

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2013 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM, SN15 1ER.

Present:

Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Stewart Dobson, Cllr Alan Hill, Cllr Simon Killane (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Jeff Osborn, Cllr Mark Packard, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr John Walsh, Cllr Bridget Wayman and Cllr Roy While (Vice Chairman)

Also Present:

Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Terry Chivers, Cllr Jane Scott OBE, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr Dick Tonge, Cllr Stuart Wheeler and Cllr Chris Williams.

120 **Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Gordon King.

121 **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

Resolved:

To approve and sign the Minutes of the meetings held on 25 June 2013 and 5 July 2013.

122 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

123 **Chairman's Announcements**

- Overview & Scrutiny Skills Training
The Chairman announced that there would be some overview & scrutiny skills training for Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Management Committee and the three Select Committees on Tuesday 15 October 2013, which would be held at Shurnhold, Melksham. It was planned that this training would then be made available to all non-executive members of the Council.

- Peer Review Challenge
The Chairman reported that he and other leading overview and scrutiny members had been interviewed by the Peer Review Team at County Hall, Trowbridge. The Team were assessing how we did things and where we could continue to make improvements in the future. In particular, their focus was on how to empower communities to do more for themselves, what more could be done working with our key partners and the Council's plans to manage change and transformation over the next four years. The Chairman stated that he had found the interview to be a positive experience and that the Peer Review Team had been impressed with the work undertaken by the various task groups.

124 **Public Participation**

There were no declarations of disclosable interest or dispensations granted by the Standards Committee.

125 **Approval of the Business Plan 2013-2017**

The Committee was reminded of the process that had taken place for scrutinising the Council's draft Business Plan 2013-2017 culminating in a meeting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Management Committee and the three Select Committees on 13 August 2013. Finalised views and comments were passed to a special meeting of Council held on 3 September 2013 when a revised Business Plan was adopted. The public version of the Plan was launched at Cabinet on 24 September 2013 including a "keepsake" summary and a young people's version. A detailed communications plan had also been developed to support the publication and distribution of the Business Plan.

It was noted that the next stage would be the development of service plans which would facilitate the implementation of the Business Plan and these arrangements together with a timetable were currently being prepared. The Committee was informed that it was likely that the first service plan to be developed for consideration would be highways and it was anticipated that this plan would be ready to be scrutinised in about three to four months' time. This process would have a significant bearing on the development of overview and scrutiny's own work programme and ultimately on how it effectively contributed to the Council in delivering its vision, goals, outcomes and objectives over the next four years.

Resolved:

- (1) **To note the positive contribution made by overview and scrutiny to the development of the Business Plan and its recent public launch.**

- (2) To move forward with engagement in the development of the service plans when further information was known.**

126 Developing the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

Consideration was given to a report by the Scrutiny Manager, prepared in consultation with the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman which set out the outcome of initial discussions between select committee chairmen and vice-chairmen with the relevant Executive members and directors.

It was pointed out that the potential priorities and topics highlighted would need to be viewed in the context of the Business Plan as agreed by Council on 3 September 2013, legacy items recommended by the previous Committee and endorsed by this Committee on 23 May 2013 and also the current Cabinet forward work plan.

The Chairman explained that he and the Vice-Chairman wished to meet the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the select committees to discuss priorities, approaches, options, capacity & resources etc. with a view to reporting back to the Management Committee at its next meeting on 5 November 2013 with an initial draft single work programme. Emphasis would be given to making strong links to the Business Plan and identifying topics where real value could be added through the overview & scrutiny process. The Chairman went on to stress the importance of allowing space for the addition of committee/individual member requests as new issues arose and priorities might change.

The Chairman also confirmed that he would be pleased for the Management Committee to consider any priority recommendations from select committee chairmen that could not wait for the timetable and gave as examples advance proposals for task groups on financial planning (which was the subject of an item to be discussed later in the meeting) and also a review of area boards.

Cllr Jonathon Seed, the Cabinet Member responsible for area boards, explained that area boards had been evolving since their inception in 2009 and he considered that the time had come for a scrutiny exercise to be carried out, which would include seeking the views of partners and stakeholders. He stressed that area boards were working well but they could benefit from a fresh look at their working for the future. It was noted that terms of reference and topics to be covered had been drawn up in consultation with the Cabinet Member and were as follows:-

- The current role and remit of the Area Boards
- Area Board budgets and grants
- Local service devolution and management
- JSA and community planning/community priorities.
- Contract and commissioning decisions affecting the community area.

- The consultative role of the Boards in local development
- The role of the Area Boards in future campus governance.
- Community area partnership arrangements.
- Area Board meeting management.
- Area Board support, promotion and publicity.
- Area Board staffing and management
- Future service delivery through Area Boards

During discussion the following topics were considered for scrutiny:-

- (i) The desirability of establishing a rapid scrutiny exercise on the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). It was noted that, although the LEP was not a political body, a lot of public money had been ploughed into it. Arrangements should be considered for a joint scrutiny of LEP with Swindon Borough Council.
- (ii) The Chairman & Vice-Chairman of the Health Select Committee referred to the considerable number of health issues worthy of scrutiny and considered that despite there being a number of historic issues that could be scrutinised and which needed to be categorised by the Select Committee, priority should be given to refocusing on strategic issues, such as Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Health & Wellbeing Board.
- (iii) Reference was made to the need to scrutinise the 20mph Speed Limit Policy prior to the Cabinet Member approving it under delegated authority. It was noted that the Cabinet Member would be pleased for the Policy to be scrutinised once it was available probably in mid to late November 2013.
- (iv) It was noted that a report on Housing Allocation Policy would be prepared for consideration by this Committee at its next meeting on 5 November 2013 prior to its determination by Cabinet on 21 November. It was suggested that, if feasible, a rapid scrutiny exercise be set up to examine the draft Policy in advance of the meeting on 5 November and that all members of the Management Committee be invited to take part.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the positive outcome of the meetings held between the chairs and vice-chairs of each O&S committee with the relevant Executive members and directors.**
- (2) To endorse further such meetings being held as appropriate.**
- (3) To agree that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Management Committee meets with the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the**

individual select committees to discuss priorities, approaches, options, capacity and resources with a view to reporting back to the O&S Management Committee on 5 November 2013 with an initial draft single overview and scrutiny work programme.

- (4) To note that the establishment of a task group on the Council's financial planning and budget setting arrangements is the subject of a separate paper for consideration at this meeting.**
- (5) To establish a task group to review area board arrangements with the terms of reference of topics to be covered as set out above.**
- (6) To note that a report on Housing Allocation Policy would be considered at the next meeting of this Committee on 5 November 2013 and that if possible a rapid scrutiny exercise be set up to examine the draft Policy in advance and that all members of the Management Committee be invited to take part.**

127 Overview and Scrutiny of Financial Planning and Budget Setting in the Council

The Committee considered a report by the Scrutiny Manager on proposals for the overview and scrutiny of the financial arrangements in the Council including budget scrutiny.

The Vice-Chairman stated that the report had been written following consultation he had held with those with direct responsibilities for financial planning in the Council including the Cabinet Member and the Service Director for Finance. He explained that the discussions which had taken place, along with the direction of the Business Plan, suggested that a new approach was required not only for scrutiny of the revenue budget but encompassing broader and longer-term financial planning. Major external factors such as welfare reform and Central Government policy implications also needed to be taken into account.

After discussion during which the importance was emphasised of interplay with the select committees, to which would be referred selective items for consideration and report back,

Resolved:

- (1) To establish a new standing Financial Planning Scrutiny Task Group of the Management Committee (to replace the legacy Budget Scrutiny Task Group) with the following terms of reference:-**
 - To understand and review the Medium Term Financial Strategy (4 year financial model)**

- To understand and review the approach and robustness of the financial planning regime within the Council
 - To understand and help develop the approach to the annual budget setting cycle
 - To review the specific contribution of overview and scrutiny in the annual budget setting cycle with a focus on outcomes
 - To undertake periodic budget monitoring including reviews of key mid-year trends and developments and to ensure that these are taken into account when updating the Financial Plan
 - To work under the direction and guidance of the Management Committee and report regularly to the Cabinet Member, Management Committee and select committees (as appropriate) on its work and findings and to make any necessary referrals
 - To include a review of performance management
- (2) To appoint the following Members to serve on the Task Group (until the usual annual review of places) and to note that the Task Group will elect a chairman at its first meeting:-

Cllr Glenis Ansell
Cllr Sheila Parker
Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Ian Thorn
Cllr Roy While

- (3) To hold the first meeting as soon as is practically possible.

128 Member Request - Staff Morale

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from Cllr Jeff Osborn on 24 September 2013 for a scrutiny review on the following:-

“An objective investigation into the state of morale amongst the non senior staff of Wiltshire Council, in light of recent management restructuring, legal cap on salaries, extra work load and loss of job security.”

It was noted that as a member of the Management Committee, Cllr Osborn was entitled to submit his request under the overview and scrutiny procedure rules in the Council’s Constitution.

Cllr Osborn explained that he had lodged his request as a consequence of informal conversations he had held with staff, their families, friends and neighbours especially in his Division. He also referred to the following draft resolution of the Audit Committee from its meeting on 17 September 2013:-

“To note the latest position regarding the Council’s risks that are identified in the current Corporate Risk Register as detailed in Appendix A of the report, with the inclusion of risks regarding the Voluntary Redundancy Programme and Staff Reorganisation, confirming the status of the high level risks being reported from service areas and that the Risk Management Strategy and the processes associated are to be reviewed to ensure that arrangements are fit for purpose to monitor progress against the new Business Plan.”

Cllr Osborn’s request had been forwarded to Cllr Stuart Wheeler and Cllr Allison Bucknell, as the relevant Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder for staffing and also to the Service Director for HR & OD for initial comment to help inform the Committee about the issue.

Cllr Osborn explained that he considered that an independent review of staff morale should take place using an external consultant in order to obtain objective evidence.

Cllrs Wheeler & Bucknell informed the meeting that Staffing Policy Committee received detailed quarterly workforce reports and Members examined these closely looking in particular at staff turnover and sickness. In addition staff surveys were carried out usually every two years and, although it was appreciated that the most recent one took place in December 2012, there appeared to be little evidence of a major problem regarding staff morale. It was recognised that as with all large organisations, there was bound to be some staff who were unhappy for varying reasons, but the information received by the Staffing Policy Committee did not indicate that this was a significant problem within Wiltshire Council.

A discussion took place during which it was generally considered that sufficient detailed information was already available to the Council on staff morale and that it would not be a sensible use of sparse Council resources to engage an external consultant to carry out a survey. If there were to be a fall in staff morale then this would be apparent in the quarterly workforce report to the Staffing Policy Committee.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

To ask the Staffing Policy Committee to take a further look at statistical information available which might indicate the level of staff morale and to report that Committee’s findings back to this Management Committee.

129 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

130 **Date of next meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting was due to be held on Tuesday 5 November 2013 in the Council Chamber at Monkton Park, Chippenham, starting at 10.30am.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.10 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, direct line (01225) 7183763035, e-mail roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk

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