

**POLICY & RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT  
& TRANSPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE  
30TH NOVEMBER, 2001**

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**REPORT OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT  
SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To advise the new Overview and Scrutiny Managing Board on the activities of this Sub-Committee from June, 2000 to November, 2001.

**Terms of Reference**

2. The Sub-Committee acted within the following terms of reference which were agreed by the County Council and the two parent committees:-

To consider and enquire into the policies and practices of the committees scrutinised.

To monitor service delivery.

To consider the budget plans, service plans, and any other major planning or strategic statements of the committees scrutinised.

To review aspects of the committees' best value performance plans.

To comment on the performance of the committees scrutinised using indicators such as:

- Best Value Targets
- Data generated by the District Auditor and the Audit Commission and other external agencies concerned with economy, efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities.
- Whether anticipated costs and benefits of earlier actions materialise in the way the commissioning committees hoped.

To explore the general quality and effect of the decisions of the committees scrutinised.

To study the impact of the work of the committees on other agencies and vice versa.

## Proceedings

3. The first meeting of the Sub-Committee took place on 8th June, 2000 and there have been twelve meetings up to and including today's meeting.

4. Significant items considered have included:-

(a) Best Value Reviews

- Property Management
- The Planning Service
- Waste Management
- County Farms
- Trading Standards

(b) Other Issues

- Capital Programme Slippage
- Audit of Best Value Performance Plan 2000/01
- E-Local Government for Wiltshire
- Rural Transport
- Building Maintenance Backlog
- Role of Scrutiny
- WDS Externalisation – Review of Process
- Budget Process Review

5. The following items remain outstanding and will be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Managing Board:-

(a) Best Value Reviews

- (1) County Farms - The Sub-Committee has examined the Best Value Review of this topic as far as Stages 3 & 4, but considers that further work should not resume until the outcomes of the Government's three Inquiries raised by the Foot and Mouth Crisis are known.
- (2) Trading Standards – The proposed scope of the Review has been approved and the Sub-Committee has requested brief update reports at each meeting.

(b) Other Issues

- (1) Budget Process Review – Consideration has been given to proposals to include a scrutiny input into the development of the Financial Plan. The Vice-Chairman, Mr McCarthy, Mr Molland and I have met with the County Treasurer, the Deputy County Treasurer and our Policy Support Officer following which the County Treasurer has prepared a report that will be considered elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.
- (2) WDS Externalisation – Review of Process – The Sub-Committee has been invited to scrutinise the decisions and events leading up to the externalisation of WDS services and the contract with Sodexo. It has agreed that a review be carried out on the externalisation process by concentrating mostly on the period from 16th October, 2000, when an independent option appraisal was commissioned on the future of WDS. The Sub-Committee has received a breakdown of the key historical events and factors which led to the decision to externalise the services.

- (3) Building Maintenance Backlog – Ongoing consideration has been given to this subject. It has been noted that a rationalisation of County Council properties was being carried out initially in Salisbury, following which it was planned to carry out similar reviews in other areas of the County, starting with Trowbridge. The Sub-Committee also noted the outstanding high maintenance costs and requested that reports on the backlog position be reported annually in May.

## **Conclusions**

5. The Sub-Committee has, in the main, worked successfully and has considered matters referred to it in as much depth as was necessary, given the resources available.
6. For example, the Sub-Committee considered reports on Capital Programme slippage. After consultation with the Wiltshire and Swindon Partnership Panel (WASPP) guidelines on joint working on capital projects were drawn up and subsequently approved by the Policy & Resources Committee. Each project plan will be timetabled and details of each plan will be included on the intranet, together with the key contacts in each partner body.
7. In their review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements, INLOGOV acknowledged that there was a need for additional resources to be made available for the scrutiny process and, in particular, for member and officer training. The Sub-Committee fully endorses these recommendations, which have also been supported by the Scrutiny Members' Steering Group. The Steering Group will be reporting on this and other issues to the new Overview and Scrutiny Managing Board.
8. During this period members have started to develop an expertise in the scrutiny process and have worked well together. It is to be hoped that this expertise will not be lost in the new governance arrangements that are being introduced.

## **Recommendations**

9. To recommend:-
  - (1) that this report be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Managing Board for information.
  - (2) that a report on the revised Best Value procedure be presented to an early meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Managing Board.
  - (3) that the following outstanding issues be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Managing Board in the priority as indicated:-

Priority 1 - Budget Process Review

Priority 2 - WDS Externalisation – Review of Process

Priority 3 - Building Maintenance Backlog

**DJ WILLMOTT**

Chairman

Policy & Resources and Environment  
& Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

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Unpublished documents relied upon in the production of this report: None

Environmental impact of the recommendations contained in this report: None