

Draft Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 22nd November 2007, in Committee Rooms A, B & C, Monkton Park, Chippenham, commencing at 7.00 p.m.

Present:

Chair: C.J. Caswill

Committee Councillors: R.L. Cinnamond, S.K. Doubell, J.M. Hartless, P.J. Hutton, R.B. McGregor, S.G. Parker, C. Reid and M.L. Singlehurst, and J.P.S.S. Thomson

Other Members Present: B. Causer

Officers Present: S. Pangbourne (Deputy Chief Executive), G. Wilkie (Performance Management Officer) and J. Whittleton (Policy & Democratic Services Assistant)

O73. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors P.J. Doyle, A.K. Hill, P.C.B. Coleman and N.M. Phillips.

O74. Membership

Councillor to be replaced	Replacement	Political Group
P.J. Doyle	P.J. Hutton	Conservatives
P.C.B. Coleman	S.K. Doubell	Liberal Democrats

O75. Public Question Time/Receipt of Petitions

There were no public questions nor petitions received.

O76. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd October 2007 were considered.

Issues discussed included:

- The accuracy of some of the information in Appendix 1, Interim Report of the Household Waste & Recycling Task Group; and
- That Councillor S.K. Doubell would provide suggested factual corrections, which would also be sent to Councillor A. Hill for his agreement.

Resolved

- 1) That the Appendix 1 included in the Draft Minutes be removed.
- 2) That subject to the above amendment, the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, held on 23rd October 2007, be approved and signed as a correct record.

O77. Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Type of Interest	Nature of Interest	Action
C. Reid	Item 8 – Questions to Health Service Leader	Personal	Non Executive Director on the Wiltshire PCT Board.	Spoke but did not vote.

O78. Chair's Announcements

The Chair, Councillor C.J. Caswill:

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the paper circulated at the meeting, providing an update on Overview & Scrutiny arrangements for the transition to one Council. There is to be an informal meeting of the Joint (Overview & Scrutiny) Board on the 14th December to which all the representatives and their deputies have been invited. The North Wiltshire Overview & Scrutiny Committee is to receive regular updates on the work of the Joint Board.

The Chair stated that a meeting with the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview & Scrutiny is being organized. The Committee would be kept informed of the key issues raised.

The Chair stated that it was his wish to take items 10 & 11 before item 9 in order to allow the officer to leave and to reverse items 12 and 13 for purposes of expediency.

O79. Action Report

Consideration was given to Report No. 7, circulated with the Agenda, which provided an update on actions from the meeting held on 23rd October 2007.

Resolved that the Report be noted.

O80. Questions to Health Service Leaders

Councillor B. Causer was in attendance to update the Committee on his recommendations and progress towards inviting Health Service leaders to address Councillors.

Issues discussed included:

- The role of the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee at Wiltshire County Council;
- That a representative from North Wiltshire would (if in attendance) have speaking rights at the PCT Board;
- That the Director of Corporate Affairs has offered to address Councillors at North Wiltshire District Council and to answer questions;
- Whether such a meeting would be useful, given the existence of a County wide scrutiny process;
- Whether the best forum for such a meeting would be an Overview & Scrutiny meeting, a Council meeting or an informal meeting with invitations to all Councillors; and
- The possibility of an Overview & Scrutiny discussion drawing on the information given at any meeting with all Councillors.

The Chair, thanked Councillor Causer for attending to contribute to this item.

O81. Housing Advice Task Group

Consideration was given to Report No. 9, which presented the findings of the Housing Advice Task Group.

Issues discussed included:

- The comments from the Citizens Advice Bureau;
- The reasons for bringing the housing advice function in-house;
- The good work by officers in the Housing Team;
- The upcoming Audit Commission review; and
- The process for customer feedback.

Resolved

- 1) That the Committee endorses the Task Group Report and recommendations.
- 2) That the Task Group Report is presented to the Executive.

- 3) That consideration be given to how to forward relevant findings to the transitional Joint Implementation Board.
- 4) That the Report be published, if possible using the proposed new format.

O82. Poorly Performing Performance Indicators

Consideration was given to Report No. 10, which provided information on performance indicators that, when compared with all District Councils, are amongst the worst 25% of performers.

Issues discussed included:

- That the three performance indicators relating to the processing of benefits have all shown consistent improvement;
- That the Council's recycling rate has been boosted by the increase in provision of the green waste scheme;
- That the transition to a unitary authority is a difficult time for staff;
- That collections of Council Tax and NNDR are approximately 1% better than this time last year, due mainly to a better starting position at the beginning of the year;
- Considerable improvements have been made in dealing with major planning applications. The Overview & Scrutiny contribution to the Major Planning Applications Protocol may have had a positive impact;
- That the Development Control Service is investigating why the processing of 'other' planning applications has shown a drop in performance; and
- The improvements in the number of planning appeals allowed against the Council's decision has improved as a result of improved decision making at the Development Control Committee.

Resolved that

- 1) The report be noted.
- 2) That the Committee passes its' congratulations to the Customer Relations – Benefits Team.
- 3) That statistics on sickness be included in the next poorly performing performance indicators report (regardless of any improvement), along with the total number of employees.
- 4) That a table outlining the Council Tax and NNDR collection figures be included in the next poorly performing performance indicators report.

O83. Corporate Plan Progress Report

Consideration was given to Report No. 11, circulated with the Agenda, which provided an update and exceptions report on the delivery and performance of the Corporate Plan for the second quarter of 2007/08.

Issues discussed included:

- That many of the targets in the plan are revised down as they are now 2 year targets instead of 3 year target;
- The Made In Malmesbury Directory will be published;
- The leisure contract with DC leisure has been extended to March 2009. District Officers have begun work with County officers to deal with the transition of leisure centres and contracts;
- Disappointment was expressed at the lack of ambition in the climate change actions. The possibility of Overview & Scrutiny looking at the work of other Councils was raised.
- That litter picking equipment is available on loan to all Councillors and community groups from the depot;
- The community 'day of action' in Corsham was considered a successful event;
- That level 3 of the equality standard will not be pursued. Instead effort will be concentrated on the five Councils working together to ensure best practice is built into the planning for the new authority;
- The cancellation of Young People's Council (YPC) events; and
- The North Wiltshire Transition Team.

Resolved

- 1) That the Report be noted.
- 2) That the community 'Day of Actions' be included in the draft Corporate Plan.
- 3) That the Deputy Chief Executive inform Councillor S.K. Doubell about the reasons for cancellation of events and the next scheduled meeting.
- 4) That a list of the five Councils' appointments to the transitional Executive along with their political group be produced for Committee members.
- 5) That an email be sent to all members stating that if they have any questions relating to the transition team, to contact the Head of Policy & Performance.

O84. Interim Report

Consideration was given to Report No. 12, circulated with the Agenda, the purpose of which was to allow the Committee to reflect on the last 6 months.

Resolved

- 1) That the second bullet point under lessons to be learned be amended to read:
“Discussions of developing policy had shown the need to have the participation in the Committee’s discussions of officers closely involved in the preparation of the particular policies”.
- 2) That the Appendix 1 be amended to show only the number of committee members who attended and any substitutes.
- 3) To use the format for the production of the Annual Report.
- 4) That subject to the two amendments, to send the Report to all Councillors, stating that the Committee is planning its’ work-plan for the next 6 months and would welcome any suggestions for issues to address.

O85. Communications

A brief update on work to improve communication from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was circulated ahead of the meeting.

Issues discussed included:

- The Overview & Scrutiny pages on the Council’s website are being updated and improved to make them more useful for members of the public;
- Work taking place to produce a Scrutiny Bulletin, perhaps on a quarterly basis for distribution to libraries, town/parish councils and the foyer at Monkton Park;
- A specification for a bulletin template has been sent to a publishing company. We are waiting to hear for a price. The template could also be used to ‘publish’ reports from Task Groups and any reviews undertaken by the Committee.

O86. Notice of Motion

Consideration was given to Report No. 14, circulated with the Agenda,

- That the intention of the Motion is to give the portfolio holder time to prepare for the meeting;
- Whether or nor a call-in will fail if this procedure is not adhered to; and

- Possible amendments to the Motion.

Resolved that Councillor Doyle be asked to defer the Motion's consideration at Council in order to:

- Discuss the Motion with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the attendance of the Council's Monitoring Officer;
- Determine whether the amended Procedure Rule will mean that call-ins will fail if this procedure is not adhered to;
- Consider two amendments to the motion:
 1. Replacing the word 'detailed' with the word 'substantive'.
 2. That members inform the proper officer, whose duty it will be to inform Executive and Overview & Scrutiny members.

O87. A Programme of Work for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Consideration was given to Report No. 15, circulated with the Agenda, which considered amendments and additions to the Committee's Work Plan.

Issues discussed included:

- The need to look at the budget and Corporate Plan before the Executive agree recommendations for Council;
- The HR and Grounds Maintenance report will involve a broader look at the work of Cleansing & Amenities improvements;
- That there is capacity to create a new Task Group; and
- That there would be a paper on the new Review Panel process coming to the next meeting.

Resolved that the Committee would return to the question of new enquiries at the next meeting, by which time all Councillors should have had the chance to suggest topics.

The meeting finished at 8.45pm.

There were 0 members of the public present.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 22nd November 2007

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