

Report of a Scrutiny Panel on the topic:

**SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SELECTED COUNCIL POLICIES
AND STRATEGIES
(Policy Review/Development)**

As agreed by Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee at its meeting held on 13th November, 2007



Panel Membership:

**Councillor D Hayes (Chair)
Councillor B Dawson
Councillor J Liddle
Councillor C McCormack**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** A Scrutiny Panel was set up in July, 2007 with the remit to undertake a scrutiny review of Selected Council Policies and Strategies (Policy Review/Development), to be referred to as “scrutiny review”. Its findings would be reported to the November 2007 meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee¹.
- 1.2** Members felt that the Council could make better use of the Overview and Scrutiny function in undertaking its role under the Constitution to be involved in the review and development of Council policies and strategies. Examples of such policies could be the Waste Management; Sustainable Communities and Climate Change Strategies. The Panel wished to explore the processes and procedures that were actually involved.
- 1.3** The Panel comprised a politically balanced membership of two Conservative Members (Councillors Hayes and Liddle) and two Labour Members (Councillors Dawson and McCormack). Councillor Hayes was appointed Chair at the Scrutiny Panel’s first meeting.
- 1.4** Scrutiny Panel Members received a Project Plan in July, 2007 including the terms of reference; objectives; information and timescales for this Scrutiny Panel topic.
- 1.5** The Panel met on four occasions. This final report outlining the Panel’s findings and detailing their recommendations on this Scrutiny topic was then produced.
- 1.6** A summary of the main findings of the Scrutiny Panel, based on the evidence/verbal submissions/ research information received, is included in Section 3 of this report.
- 1.7** Section 4 of the report explains the key factors emerging from the Witness/Documentary/ Research evidence considered by the Scrutiny Panel during the course of its work.
- 1.8** The Panel’s final recommendations are set out at Section 5 of the report.

¹ The Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules – Paragraph C17 allows for each Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to appoint up to one Scrutiny Panel at any one time (a time limited Task and Finish Group) and may determine the Panel’s terms of reference, size, membership and duration (provided that the composition of the Panel is the same as the political balance of the Sub-Committee which appointed it).

2. INTRODUCTION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Background to the Review

2.1.1 The Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee, at its meeting held on 17th July, 2007 agreed to the inclusion of this scrutiny review topic in their 2007/2008 Work Programme.

2.1.2 The need for such a review had arisen following observations made by a number of Councillors that the Constitutional role of Overview and Scrutiny to be involved in the review and development of Council policies and strategies was not being fully utilised. Consequently, only a relatively few policy and strategy matters had been considered by Overview and Scrutiny during the past couple of years. It was agreed that there was a need for this topic to be scrutinised in depth by this scrutiny panel.

2.1.3 By making recommendations as appropriate, the aims and outcomes would be:-

- to assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of the Council's Budget and Policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
- to conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
- to consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options;
- to assist with the development and review of Council policies and services, including those delivered in partnership with others.

2.2 Terms of Reference

2.2.1 The meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 17th July, 2007 agreed the terms of reference of this Scrutiny Panel as follows:-

- To undertake a scrutiny on the topic of a review of Selected Council Policies and Strategies (policy development and review).
- To present a report on the Scrutiny Panel's findings to the meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to be held on 13th November, 2007.

2.3 Establishment of Scrutiny Panel

2.3.1 It was decided to establish a Panel of four Non-Cabinet Members to carry out this scrutiny review and report back its findings and recommendations to the November meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

2.3.2 The Scrutiny Panel was also politically balanced, as required by Hyndburn's Constitution.

2.4 Meetings of the Scrutiny Panel

2.4.1 The Panel met on four occasions during October, 2007.

- 2.4.2** At the first meeting of the Scrutiny Panel held on 3rd October, 2007, as part of their Project Plan, the Chair with other Panel Members agreed the method of working they would adopt.
- 2.4.3** The Panel received verbal contributions and some written submissions from six Officers of the Council who attended the meetings held on the 10th and 23rd October, 2007 (Appendix A lists all the witness submissions/evidence considered by the Panel).
- 2.4.4** The Overview and Scrutiny Officer acted as Clerk and provided research support to the Scrutiny Panel.
- 2.4.5** The Scrutiny Panel, at its fourth meeting held on 31st October, 2007 assessed all the information received, reached its conclusions and formulated recommendations. The final report was agreed by the Scrutiny Panel Members at its final meeting.

2.5 Thanks

- 2.5.1** The Scrutiny Panel would like to record its thanks to all the Council Officers who took part in the consultation on this scrutiny topic and in particular, expresses its appreciation and thanks to the undermentioned individuals who contributed their time and expertise during the information gathering stage of the process:-

Steve Tanti, Deputy Managing Director, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Steve Todd, Chief Environmental Services Officer, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Rob Grigorjevs, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Dave Allonby, Environmental Maintenance Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Steve Riley, Waste Services Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Scott Butterfield, Principal Policy and Research Officer, Hyndburn Borough Council.

3. THE PANEL'S MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 Local Context - Evidence Considered

- 3.1.1** The Scrutiny Panel chose to interview a member of the Corporate Management Team; a Chief Officer; two Heads of Service; an Operational Manager; and the Principal Policy and Research Officer of the Council, in order to assess the extent to which they involved Overview and Scrutiny in developing policies and strategies within Service Areas and to ascertain what future actions, if any, were required.
- 3.1.2** The Panel interviewed the Deputy Managing Director, to obtain a better understanding of the role a Chief Officer and member of the Corporate Management Team (CMT) had in Strategy and Policy review / development matters at the Council.
- 3.1.3** The Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance and the Principal Policy and Research Officer were interviewed in order to gain an in-depth perspective and greater understanding of the role and remit of the central Policy section of the Council; and how the section was involved in matters of Strategy and Policy review / development at the Council.

3.1.4 The Panel also interviewed the Chief Environmental Services Officer, the Environmental Maintenance Manager and the Waste Services Manager to gain a better understanding of the issue from the perspective of Heads of Service and Operational Managers.

4. FACTORS EMERGING FROM THE WITNESS/DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE CONSIDERED BY THE SCRUTINY PANEL

4.1 A number of factors emerged from the Panel's deliberations. These are discussed below. The Panel's recommendations are summarised in section 5 of the report.

- The Panel felt that the way the various Council Departments and Sections interacted and worked together across the organisation on Policy/strategy matters was inconsistent. The Panel felt that Cabinet should examine in more detail and consider methods of bringing together all the Policies and Strategies of the Council.
- The Panel identified that there should be more awareness amongst Council Service Areas of the important and statutory role that Overview and Scrutiny undertakes in the democratic process and with specific regard to the review and development of policies and strategies. The Panel felt it would be useful if a hard copy of all Council Policies and Strategies was maintained in a central library, possibly within the Council's Policy, Partnerships and Performance Team. The Panel however acknowledged that additional funding and/or staff resource would be required if this was to occur.
- The Panel concluded that it would be helpful if all the Council's Policies and Strategies were made available electronically on the Council's website and its intranet (Hyntranet). The Panel also felt that communications between the various Service Areas could be further improved. (An example of this was the liaison between the Planning and Waste Services sections relating to new developments - the need for better communications on issues such as the need for adequate access for refuse vehicles on roads in new developments and the design and provision of appropriate refuse storage facilities for new properties – see recommendation 7 below).

4.2 All Panel Members felt that they would find it useful if a maintained hard copy of all Council Policies and Documents was available for Members/Officers/the Public's perusal at the Council Offices.

4.3 The Panel considered a report of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance on Strategy Management, which had recently been presented to the Council's Management Team highlighting similar issues, including the strengthening of corporate capacity for research, and the need for the monitoring and co-ordination of strategies. The Panel also noted that currently, there was no systematic way of monitoring/reviewing Strategies within the Council.

4.4 As part of their research on this scrutiny, the Panel also reviewed a model relating to the development of a Health and Well-Being Strategy with partners; the progress of the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the development and emergence of new key strategies, examples being Equalities and Climate Change.

4.5 The Panel also reviewed accessibility, from the public's perspective, to a number of policy/strategy documents on the Council's website, and examined the information contained on the Waste Services Customer Charter, Service Standards and Performance Indicators and the list of acceptable pick-ups.

5. THE SCRUTINY PANEL'S FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That hard copies of all Council Policies/Strategies be made available, for reference, by Members, Officers and the public.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That a central resource library for the co-ordination of Policies and Strategies be established, including the provision of additional funding and/or staff resource for such a library, if necessary.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That Service Managers be encouraged to make policy documents and strategies available on the Council's website and the Hyntranet, in order to improve accessibility.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

That all Members of the Council be kept informed of amendments to existing policies and strategies on a regular basis.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

That Cabinet is asked to consider making a recommendation to Council, under the Constitution, for the establishment of a Sub-Committee of Overview and Scrutiny in the 2008/09 Municipal Year to undertake dedicated Policy and Strategy development/review work.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

That Service Managers be reminded of the value of consultation with Overview and Scrutiny when reviewing and developing policies and strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

That the Panel recommends that there is a more co-ordinated approach and better communications between Service Areas within the Council on policy and strategy matters.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

The Scrutiny Panel requests that Cabinet report back to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee upon progress made in achieving the above recommendations within six months from the date this report is considered by Cabinet.

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APPENDIX 'A': List of Evidence Considered by the Panel

Written/Research evidence:

1. Background information provided by the Head of Policy, Partnerships & Performance on Strategy Management and Health and Well-Being Strategy for Newgate – Workshops 11th/12th October, 2007.
2. Background information provided by the Waste Services Manager – hard copies of the Waste Services – Customer Charter, Service Standards and Performance Indicators and List of Acceptable Pick-Ups (Guidance Notes).

Verbal evidence:

The Panel considered verbal evidence from the following witnesses:-

1. Steve Tanti, Deputy Managing Director, Hyndburn Borough Council.
2. Rob Grigorjevs, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Hyndburn Borough Council.
3. Steve Todd, Chief Environmental Services Officer, Hyndburn Borough Council.
4. Dave Allonby, Environmental Maintenance Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.
5. Steve Riley, Waste Services Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council
6. Scott Butterfield, Principal Policy & Research Officer, Hyndburn Borough Council.