

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2013 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, MONKTON PARK OFFICE, CHIPPENHAM SN15 1ER.

Present:

Cllr Richard Britton (Substitute), Cllr Trevor Carbin (Chairman), Cllr Nigel Carter, Cllr Tony Deane (Vice Chairman), Cllr Peter Doyle, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Alan Hill, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Peter Hutton, Cllr Ricky Rogers, Cllr Judy Rooke and Cllr Jonathon Seed

Also Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell

64 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Carole Soden and Cllr Christopher Newbury. Cllr Richard Britton substituted for Cllr Carole Soden.

65 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 13 December 2012 and 7 February 2013 were approved and signed as a correct record.

66 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

67 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman confirmed that although there had been two referrals for potential call-ins these had not been taken forward.

68 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

69 **Review of Housing Allocations Policy**

Nicole Smith, Head of Strategic Housing, was in attendance to give a presentation on the current Housing Allocations Policy review.

This included confirmation that the policy, entitled 'Homes 4 Wiltshire Policy' was lawful and that the authority was not required to amend it. The Council had, however, decided to undertake a review noting the changes taking place as a result of the Localism Act and Welfare Reform Bill.

In making the presentation, the following points were made:

- Wiltshire Council ran an open housing register which meant anyone could request to be added to the register, even without a local connection.
- New guidance arising from the Welfare Reform Bill would result in changes to eligibility in relation to the number of bedrooms required.
- The Localism Act provided new freedoms in the way in which authorities could deal with social housing including the ability to introduce exclusions if appropriate (i.e. for rent arrears or for anti-social behaviour reasons).
- There were approximately 8,000 people registered within the Bronze banding of the housing register, i.e. the category for those with no identified housing need.
- The views of the community by way of area boards, working groups and housing providers had been sought as part of an initial fact-finding exercise. The results of this initial exercise included a strong desire for the following to be included within the revised Policy:
 - A need for a connection to Wiltshire
 - Exclusions should be applied for antisocial behaviour and rent arrears
 - Priority should be given to those registered in the respective parish or town to which a property was situated
 - Under occupation should be addressed

The formal consultation included some of the options as above, details of which could be found attached to the agenda.

Ensuing discussion included concern on the implications of the bedroom standard as set out by welfare reform, noting that although this was not something to which a local authority was able to change, it would still need to deal with the implications.

The Committee felt that the military should continue to receive a significant priority in the allocation of future housing noting that in most circumstances a

local connection did not exist and that this should be taken into consideration as part of the revised Policy.

The revised Policy would also benefit from clarity on the financial resource limit, noting that there was often confusion over eligibility for those who did not claim housing benefit but did not earn enough to purchase a home.

The allocation of affordable homes as part of planning requirements was not included within the Review but was discussed. The Committee highlighted the importance of partnership working across all areas of Housing, noting that there was a significant shortage of affordable homes within the County. The Head of New Housing would be asked to prepare information for circulation on the process undertaken for the consideration of affordable housing within planning applications.

Following completion of the Consultation exercise, a further report would be provided to the Committee at its meeting in June and prior to consideration by Cabinet. It was proposed that an appropriate planning officer should also be invited to attend to address any issues in relation to spatial planning and how the areas worked together.

On questioning the breadth of the consultation, clarification was made that the department wanted to consult as wide as possible. Although many consultees had been contacted, i.e. tenants panel, all those on the housing register and anti-social behaviour team, the Head of Strategic Planning welcomed any other suggestions forthcoming from the Committee.

In noting that antisocial behaviour was a key concern for those initially consulted and featured within the draft Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Plan, clarification was made that the PCC would be included in the consultation process.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her presentation and responding to questions

Resolved:

- 1) That the comments of the Committee would be considered as part of the consultation process; and**
- 2) That the Committee, post election, would be requested to consider the outcome of the Housing Allocation Policy consultation at its meeting in June 2013, prior to a report being considered by Cabinet.**

70 Procurement Half-Day Briefing Session

A report on the outcome of the Category Management awareness session held on 13 December 2012 was presented to the Committee for consideration.

The Vice Chairman, who attended the session, gave a brief overview of the report highlighting the importance of councillors and staff being on board to ensure the transfer to the new Category Management system was successful.

The attending Interim Head of Procurement confirmed that the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) recognised the need for strong support and cultural change and were fully supportive of the new model.

Confirmation was provided that those Committee members who attended the session were also supportive of the new approach and the actions necessary to ensure successful implementation.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee support the category management approach to procurement and the action need to ensure successful implementation; and**
- 2) That an update on progress be made to the Committee at an appropriate time as defined by the Interim Head of Procurement in consultation with the Cabinet member.**

71 Business Plan Scorecard

A report providing a summary of progress made against the Business Plan for the third quarter of 2012/13 was presented, together with a copy of the minute arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 12 February where the report had been considered.

In presenting the report the Head of Policy confirmed that only two of the 18 work programmes were classified as not on target, an explanation of which was provided with the report. The attending Corporate Director indicated that both these targets were now thought to be on target. Clarification would be sought and circulated to members of the Committee following the meeting.

The Committee questioned whether affordable housing was on target, noting that a classification had not been provided. In addition the measurement of LPG under Energy Efficiency was also queried, as was an explanation on the increased number of children in care and clarification on the classifications of reference number 1043 and 1044 in relation to Public Health.

The attending Head of Policy confirmed that he would seek further clarity on all of the above points and forwarded to the Democratic Services Officer for circulation.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their attendance and responding to questions

Resolved:

That the Head of Policy would seek clarification on the questions raised by the Committee and forward responses to the Democratic Services Officer for circulation.

72 Overview & Scrutiny Members Induction

The agenda sheet provided an update on the proposals for the overview and scrutiny member induction programme, due to be considered by Full Council on 26 February.

The proposals included a main full day event for overview and scrutiny currently scheduled for Thursday 16 May at County Hall and short 30 minute dedicated sessions for overview and scrutiny on Wednesday 8 May (Chippenham) and Thursday 9 May (Salisbury) within a wider session on governance.

Members of the Committee were supportive of the proposals made and agreed that the Chairman and Vice Chairman should work with the Scrutiny Manager and Programme Lead Officer to ensure effective delivery of the scrutiny elements.

Resolved:

To note the proposals and further work to be done.

73 Overview & Scrutiny Constitutional Changes

A report on the background to the proposed constitutional changes in relation to overview and scrutiny was presented for the Committees endorsement.

Resolved:

- 1) That in response to the suggestion of Group Leaders, to leave the final decision on the Constitutional changes including call-in until the new Council (and Standards Committee is constituted) but in the meantime to ask for a further review to be undertaken on other options for member call-in including the possible expansion beyond the Management Committee; and**
- 2) To agree to the refreshed Task Group Protocol as circulated with the report to the Constitutional Focus Group.**

74 Task Group Update

The Committee noted the updates provided.

75 **Scrutiny Representation on Project Boards and Groups**

Wiltshire Online Project Board

No update was provided.

Constitutional Focus Group

The Service Director for Law & Governance was in attendance and confirmed that a number of issues had been covered at the last meeting of the Group including overview and scrutiny arrangements, planning code of good practice, code of conduct and councillor and officer relations protocol.

The next meeting would take place on 12 March where recommendations would be put forward that changes should be considered by the new Council post election.

Staffing Management Project Board

The Board had not met since the previous update provided. The next meeting was expected to take place in March.

76 **Forward Work Programme**

- i) The following updates were provided from the Chairman of the Select Committees:

Health Select Committee

All Task Groups and Rapid Scrutiny Exercises would be reporting to the next meeting of the Committee on 14 March.

Environment Select Committee

The focus of the next meeting would be to review the recent work of the Committee and produce recommendations for potential legacy consideration by the Management Committee at its next meeting on 11 April.

Childrens Select Committee

No further update was provided.

- ii) The Committee noted the single work programme.

77 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for consideration.

78 Date and purpose of next meeting

The next meeting would be 11 April 2013. Members were reminded that the main focus of the meeting would be to identify legacy items proposed by scrutiny committees for consideration by a newly constituted Management Committee post election.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.55 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Sharon Smith, of Democratic Services, direct line (01225) 718376, e-mail stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115