

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2011 AT COMMITTEE ROOM III, COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Cllr Nigel Carter, Cllr Tony Deane (Vice Chairman), Cllr Peter Doyle, Cllr Nick Fogg, Cllr Charles Howard, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Jeff Osborn (Chairman), Cllr Bill Roberts, Cllr Ricky Rogers, Cllr Judy Rooke and Cllr Jonathon Seed

Also Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Christopher Cochrane, Cllr Jeffrey Ody and Cllr John Thomson

132. **Apologies and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllr Christopher Devine.

133. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 January 2011 were approved and signed as a correct record.

134. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

135. **Chairman's Announcement**

The update on Professional Services Project Board (which was to be considered under Item 12) would be brought forward on the Agenda and considered following the update on HR matters (Item 6) as the Scrutiny representative would need to leave the meeting early due to other commitments.

136. **Public Participation and Councillors Questions**

There was no public participation and no questions were received from Councillors.

137. **HR Update**

The Committee at its previous meeting resolved to receive a further update on HR related matters to include details of those leaving the organisation through redundancy.

The Corporate Director for Resources and Service Director for HR and Organisational Development were in attendance to present the update and to answer any questions arising.

Ensuing discussion included that staff morale had been affected due to the number of employees who had received 'at risk' letters although it was understood that it was a legal requirement for the authority to notify those at risk of redundancy.

Clarification was provided that the total number of posts to be removed through the current 12% saving requirements consisted of 97 redundancies and the removal of 61 vacant posts. 480 'at risk' letters had been circulated. The number of employees within the 'at risk' category moving into new positions within the organisation would be provided following the meeting.

Concern was again raised that members were not always informed of those employees leaving the organisation through redundancy which had also been raised at the Committee's previous meeting. Although Service Directors had been requested to keep members informed the Service Director for HR and Organisational Development would reiterate the concern of the Committee. Councillors themselves were also encouraged to contact relevant Service Directors where it was felt necessary.

Resolved:

- 1) **To thank officers for the information provided.**
- 2) **That the Committee would be kept informed of developments in relation to staff Terms and Conditions.**

138. **Professional Services Project Board**

Due to the need of the Scrutiny representative on the Professional Services Project Board to leave the meeting early and, as detailed in the Chairman's Announcements, this item was moved forward on the agenda for discussion.

Clarification was provided that following commencement of the Board approximately one year ago, significant improvements had been made in the centralisation of consultancy and agency employees.

It was noted that a total of 260 undeclared posts had been highlighted as part of a recent amnesty exercise but that disciplinary procedures written with policy guidelines would eliminate the potential of undeclared consultancy/agency staff in the future.

Acknowledgement was made that there would always be a need for the employment of agency staff particularly in frontline service areas, but the Comensura contract, in conjunction with Dorset County Council, was proving highly successful in significantly reduced costs to the Council. It was acknowledged there were risks associated with contractual negotiations with one agency provider but these were limited and being managed.

Confirmation was provided that, should central government initiate a centralised system next year, and should the Council wish to adopt this, the Comensura contract included provision for the Council to adopt this.

As the work of the Project Board was now approaching finalisation, future updates by exception would be provided by the Service Director for HR and Operations.

Resolved:

- 1) To thank officers for the update.**
- 2) To thank Cllr Jonathon Seed for his role in this exercise.**
- 3) To receive an annual update on consultancy/agency staff in March 2012.**

139. Area Board Update

The Committee resolved at its meeting in March 2010 to receive an update on the implementation of recommendations made following a review of Area Boards to include progress made in relation to the Handbook.

The Cabinet member for Communities, Service Director for Communities and Head of Community Governance were in attendance to present the update and answer questions arising.

Clarification was provided that no further reviews were expected to take place but, once the Localism Bill received royal ascent, this would be taken into consideration.

General discussion took place in relation to consistency across the 18 Area Boards where confirmation was provided that regular meetings were held with the Chairman of the respective Boards to discuss issues. This included consistency, but the nature of the Boards themselves dictated that each would retain an element of individuality as priorities within each community area were set. The Chairman of each Board was responsible for setting the priorities pertinent to the community area itself and for ensuring that the venue of each meeting was set to allow for maximum attendance of residents.

Clarification was also provided that the purpose of the area boards was to have a single local democratic forum for the council to do its business. In line with this, the three key elements to be included within agendas were:

- Details of Council services
- Information on councillor business
- The ability for local communities to request items

As a council, it was also agreed that the area boards would be the main venue for consultations and communication with the community.

In considering the key information provided and with particular reference to '79% of people attending Area Boards rated the meetings as excellent or good', clarification was sought on how this percentage was calculated. The Cabinet member for Communities confirmed that further detail would be provided following the meeting.

Upon further discussion grant allocation was also raised where members felt further guidance was required to ensure transparency and consistency in approach throughout the County. The Head of Community Governance would arrange a meeting with interested councillors to provide further guidance as requested.

In addition, details of the Council's benchmarking in terms of benefits realisation would be tabled and circulated to all members of the Committee.

Resolved:

- 1) To thank officers for the information provided.**
- 2) That the Committee would receive a copy of the revised Handbook once completed.**

140. Council Funding Framework for the Voluntary Community Sector

The Committee at its meeting held in March 2010 resolved to receive a further update on the Council's Voluntary and Community (VCS) Strategy in March 2011.

The Cabinet member for Communities and Service Director for Communities were in attendance to present the update report and answer questions arising.

The Chairman commenced discussion by welcoming the content of the report before opening up discussion to the floor.

Confirmation was provided that the review had taken into consideration the voluntary groups within Wiltshire and had included the input of the Wiltshire Inequalities Council to ensure the seven strands of inequality were incorporated.

Specific note was made to the withdrawal of grant funding to luncheon clubs from the end of March 2012. However, it was noted that the Community Foundation for Wiltshire and Swindon were working with the lunch clubs to identify funding thereafter.

To provide further clarity, the Service Director for Communities would ensure a joint press release was prepared with the Community Foundation that could be highlighted through the Area Boards. The release would also include guidance for other voluntary sector funding to provide a more joined up approach.

Independent organisations were being encouraged to work together and to consider sharing back-office resources to attain sustainable funding. As streams of funding were being reduced nationally, many of the organisations had expressed thanks to the Council for maintaining some of its funding. Wiltshire Council had also been recognised nationally for the work being done with the voluntary sector.

The Head of Community Strategy was a member of the Procurement Board to ensure a link existed between the Voluntary and Procurement Units. This would provide consistency, including any impact from changes announced as part of the Localism Bill and Big Society.

Resolved:

- 1) To thank officers for report.**
- 2) To request that the various comments raised are taken on board to include that a press release be circulated with information on voluntary sector funding and the transfer of luncheon club responsibility.**

141. Information Services Technology Plan 2011-2015

The Committee was asked to consider the content of the Information Services Technology Plan which provided details of the strategic and design considerations for how ICT would be delivered across the organisation over the next four years.

The Corporate Director for Resources, Portfolio Holder for ICT and the report author were in attendance to present the report and answer questions arising.

The Committee was reminded that a core element of the Business Plan was the Technology Plan which would underpin the work of the organisation. The Committee was asked to consider its content prior to consideration by CLT and Cabinet Liaison.

Confirmation was provided that there were over 200 projects underpinning the Plan each of which would have its own risk assessment and that the delivery of the Plan was expected to achieve a cost reduction of 25%.

The Chairman proposed that the ICT Task Group consider the Plan at its next meeting and that a copy of the Roadmap referred to within the report should also be provided for the Group's consideration.

Resolved:

- 1) To thank officers for the Plan.**
- 2) That the ICT Task Group would consider the content of the Plan at its next meeting in conjunction with the Roadmap and relay its findings to CLT and Cabinet Liaison.**

142. Revenue and Benefits Service Inspection

Following a recent inspection of the Revenue and Benefits system by the Audit Committee the Organisation and Resources Select Committee requested that a summary of the key findings was provided for consideration.

The Corporate Director for Resources and Interim Chief Finance Officer were in attendance to present the summary and answer questions arising.

Clarification was provided that the Inspection had taken place in October 2010 with the Audit report received in December 2010 which included reference to the need of more detailed scrutiny involvement. As a result an action plan had been agreed with the Audit Commission. The Interim Finance Officer confirmed that a report on progress made against the action plan could be provided for the Committee's consideration if requested.

Resolved:

- 1) To thank officers for the update provided.**
- 2) That an update report on progress made against the Action Plan would be made available to the Scrutiny Manager, Chairman and**

Vice-Chairman of the Committee for consideration before the next Select Committee.

- 3) That following consideration of the update report a decision would be made by the Chairman and Vice Chairman on whether further scrutiny activity was required.**

143. Customer Focus Board

Following the amalgamation of the Customer Focus Board and Shaping the Future Culture Group, the Committee at its last meeting resolved to receive a report on the proposed new structure to allow the Committee to consider whether further scrutiny representation would be required.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Care was in attendance to present the update and to answer questions arising.

Clarification was provided that the newly formed Shaping the Future Group drew together the work of the former Groups detailed above and would be the backbone for the authority to deliver services and culture for the future. The Group, chaired by the Chief Executive, had met twice since its formation and was now putting together a combined Action Plan for imbedding within the organisation which would be presented to the Committee for consideration once available.

The Chairman confirmed that following consideration of the Action Plan the Committee would consider whether scrutiny representation on the Board was required. The Portfolio Holder would also request that scrutiny representation is added as an agenda item for consideration by the Board at it's next meeting.

Resolved:

That Shaping the Future Group would be added to the Committees Forward Work Programme and that the Action Plan would be submitted for consideration once available.

144. Scrutiny Representation on Project Boards

Updates were provided from the scrutiny representatives on Project Boards for consideration. Members were reminded that information relating to the Professional Services Project Board was discussed under Item 138 above.

Resolved:

To note the updates provided.

145. **Partnership Task Group**

The Partnership Task Group following a review of the Community Safety Partnership presented an report on its findings for the Committees consideration.

The Chairman of the Task Group and Senior Scrutiny Officer were in attendance to answer questions arising.

Clarification was provided that the representatives of the Task Group had attended a Board meeting of the Community Safety Partnership, chaired by the Joint Director for Public Health, in December 2010 and had been impressed by the Board's commitment to encourage partnership working.

Many changes were taking place in light of the Localism Bill and changes within the Police Authority. As a result, the work undertaken by area boards had increased and it was felt that more involvement of the Community Area Managers within the Partnership Task Group would be of benefit.

Following discussion, it was agreed the Task Group should continue its work but at it's next meeting Councillors should discuss the terms of reference to ensure expected outcomes are clear and the work undertaken fitted within the future work programme of the Committee.

The Committee also acknowledged the Task Group was not always well attended and, as such, agreed that membership itself would be reviewed to encourage further participation.

Resolved:

- 1) **To thank the Task Group for the report.**
- 2) **That the Committee endorsed the following recommendations of the Task Group, the majority of which will then be sent to the Community Safety Partnership's Chairman and Cabinet Member for consideration:**
 - a) **To approve the continuation of the Task Group to scrutinise further partnership working;**
 - b) **To recommend to the Community Safety Partnership that they produce a tool-kit directed towards elected members, which provides them with important contact information and a summary of the powers available to promote and enforce the ambitions of the Partnership;**

- c) **To ask the Partnership to provide elected members with a regular update on their achievements, to include any legislative reforms such as changes to tool-kits (e.g. anti-dispersal orders) using the Council's members briefing system or Elected Wire;**
 - d) **To recommend that the Cabinet members with responsibility for Community Safety and Area Boards discuss how the Area Boards can be used to empower communities with the Task Group highlighting the potential of single item meetings to tackle Community Safety issues specific to that community; and**
 - e) **To request an update from the Community Safety Partnership in 6 months time.**
- 3) **That the Task Group review its terms of reference to ensure expected outcomes are clear and that the work undertaken fits within the future work programme of the Committee.**

146. **Task Group/Rapid Scrutiny Exercise Updates**

Updates from the various Task Groups and Rapid Scrutiny Exercises were attached to the Agenda for consideration and comment.

In addition to the information provided the following clarifications were made:

a) **ICT**

Taking into consideration the recommendations of the Committee in relation to Item 141 above the Task Group at its next meeting would consider the Information Services Technology Plan.

b) **Major Contracts**

The work undertaken by the Major Contracts Task Groups would be further considered by the Liaison Board at its next meeting, taking into consideration the reduced resources available.

c) **S106**

The Corporate Director for Resources confirmed that an update meeting was to take place with the Chairman of the Task Group on 30 March.

Clarification was provided that the Department was on track to complete the S106 database on historic agreements by the end of May 2011.

d) Campus and Operational Delivery Programme (CaODP)

Clarification was provided that there were now 8 campuses planned across the county. Shadow Boards had been established to monitor decisions made in relation to the campuses although the remit of the Task Group would remain focused on the broader element of the Programme to include communication.

Resolved:

To note the updates provided.

147. Business Plan

Following approval of the Business Plan by Full Council on 22 February 2011, the individual Select Committees were tasked, with the support of the scrutiny officers, to identify key areas pertinent to the work of the individual committees for inclusion within future work programmes.

A report providing areas of interest to the Committee was presented accordingly.

The Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Scrutiny Manager and Senior Scrutiny Officer were in attendance to present the report and to answer questions arising.

Clarification was provided that the initial exercise had highlighted key areas for consideration but further reviews would be required once more detail was received on how the Plan was to be implemented throughout the organisation. In addition to the topics identified, the Committee would need to be mindful of the resources available.

Resolved:

- 1) **To note that Council on 22 February adopted the 4 year Business Plan on recommendation from Cabinet;**
- 2) **To note the decision of the Liaison Board on 10 February that work is undertaken to identify content from the Business Plan for the individual select committees;**
- 3) **To agree the list of themes identified whilst acknowledging that further refinement will be made when detail emerges; and**
- 4) **Recognise the budget implications and the demands on the leading scrutiny members in determining priorities and workload.**

148. **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme provided and understood that much of its content would be dependent on the work being undertaken as part of the Business Plan.

Members would also reminded that the Chairman and/or Scrutiny Manager could be contacted should members wish to include specific items for consideration.

Resolved:

To note the Forward Work Programme.

149. **Date of next Meeting**

26 May 2011.

150. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for consideration.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.15 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Sharon Smith, of Democratic & Members' Services, direct line (01225) 718378, e-mail sharonl.smith@wiltshire.gov.uk

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