trading in some way) and requests a report back on all future options for the building.”*

### Holding Cabinet Members to Account

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

At the first meeting of every municipal year Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree who will undertake the role of Cabinet Liaison Member for each member of Cabinet. The purpose of this appointment is to help keep the Committee informed of issues within individual Cabinet portfolios. Cabinet Liaison Members have provided regular feedback at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

Cabinet Members with corresponding Cabinet Liaison Members for 2012/13 are set out below: -

Cabinet Liaison Members	Cabinet Member
Councillor Jane Parkinson	Councillor Eileen Blamire
Councillor Roger Dennison	Councillor Janice Hanson
Councillor David Kerr	Councillor Abbott Bryning
Councillor Ceri Mumford (resigned March 2013)	Councillor Ron Sands
Councillor Emma Smith	Councillor Karen Leytham
Councillor Mark Bevan	Councillor David Smith
Councillor David Whitaker	Councillor Jon Barry
Councillor Ian Pattison	Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox

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

With regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Leader of the Council attended June's meeting to discuss developments in her capacity as the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Relationships with other Councils, Communications and Performance Management.

The Committee discussed various issues including proposals for business rates retention, the introduction of Universal Credit and council tax banding.

The Committee asked a number of questions relating to Councillor Blamire's portfolio, including corporate consultation, community leadership, engaging with the electorate, how corporate priorities would enhance the lives of vulnerable people, the Storey Creative Industries Centre, and bus station signs.

Councillor Blamire advised that Cabinet Members and the Storey Creative Industries Centre were in discussions regarding the future of the Centre.

Councillor Karen Leytham, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Environmental Health attended the September meeting of the Committee.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions regarding repairs and maintenance, Council Housing voids, Chatsworth Gardens, Dog Wardens, dog fouling and Council Housing Strategy.

The Committee went on to ask questions relating to the future Housing Regeneration Funding Options and Medium Term Council Housing Rent Policy which had recently been considered by Cabinet.

Concern was raised over Cabinet's decision not to meet the rent convergence requirement as recommended by Government and to approve a medium term rent setting policy with rent increases being capped at no more than 3% per annum. Councillor Leytham stressed the importance of keeping rent rises at no more than 3% for the next few years.

Councillor David Smith, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety and Clean & Green attended the October meeting of the Committee.

He gave the Committee details of the wide range of services that were covered by his portfolio and also the issues that were dealt with by the service, many of which fell under the remit of the County Council.

Members of the Committee asked Councillor David Smith a number of questions relating to schedules, West End toilets, the cost of returning to weekly based refuse collection, disposal of electrical goods, the difficulties of outsourcing refuse collection, the possibility of moving the depot to Middleton and financial challenges with the service.

Councillor Smith also attended the November meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting which was dedicated to Community Safety, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Community Safety Partnership.

Councillor Sands, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children & Young People and Culture & Tourism, attended the December meeting of the Committee. He gave the

Committee an overview of the different work that was covered by his portfolio. Members were reminded that the Morecambe Visitor Information Centre had won the award for 'Best in England' this year.

Portfolio holders from pan Lancashire now met on a regular basis and the importance of joint working with other local authorities and the County Council was emphasized, such as the Museum's Partnership and the Tourism Forum.

The Committee asked Councillor Sands a number of questions regarding the importance of promoting the district as a whole, World War 1 commemorations, budget constraints, Carnforth Visitor Information Centre, the Museum's Partnership and creation of an observatory in the district.

Councillor Barry, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Markets, Connecting Communities, Voluntary Sector and Older People attended the January meeting and gave the Committee details of the main aspects of his portfolio.

An update was given on the current position of Lancaster Market. It was noted that the current street market in Lancaster was so successful there were proposals to add another market day.

The Informal Festival Market Task Group had been requested to consider ways of improving the current provision. It was reported that the proposed budget for 2013/14 included £50K for markets but was mostly earmarked for the Festival Market for improvements. The Cabinet Member agreed to circulate the breakdown of this to the Committee.

It was reported that, at Easter, there was to be a trial of a craft market on the promenade in Morecambe which had worked successfully in other districts. Members were reminded of the plans to hold a market on Victoria Street, Morecambe as part of the Mary Portas project and it had been agreed that these two markets had to compliment each other without taking business away from the Festival Market.

Councillor Barry went on to discuss allotment provision in the district.

The Committee was advised that with regard to Voluntary Groups, funding was to be radically changed. Groups would be requested to tender for grants and the Council would be focusing funding on three main criteria: Information & Advice, Volunteering and a smaller grants scheme.

At the March meeting of the Committee, Councillor Hamilton-Cox gave an update on the conditions survey which had been undertaken on the Council's buildings. He advised of the Energy Investment Strategy that was to be undertaken and also advised of invest to save schemes.

## **Urgent Business**

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

Since the last annual report and the writing of this report, the procedure of waiving the right to call-in decisions as a matter of urgent business by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny has been requested on two occasions: -

- Disposal of land at Wellington Terrace;
- Storey Creative Industries Centre.

On one occasion the Chairman advised the Chief Executive that she did not support waiving the right to call-in a decision. This related to Storey Creative Industries Centre.

## Budget and Performance Panel

**Membership:** Councillors Susan Sykes (Chairman), Alycia James (Vice-Chairman), Tony Anderson, Dave Brookes, Janet Hall, Richard Newman-Thompson, Richard Rollins (May 2012 to September 2012), Roger Mace (September 2012 to May 2013), Elizabeth Scott, and Keith Sowden.

### Foreword from the Chairman of Budget and Performance Panel

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

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

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

The Panel has looked closely at accountancy data, and taken a particular interest in financial reports. Of particular interest to the Panel have been the carry forward of underspends from the 2010/11 budget, treasury management, and the planned maintenance of council housing.

The Panel has looked closely at the Council's Partnerships and Service Level Agreements (SLAs), and has noted that new reporting processes monitoring these two areas were expected to be introduced in municipal year 2013/14. This should provide the Panel with the tools to thoroughly monitor the performance of the Partnerships and SLAs and could lead to an improvement of the scrutiny function. The Panel has taken a particular interest in the monitoring of shared service partnership arrangements, and this is expected to carry on into the new municipal year.

The Panel has received a number of reports regarding Salt Ayre Sports Centre from the Assistant Head of Community Engagement (Wellbeing) and the Head of Community Engagement, which have covered the social value of services provided by the sports centre, the allocation of management and administration costs, performance against national and regional benchmarking standards, and information regarding marketing and advertising of the sports centre.

The Panel agreed to monitor progress of the ongoing review relating to the sports centre and will receive updates as necessary throughout 2013/14.

The Panel has looked closely at the Storey Creative Industries Centre (SCIC) and asked a number of questions of the chief executive regarding the centre, the loan provided to the company, and the urgent business decision taken in December 2011.

As a result of this report the Panel requested that the constitutional issues of urgent business decisions normally taken by Cabinet, call-in procedure, issues of urgency and the waiver of call-in be considered by Council Business Committee. The committee subsequently referred a proposal regarding the waiver of call-in for consideration at full

council, which accepted the proposals. The changes are now in effect and are discussed in this report.

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

***Councillor Susan Sykes***  
***Chairman Budget and Performance Panel***

## **Corporate Performance Monitoring**

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

## **Salt Ayre Sports Centre**

At its meeting held on 12 June 2012 the Panel received a report from the Assistant Head of Community Engagement (Wellbeing) and the Head of Community Engagement regarding Salt Ayre Sports Centre including a performance and an overview of specific areas of work planned for the future. Following consideration of this report the Panel resolved that a further more detailed report on the finances of the sports centre be requested which included income and expenditure for the financial year 2011/12.

This report was received by the Panel on 25 September 2012, and provided Members with detailed information regarding expenditure and allocation of overheads at Salt Ayre. The Panel considered this report in great detail over two separate meetings, and produced a number of resolutions which necessitated two further reports.

The first of these reports was considered by the Panel at its meeting held on 11 December 2012, and provided Members with information regarding the social value of services provided by the sports centre, and the allocation of management and administration costs. The second report was presented to the Panel at its meeting held on 26 March 2013 and provided information in relation to the sports centre's performance against national and regional benchmarking standards, as well as information regarding marketing and advertising of the sports centre.

At its meeting on 26 March the Panel was also advised that the review of Salt Ayre Sports Centre was ongoing, and that a number of project groups had been established to look at various areas. The Panel requested that a further report be provided to the Panel once this review had been completed in September 2013, and also intends to monitor the progress of the review in the interim period.

## **Storey Creative Industries Centre (SCIC)**

At its meeting in July 2012, the Panel submitted a number of questions regarding the SCIC and requested that a report be provided which answered these questions. The Panel received a report of the Chief Executive at its meeting on 25 September 2012 which responded to the questions raised by the Panel.

Members asked detailed questions regarding the SCIC at this meeting covering the following areas:

- Whether the sub-tenants were active as a group, or whether they were attending meetings with the Council as individuals.
- The future of the Visitor Information Centre.
- Potential savings identified by the sub-tenants of the building.
- The installation of separate electricity meters.
- Use of the Storey Gallery space.
- Future management of the building and suggestions from sub-tenants.
- The potential removal of specific covenants from the building.



- The payment of insurance and utility bills.
- The details of the loan provided to the SCIC.
- The urgent business decision taken by the chief executive on 20 December 2011.
- Issues regarding the payment of VAT bills.

The Panel requested that the constitutional issues of urgent business decisions normally taken by Cabinet, call-in procedure, issues of urgency and the waiver of call-in be referred to Council Business Committee for further consideration. This report was subsequently considered by Council Business Committee on 8 November 2012, which resolved that officers refer the following proposal regarding the waiver of call in to Council for consideration:

***“On the basis that officers advise and Members decide, we ask that the city constitution no longer provides power for the Chief Executive to override any decision of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee not to agree to the waiver of call-in, and that call-in may only be waived where the Chairman and Vice- Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are in agreement that call-in be waived. Should the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny be unavailable, the Mayor should be approached for his/her agreement. Should the Mayor be unavailable, the Deputy Mayor should be approached for his/her agreement. “Unavailable” in this context is defined as unable to be contacted within 6 hours.”***

A report regarding this matter was considered by full Council at its meeting on 6 February 2012. The report asked Council to consider the proposal regarding the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule relating to the waiver of the call-in period. The report also asked Council to note a change to the grounds for calling-in a decision, as approved by the Council Business Committee at its meeting on 17 January 2013.

After some debate Council resolved to note the changes for the grounds to calling in a decision. These changes are now in effect.

The Panel also requested that the chief executive be requested to make documentation relating to future urgent business decisions available to Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Budget and Performance Panel at the same time that it is provided to Cabinet Members. As a result of this recommendation all urgent business decisions will be carried out in this way in future.

Additionally, the Panel requested that the chief executive enquire as to whether the exempt urgent business report from 20 December 2011 regarding the Storey Creative Industries Centre could be made available to the public. Following the meeting this was considered by senior officers and the report was subsequently released as a public document.

At its meeting held on 23 October 2012 the Panel considered the answers to two questions relating to the SCIC which had been answered by the Head of Resources. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Revenues and Benefits was also in attendance in order to answer questions relating to the SCIC.

The Panel identified a number of discrepancies between the figures in the company accounts as at 1 April 2011 and the starting point of the forecasts and projections produced by the SCIC in support of the company’s request for a £90,000 loan. Members discussed these discrepancies and requested that they be provided to the liquidators of the SCIC.

Additionally, the Panel requested that Democratic Services be requested to consider arranging for additional training to be provided to Members who have been appointed by the Council as a representative on outside bodies. A training session was subsequently provided by Excela Interim Management & Consultancy LTD and held on 17 January 2013.

## **Partnerships**

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

This included a report in November 2012 advising the Panel of the significant changes and new developments which had taken place over the past 12 months. These changes had reinforced the importance of working together, but had also emphasised the need to ensure that arrangements added value and helped to achieve results.

Members discussed the Council's future approach to partnership working, and were advised of the partnership arrangements which would be continued in the future.

It was advised that the Council was also working with partners and families to develop and deliver an initiative known as *Working with Families*. This work was outlined to the Members. It was queried whether it was possible to provide information to illustrate the financial benefits of the partnership to the Council and other authorities. It was reported that financial evaluation was a key part of *Working with Families*, and that this information should be available for member's consideration in approximately twelve months time. This was subsequently included on the Panel's work programme and will be presented in municipal year 2013/14.

The Panel was advised of a database that had been created that provided an overview of key partnerships helping the Council to achieve its priorities. It was agreed that this would be helpful in assisting the Panel to fulfil its Terms of Reference and was added to the Panel's Work Programme. It is expected that this reporting process will begin in the new municipal year, with reports presented to the Panel on a regular basis.

The Panel has also discussed arrangements for the Council's shared services. It was advised that the Revenues and Benefits Service now shared governance arrangements with Preston City Council via a joint Cabinet Committee. This arrangement was monitored through the PRT reports process and by the Cabinet member with responsibility for finance. The Panel requested that information regarding the shared service partnership arrangements for the Council's shared Property Service with Lancashire County Council be provided to the Panel, it is expected that this information will be received in the new municipal year.

## **Treasury Management**

At its March meeting, the Panel received the report of the Financial Services Manager to seek the Panel's views regarding the approved treasury management framework proposals for 2013/14.

The Panel was advised that the Treasury Management Strategy 2013/14 had been approved by Council on 27 February 2013. Members were reminded that in line with the updated (2011) CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, Budget and Performance Panel had been explicitly named as responsible for scrutiny of the Treasury Management function, including review of the Annual Strategy.

Given the timing of Budget and Performance Panel meetings, unfortunately it had not been possible to provide for scrutiny of the treasury proposals prior to them being approved by Council.

The Panel was provided with an update on Icelandic investments contained within the report, which they had monitored over the course of 2012/13. During quarter 1 2012/13 repayments had been received from KSF (10%) and Landsbanki (12%), in quarter 3 further payments had been received from Landsbanki (5.8%) and KSF (3%). The total repayment

in cash terms was expected to be £5.9M, meaning that the majority of the £6M principal invested would be returned.

### **Service Level Agreements (SLAs)**

At its meeting on 11 December 2012, the Panel received a report of the Assistant Head of Community Engagement (Partnerships) regarding progress towards introducing commissioning arrangements for the future, which would replace the current Service Level Agreements with voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) partners and arts/leisure partners..

It was reported that a report titled 'Commissioning Arrangements for the Voluntary Sector' had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 4 December 2012. The report outlined the latest position regarding the introduction of commissioning arrangements for the Council's investment in VCFS and arts/leisure, and was attached to the agenda for member's information.

It was reported that it was expected that VCFS commissioning would be in place by April 2013, whilst arts/leisure commissioning would be developed by following the publication of the Arts Strategy in early 2013, and was expected to be in place by April 2014.

It was advised that commissioning would provide a means of steering the Council's investment in VCFS services to achieve the maximum impact linked to current needs and opportunities in the district. In addition it was expected that commissioning would provide clear transparent arrangements which focused on value for money.

The Panel queried whether the introduction of new commissioning arrangements would result in changes to the recipients of Council grant funding, it was advised that this was a possibility.

The Panel discussed how those organisations which received money from the Council were monitored. It was reported that these organisations were monitored by the Partnerships team within the Community Engagement Service.

The Assistant Head of Community Engagement (Partnerships) advised that officers were currently considering how to monitor the new commissioning arrangements as they were introduced. The Panel agreed that the monitoring of VCFS contracts should be added to the work programme, with appropriate dates for monitoring included once the new commissioning arrangements had been agreed.

### **The Effect of the Current Economic Climate and Changes to Planning Legislation on Related Revenue Coming into the Council**

At the March meeting of the Panel the Head of Regeneration and Planning presented a report to brief Members on the most significant impacts of the current economic climate and changes in planning legislation on income received by the Council relating to its Regeneration and Planning function.

The most significant impacts targeted at revenue streams were:

- External funding programmes.
- Section 106 contributions.
- Reductions in planning fee income.
- The building control trading account.
- Civil engineering projects.

The Panel was advised that the Council was currently in discussions with a neighbouring authority regarding the possibility of establishing a shared service in regards to the Building

Control Trading Account. It was advised that the Panel would be kept informed of any developments in this area. This was included on the Panel's work programme for municipal year 2013/14.

### **Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2012/13**

At its annual stakeholder meeting in January, the Panel and stakeholders received a detailed presentation from the Leader of the Council, and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance, on the Cabinet's Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2013/14. The Head of Financial Services assisted with the presentation and helped answer Members' questions.

The Panel was advised that Cabinet had noted the expected need to make substantial savings from 2014/15 onwards, and had agreed to that the 2012/13 Revised Budget of £19.193M be referred on to Budget Council for approval, with the net underspending of £997K transferred into Balances.

The Leader outlined the savings proposals to be considered. This included one item expected to result in income generation; charging for replacement bins and recycling boxes. It was advised that this was already the practice at most local authorities. Cabinet had also agreed three items of budget reductions; reducing 'Your District Council Matters' from three to two issues a year, only applying 1% inflation to voluntary sector grants, putting funding for the Morecambe BID back into the Council's reserves with a commitment to bring it back when required, and reducing the member training budget (except in election year). In addition Cabinet had agreed three efficiency proposals; a review of Salt Ayre Sports Centre, a review of Community Engagement Management, and a review of the Museums Partnership.

The Leader outlined the growth proposals agreed by Cabinet, these were:

- Adoption of the Living Wage
- Corporate Property Improvements
- Energy Renewal Strategy
- Funding for PCSO's
- Appointment of an Empty Homes Officer (on a two year contract)
- Markets Reserve
- Cycling Event

The Panel discussed these items in detail and asked questions of the Leader and the Head or Resources accordingly.

The Panel discussed the possibility of making the adoption of the Living Wage cost neutral within the overall payroll; the Chief Executive advised that it would be possible for the Council to set the costs of the Living Wage against the cost savings that could be made by not filling the post of Head of Community Engagement when the post became vacant at the end of March 2013.

The Panel enquired as to why Cabinet had not put forward a proposal relating to Council Tax, it was advised that there had been a number of factors which had held up making a decision, including the very late Provisional Grant Settlement from Government but that it was expected that a decision would be made on 6 February 2013.

The Panel discussed the following issues in detail:

- Increased parking charges
- Museums Partnership with Lancashire County Council
- Future reductions in staff numbers
- Appointment of an Empty Homes Officer

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

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

The County Treasurer reminded the Panel of the context in which the budget proposals had been considered; in February 2011 the Full Council had agreed a Revenue Budget and Capital Investment Strategy for the three years from 2011/12 to 2013/14. In this three year approach the County Council was able to provide communities and stakeholders with certainty over services. It had been recognised, however, that over this three year period things would change and the County Council would have to consider how to manage changing financial pressures.

Following the verbal presentation, the County Council's Treasurer answered extensive questions from the Panel and stakeholders. The issues raised by the Panel and stakeholders were:

- How the County Council intended to cope with the City Council's decision to adopt a Localised Council Tax Support Scheme that retains existing levels of Council tax support for the year commencing 01 April 2013.
- The level of returns on investments.
- The transfer of additional financial responsibilities to County Council level.
- Impact of upcoming County Council elections on budget proposals.

The County Treasurer advised that any comments received as part of the consultation process would be fed back to Lancashire County Council's Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February 2013, the deadline for submitting comments was 6 February 2013.

## **Lancashire Combined Fire Authority Budget Consultation**

At its budget meeting the Panel also received reports considered by the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority relating to Reserves and Balances Policy, Capital Budget 2013/14 – 2017/18, and the Revenue Budget 2013/14 – 2015/16.

The Principal Democratic Support Officer advised the Panel that at its meeting on 14 January 2013, the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority had given initial consideration to a report on the Reserves and Balances Policy, Capital Budget 2013/14 to 2017/18 and the Revenue Budget 2013/14 to 2015/16. Copies of the reports considered by the authority were attached for member's information.

It was advised that any comments on the budget proposals should be submitted to the authority no later than 31 January 2013, in order that they be considered by the Lancashire Combined Authority at its budget setting meeting on 11 February 2013.

## Task Groups

In 2012/13 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed 2 informal Task Groups and also considered the recommendations of a Task Group that had completed its work the previous year: Details are provided below: -

### **Informal Parks Task Group**

Following the Committee's annual invite to residents to submit their ideas on which local issues should be considered by the Committee, a suggestion from a member of the public was received to look into issues in the Council's Parks. The Informal Parks Task Group was set up and visited all of the Council's Parks over the winter to see what issues arose.

The Task Group came across some minor operation issues that were brought to the attention of the relevant Council services and also took a keen interest in what the different Friends Groups contributed to the parks.

### **Informal Festival Markets Task Group**

The Informal Festival Markets Task Group was established to look at issues in the Morecambe market as part of the preparation of a report to Cabinet. The Task Group came up with suggestions for interim measures to improve facilities at the market.

The Task Group met again to consider how a proposed craft market on the promenade in Morecambe could work in conjunction with the work being undertaken under the Mary Portas scheme which was considering the introduction of a market on Victoria Street, Morecambe.

### **Informal Commissioning Plan Task Group**

This Task Group completed its work in 2011/12 but reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2012. The Committee agreed that a structured approach for the Council to feed back and influence the Commissioning Plan was required and that the Committee should include in its work programme consideration of the Commissioning Plan on an annual basis each autumn.

## Site Visits

A number of site visits have taken place over the last year for example, the Informal Parks Task Group visited the City Council's parks and visits to see the Duchy's plans for Lancaster Castle.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a visit to the CCTV room in early 2013 as detailed earlier in this report. In view of how important this is to the area the Committee are going to look further into the funding of this matter in the new municipal year.

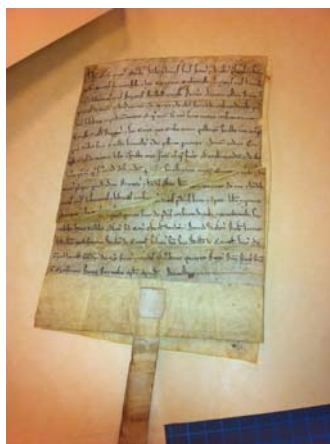
As part of the work undertaken a few years ago by the Council Assets Task Group regarding a number of charters and seals that had been found in the strong room at Lancaster Town Hall, the earliest of which dated back to 1193, it was recommended:

*"That the Charters of Lancaster be relocated to the Records Office in Preston for conservation, storage and safekeeping whilst ownership remains with the City Council, and enquiries be made with the Record Office as to the complimentary copies they would be prepared to produce."*

The Charters and seals were moved to the Records Office at Preston approximately 2 years ago and work to restore the charters and seal is in progress.

The Records Office invited the Chairman, Vice Chairman and officers to the Records Office to see the restoration work that had so far taken place.

The visit to Preston took place last Autumn and those present were extremely impressed with the progress made to date. On the day, it was suggested that the collection, once completely restored, could be displayed at Lancaster Museum for a time and that the importance of this collection to the City should be promoted by the Council.



## Training and Development

Lancaster City Council continues to contribute its scrutiny reports to the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) database.

This year, the Council has contributed to a training programme provided by the Northwest Scrutiny Officer Network in conjunction with the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

## Health Scrutiny

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

In March the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation titled Better Care Together and raised a number of points with the Chair and other representatives of the UHMBFT and the Chair and other representatives of the GP and Lancashire North Clinical Commissioning Group. A further presentation from these representatives has been requested when the formal consultation on local health services commences, which is due later in the year.

### **Lancashire Scrutiny Network**

Officers from this Council continue to attend the meetings of the Lancashire Scrutiny Network. These meetings provide a networking opportunity, providing an opportunity to share best practice, the partnership exists to share work programmes and highlight where joint working could take place. The meetings have been held at Lancashire County Council. Issues discussed have included new scrutiny powers including crime and disorder and the role of the new Police and Crime Commissioner and new Executive Regulations.

### **Northwest Scrutiny Officer Network**

This group comprises of officers who support the Overview and Scrutiny function (representing all the local authorities in the North West of England). The group exists to share best practice issues, to avoid duplication and maximise the resources available to assist in the development of Scrutiny and meets on a quarterly basis.

Membership of the Network includes Blackpool, Tameside, Stockport, Liverpool, Cumbria and Lancashire Councils and thus has access to significant expertise and knowledge.

Most recently St Helens and South Ribble have hosted network meetings. The issues that were discussed have included the impact of the Police and Crime Commissioner on scrutiny of Community Safety Partnerships and the impact of the new Executive Regulations in relation to scrutiny.



## Appointments to Other Bodies

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

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

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

## Joint Scrutiny

In October the Committee agreed to nominate Councillor Ceri Mumford as the Committee's representative on the County Council's Arts Development Task Group, as a voting member of the Group. Councillor Mumford provided regular updates on the work of the Task Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

At the December meeting a copy of the final report of the Task Group was circulated and former Councillor Mumford presented to the Committee details of the work that had been undertaken by the County Council's Arts Task Group.

Please also see the Health Scrutiny section of this report.

## Performance Review

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

### **Scrutiny of Partnership working**

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

### **Reducing the response times to Overview and Scrutiny requests**

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

### **Further development of the Scrutiny Web Page**

The Scrutiny web page continues to be updated and includes links to various documents.

## Conclusion

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

## Future Direction

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

These include:-

- The former Lancaster Prison;
- Community Safety;
- CCTV;
- Rural Broadband;
- Reports on Shared Services developments;
- Local health services;
- Issues affecting older people.

As in previous years update reports will be requested on the agreed recommendations of recent former Task Groups.

Both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Budget and Performance Panel will commence considering items for their Work Programmes for 2013/14 early in the new municipal year.

## Acknowledgements

Overview and Scrutiny Councillors and Officers would like to thank the following for their contribution to the Scrutiny process during 2012/13:

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

## The Overview and Scrutiny Officer Support Team

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

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