

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 23 May 2013**

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#### **Overview and Scrutiny Councillor Induction Event – 16 May 2013**

##### **Purpose**

1. To report the outcomes of the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) councillor induction event held on 16 May 2013 at the Civic Centre, Trowbridge. This was part of the 2013 Councillor Induction Programme.

##### **Background**

2. Following the local elections on 2 May 2013, Wiltshire councillors are undertaking several weeks of induction events providing information and training on aspects of their role and of Council business. In addition to sessions on Council governance more generally, a full morning event was provided specifically on Overview and Scrutiny.

##### **Summary**

3. The session was well-attended, with 27 elected councillors plus one co-opted member taking part. It was facilitated by Charles Jack from Gateway Training, an external facilitator with experience of O&S who has been used successfully by the Council for previous training events. Speakers included:

Cllr Jane Scott, Leader of the Council

Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director

Kelly Hearne, Systems Thinking Review Lead, and

Paul Kelly, Scrutiny Manager

Cllr Allison Bucknell, Chairman of the Councillor Development Group

4. There were also many contributions from the floor and constructive open discussion amongst attendees. Support was provided by the Democratic Services team.
5. The purpose of the event was to:

- Consider different definitions of O&S, its purpose, benefits and how it can support the Council's priorities;
- Hear the perspectives of the Leader and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on O&S, including their aspirations for O&S in the new Council;
- Recap on the current style and approach of O&S, recent key pieces of work, and how Systems Thinking approaches can enhance O&S;
- Discuss what the priorities should be for O&S in the new Council;
- Learn about the current O&S committee structure, how it operates and its constitutional powers.

## **Key messages**

6. Cllr Jane Scott, Leader of the Council, emphasised the importance of O&S to the good governance of the Council, particularly the 'Overview' element i.e. non-executive members helping to develop Council policy. She highlighted the work of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group as an example of executive and non-executive members working together effectively to address an important issue. There was general agreement that O&S's value lies in it being an evidence-based and therefore non-political process.
7. The Leader reported that, in future, she expected all key proposals to Cabinet to be submitted for consideration by O&S prior to a decision being taken. She emphasised that recommendations from O&S will continue to be taken seriously by the Cabinet. She was aware that many recommendations from O&S are considered by the relevant Cabinet member in the first instance, but expected a greater number of policy development recommendations to come to Cabinet in the future.
8. Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director, stated that O&S forms a crucial part of the Council's political leadership. He reported that the Corporate Leadership Team would continue to view engaging with O&S as a priority, describing it as an essential forum through which officers can understand the concerns and priorities of councillors.
9. There was general agreement that O&S committees can be a daunting arena for some officers when attending as witnesses. More junior officers may require a different approach, but can be very valuable witnesses in O&S reviews due to their understanding of frontline services.
10. Kelly Hearne, Systems Thinking Review Lead, provided a briefing on how Systems Thinking principles are being applied to services across the Council to improve efficiency and enhance the customer's experience. Attendees

were advised that a three-day Systems Thinking course is available (subject to agreement by the Councillor Development Group) and this came highly recommended by those who had completed it.

11. Cllr Allison Bucknell provided a briefing on the Councillor Development Group, a member-led body that coordinates a programme of development opportunities for councillors throughout the year. She encouraged attendees to take advantage of these events as much as possible. She also invited councillors to submit their own ideas for courses that they feel could address their development needs.

### **Suggested topics for future Overview and Scrutiny**

12. A number of workshops were held during the morning and as an outcome from one of these attendees were asked to suggest key issues that would benefit most from overview and scrutiny in the new Council. These included the following:

#### Health

- Reductions in local healthcare facilities, such as minor injury units
- The amount of day-care provision for vulnerable adults
- The amount of adult social care provision for a growing elderly population
- Cost of transport for those needing multiple hospital visits

#### Children and Education

- Improving provision and choice for post-16 young people with SEN
- Improving support for children with complex healthcare needs in schools

#### Planning and Housing

- Availability of affordable housing and allocation of social housing
- The amount of green and recreational spaces, particularly sports pitches
- The impact of large developments on infrastructure e.g. highways and ground drainage

## Transport, highways and street-scene

- Parking – charges in town centre car parks and lack of residential parking
- Public transport in rural areas – cost to the Council and the public
- Affordable transport for post-16 students and the elderly
- Improving traffic-calming and the enforcement of speed limits
- More consistency across the county in the setting of speed limits
- Improving and maintaining roads and pavements
- Improving dog-fouling enforcement, litter clearance and green space maintenance

## Corporate and Councillors

- Increasing the public's trust in politicians and public engagement with local democracy
- Improving the experience of customers making complaints to the Council.

13. Initial feedback from the event from both councillors and organisers indicate that the event was very valuable, enjoyable and successfully delivered its objectives. Further training and understanding is planned both in terms of subject awareness within the individual select committees and key O&S chairmanship, questioning and listening skills.

## Proposal

1. To note the outcomes of the Overview and Scrutiny Councillor Induction Event held on 16 May 2013;
2. To consider the topics suggested for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny in the new Council and direct as appropriate to the individual select committees for initial investigation. To receive reports back on any that are subsequently recommended for review and inclusion in the O&S work programme.

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