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16 September 2009

S U M M O N S

MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE: 24 September 2009
TIME: 6.00 p.m.
PLACE: Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Gosport
Democratic Services contact: Chris Wrein

LINDA EDWARDS
BOROUGH SOLICITOR

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Forder (Chairman)
Councillor Carr (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ms Ballard	Councillor Foster-Reed
Councillor Beavis	Councillor Geddes
Councillor Champion	Councillor Hylands
Councillor Dickson	Councillor Mrs Searle
Councillor Mrs Forder	Councillor Miss West

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

(To be read from the Chair if members of the public are present)

In the event of the fire alarm (single continuous sound) being activated, please leave the room immediately.

Proceed downstairs by way of the main stairs or as directed by GBC staff, follow any of the emergency exit signs. People with disability or mobility issues please identify yourself to GBC staff who will assist in your evacuation of the building.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

- If you are in a wheelchair or have difficulty in walking and require access to the Committee Room on the First Floor of the Town Hall for this meeting, assistance can be provided by Town Hall staff on request

If you require any of the services detailed above please ring the Direct Line for the Democratic Services Officer listed on the Summons (first page).

NOTE:

Please note that mobile phones should be switched off for the duration of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies, if any, for inability to attend the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members present are reminded to declare, at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter, any personal (including financial) or prejudicial interest in any item(s) being considered at this meeting.

3. MINUTES

To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 July 2009 (attached).

4. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A) REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

To consider any requests for scrutiny received by the Borough Solicitor. A copy of the Scrutiny Work Plan Prioritisation Aid is attached.

B) WORK PROGRAMME

To consider the work programme (attached) for the Committee and any suggestions from Members for issues to be scrutinise.

C) OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

5. REPORTS TO BE RECEIVED

(i) GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

This is the first annual report (attached) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the first year of its Gender Equality Scheme (GES) and its revised Action Plan.

(ii) UPDATE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Joint briefing note (attached) from the Chief Executive and the Borough Solicitor attached covering:

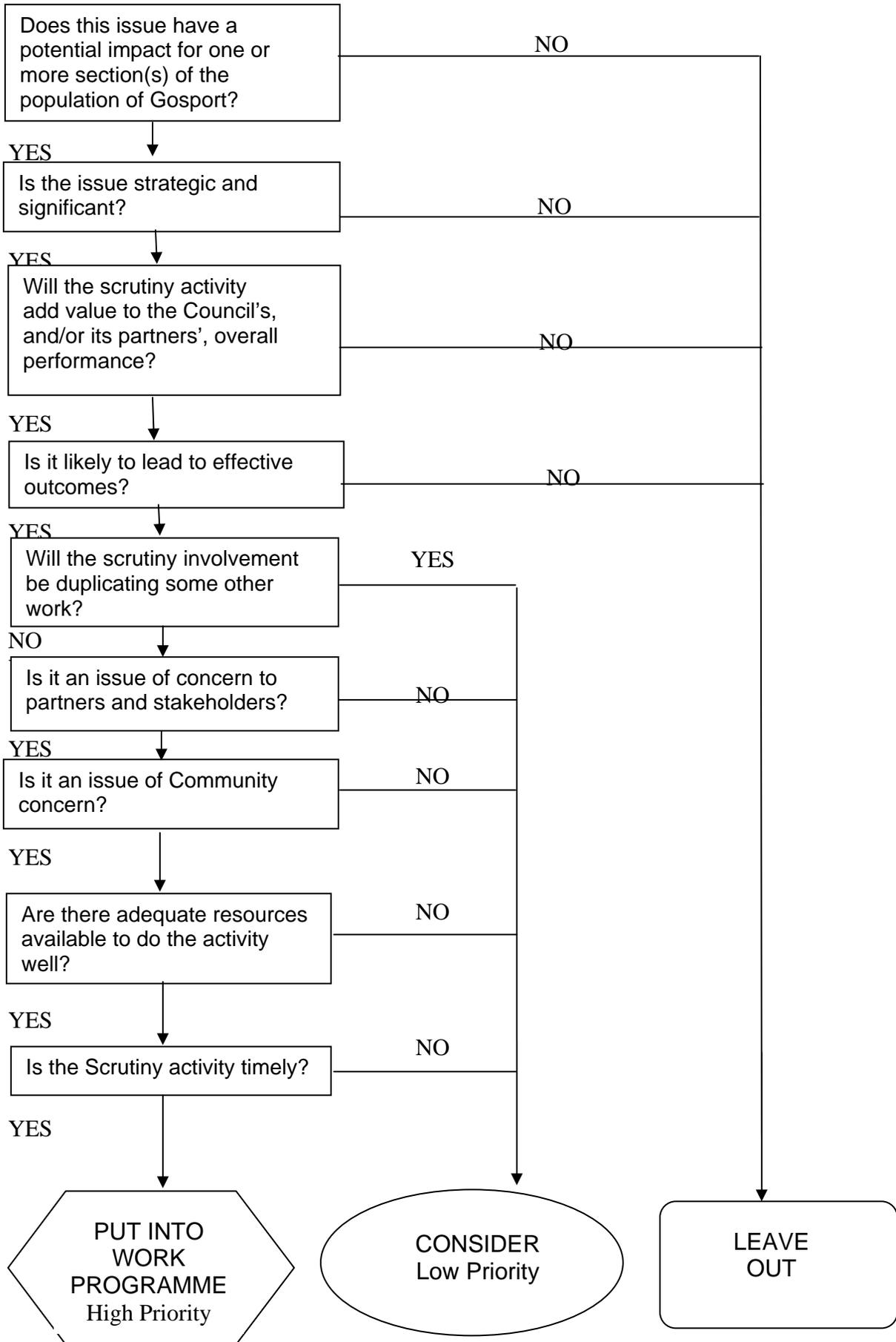
- *Sustainable Communities Act 2007*
- *Councillors Calls for Action*
- *Petitions*
- *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill*

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
24 September 2009

(iii) ARRANGEMENTS FOR SPECIAL MEETING ON POST-16
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ON 12 OCTOBER 2009

*Draft letter to Members of the Learning and Skills Council and
Hampshire County Council (attached).*

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: WORK PROGRAMME

Work Area	Lead Member/Officer	Date to be reported to Committee
Annual Report on the Work of the Committee	Chairman	25 March 2010
Performance Information: <i>Consideration of performance information relating to actions agreed by CMT</i>	Ian Lycett	At 6-monthly intervals. Next report: 28 January 2010
Community Strategy Action Plan: <i>Policy Framework Document</i>	Julie Petty	At 6-monthly intervals: Next report 26 November 2009
Disability Equality Scheme: <i>Receive progress report on an annual basis</i>	Julie Petty	Annually: Next report 26 November 2009
Race Equality Scheme	Julie Petty	Annually: Next report 28 January 2010
Gender Equality Scheme	Julie Petty	Annually: Next report September 2010
Sustainable Communities Act 2007, Calls for Action and Local Petitions and recent and impending legislation affecting local authorities	Linda Edwards	Progress report 24 Sept 2009
Outcome of conference on Services for Older people	Linda Edwards	26 November 2009
Gosport as a 4 th Option authority	Linda Edwards	28 January 2010
Budget Issues Working Group	Peter Wilson	Working Group to meet 13 October 2009
Recruitment and Succession Planning Working Group	Ian Lycett	Working Group to meet (date to be arranged)
Current and Future Post-16 Vocational Education Provision in Gosport		Extraordinary Committee meeting 12 October 2009 to meet representatives of Hampshire County Council and the Learning Skills Council
Work areas: <i>Review at each meeting</i>		

GOSPORT BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24th SEPTEMBER 2009

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

TITLE: GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

AUTHOR: HEAD OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

PURPOSE:

This is the first annual report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the first year of its Gender Equality Scheme (GES) and its revised Action Plan – Appendix A.

BACKGROUND:

The Gender Equality Scheme 2008-2011 with Action Plan was launched in July 2008 to ensure the Council is addressing its legal duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2006.

The GES is one of three statutory equality schemes linked under the Corporate Equalities Policy which was adopted in July 2008. The other two schemes are the Race Equality Scheme, adopted in November 2007, and the Disability Equality Scheme which was adopted in February 2007.

REPORT:

All of the Council's statutory equalities schemes include an annual review of the scheme and action plan through the Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), with an annual report being made to CMT and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Council maintains effective partnership working with the Gosport Domestic Abuse Forum and Inscap, and works closely with other Sections to

progress actions in the action plan and to identify and address any other gender equality issues to Council services and facilities.

EDSG receives regular updates from this group via the Council's Principal Policy Officer. Other Council officers discuss and provide updates of any gender equality issues within their service areas.

All Sections and Units responsible for 2008-09 actions in the action plan were canvassed for progress on those actions in July 2009. These and further updates have been co-ordinated by the Corporate Policy and Performance Section.

Relevant partners have been consulted and asked to suggest any new actions for consideration in the 2009-2010 action plan.

All actions designated for completion during this first year have been completed. Many actions are ongoing and will carryover to the second year of the scheme.

The attached action plan for 2009-2010 has been updated to include new and ongoing actions agreed between partners and the Council.

A new three-year Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan will be due in 2011

CONCLUSION:

The Council Management Team approved in September this annual progress report and the revised GES Action Plan for 2008-2010 in Appendix A.

It also acknowledged that all equality schemes and action plans are 'live' documents which are monitored and updated regularly to identify and address areas of inequality and to reflect the development of new initiatives and best practices to eliminate discrimination.

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny note this annual report on the Gender Equality Scheme and the updated Action Plan for 2009 -2010.

Supporting Information

Financial implications: Any financial implications arising from the Gender Equality Scheme will be considered as part of the annual budget process

Legal implications: None

Risk Assessment: Compliance of Public Bodies to all anti-discrimination legislation is monitored by the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

Failure to maintain a Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan which satisfies the general and specific duties required under the Equality Act 2006 would invite an array of possible enforcement actions against the Council.

Background papers including previous reports:

The Gender Equality Scheme 2008-2011

Enclosures/Appendices: Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan 2009-2011

Contact name & tel. no. Julie Petty, 023 9254 5381

Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan 2009-2011

Listed below are headline outcomes and actions to be achieved by Gosport Borough Council over three years. Details of service specific actions will be recorded and monitored through its Service Improvement Plans. A live Action Plan will be posted on the Council's website and be updated regularly.

Key to Abbreviations:

CMT – Council Management Team	EIA – Equality Impact Assessment
CPPS – Corporate Policy and Performance Section	LDF – Local Development Framework
EDSG – Equality and Diversity Steering Group	

Key to Specific Duties

1. prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme, showing how the authority will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives	5. assess the impact of current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality
2. consider including objectives to address the cause of any gender pay gap	6. implement the actions set out in its scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so
3. gather and use information on how the authority's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services	7. Report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.
4. consult stakeholders- employees, service users and others, including trade unions – and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives	

Objective 1: We will promote healthy lifestyles and work with our strategic partners to address areas

of local health inequality.

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
<p>1. A wide range of good quality, inclusive, safe and accessible play, leisure and youth activities are available to boys and girls in Gosport.</p>	<p>1a. The Gosport Play Strategy 2007-2012 was developed through consultation with service users and local partners.</p>	<p>Play Partners Group</p>		<p>✓</p>
	<p>1b. An equality impact assessment was completed on the strategy to determine that local provision did not exclude participation by any equality target group.</p>	<p>Leisure development worker</p>		<p>✓</p>
	<p>1c. Usage will be monitored by on-site staff and via user surveys to determine if any inequality exists in local provision.</p>	<p>Play and leisure staff, local agencies</p>	<p>Ongoing feedback and annual surveys</p>	<p>The age, gender and number of attendees are currently recorded in surveys. A review of survey formats used will be undertaken by GBC Leisure Services in 2009 to ensure equalities monitoring for age, gender, ethnicity and disability are recorded.</p>
	<p>1d. The strategy's action plan will be reviewed and updated annually.</p>	<p>Play Partners Group</p>	<p>July 2009 July 2010</p>	<p>✓This has been updated by Leisure 08.09.</p>
<p>2. The health and well-being of Gosport's children and young people will be improved through partnership working and the active participation of children and young people.</p>	<p>2a. Identify priority outcomes for the partnership to address in Gosport's Children and Young People's Plan 2007 - 2010 based on research and consultation with local partners and local children</p>	<p>Gosport Children and Young People's Locality Partnership Gosport</p>	<p>Ongoing review</p>	<p>✓</p>

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
	and young people, their parents and carers.			
	2b. Develop action plan to improve priority outcomes identified in the plan.		ongoing	✓
	2c. Develop monitoring arrangements for equality target groups to assess progress against priority outcomes.		Ongoing November 09	EIA identified gaps in GBC's Children and Young People's Plan. These gaps have now been addressed in the annual review of the policy. Next review due November 2009.
3. Council staff is made aware of opportunities and events to improve their health and well-being.	3a. Officers use the Staff Infonet as a way to communicate healthy lifestyle events, courses and opportunities which may interest Council staff.	Council staff	ongoing	Information regularly posted on Infonet.
	3b. Membership of the HLOWLA Health and Well-Being Group is maintained as a monitoring and information source	Personnel	ongoing	HR continues to regularly attend the group. Well being training provided for all staff. Carried out research on reasons for attending work. Looking into sharing well being website, training for managers and the provision of occupational health.
4. Walking to Health initiative promotes regular exercise through guided walks around the Borough for men and women	4a. An updated programme of walks is promoted on the Council's website and through circulation of leaflets around the Borough.	Environmental health officers	ongoing	There is an updated programme of walks on the website.
Objective 2: We will work with our strategic partners to improve reporting of Domestic Violence and				

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
improve awareness of local support services.				
1. Those affected locally by domestic violence know how to seek help from local services and report incidents.	1b. The Council will publish the local directory of domestic violence services and supports on its web site.	The Council	Updated (at least every two years) October 2009	✓The directory has been written by the Hampton Trust and is on GBC website. Will be updated by Dec 2009.
	1c. The source of referrals to local services will be monitored to gauge local awareness of services and gauge effectiveness of awareness-raising initiatives.	Fareham and Gosport Family aid and forum partners	July 2009	✓Information about referrals to refuges has been collated and is available in summary format.
	1d. The domestic violence alarm system will expand to include Fareham as well as Gosport housing through a joint funding arrangement and delivered by a local voluntary organisation who will report regularly on the progress of the scheme.	Fareham and Gosport Councils, Fareham & Gosport Family Aid	April 2009 Progress monitored at least annually.	✓The number and participants who have received an alarm is being recorded. Data reviewed every 13 weeks.
	1.e Review any new actions for the action plan in relation to NI185 and LAA targets.	Sharon Dalrymple-Bray	September 2009	Any new actions in relation to LAA targets and NI 185 will be updated after they meet in September 2009.
Objective 3: We will promote and monitor gender equality in our employment practices, including equal pay, and work with our strategic partners to address gender inequalities in the training and development of the Borough's workforce.				
1. Staff has a good understanding of how gender equality impacts	1a. Ensure that gender equality is integrated into	Personnel in liaison with	Ongoing	✓ GES awareness training provided in Oct and Nov

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
upon all relevant aspects of service delivery and employment, and what their responsibilities are.	the delivery of the equality and diversity training strategy including induction training of new staff and within equality refresher training for staff.	EDSG and the Learning and Development Group		2008. E-learning package rolled out to all staff July 2009.
	1b. Incorporate guidance and views from the Inscope Sexual Health Service and Portsmouth transgender support group in development gender equality training for staff.		Nov. 2008	✓6-09 New e-learning package covers all equality strands including transgender issues. It will be annually updated to include all current legislation.
2. Appointments are made on merit without discrimination, with positive action being taken where appropriate to assist in maintaining a representative gender balance.	2a. Complete analysis by gender of applicants for each post.	Personnel	Sept. 2008 Then annually thereafter (Sept-09)	On going analysis is carried out and reported to the Performance Sub-Group.
	2b. As members of the HIOWLA Recruitment Portal group, liaise with that group on statistical equalities information to establish any common areas or problems.	Personnel and HIOWLA	Sept. 2008 Annually thereafter (Sept 09)	✓These issues are discussed regularly by the Recruitment Portal and by the Personnel Officers Group.
	2c. Research the use of possible positive actions in recruitment and training to encourage consideration of all career paths without gender bias.	Personnel in liaison with Unison and CMT	Nov. 2008 Annually thereafter (Nov 09)	✓Statistics reviewed regularly. Portal attracts more diverse applicants. Training needs are reviewed bi-annually. No gender specific training has been required, but this is regularly reviewed.
3. Good equality practices are demonstrated throughout the	3a. Data is routinely collected from all	Head of Personnel	July 2009 Annually	✓Employment Indicators Annual Report taken to EDSG

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
Council's employment functions.	employment functions and analyzed to update the Council's workforce profile by gender.			in June. – See mins' of July EDSG.
	3b. Data is analyzed for any equality issues and brought to EDSG for recommendations to address them.		July 2009	✓ Completed for 2008/09. See above
4. Potential areas of pay inequality are identified and addressed to ensure fair and consistent practices are applied.	4a. The Council completes an Equal Pay Audit every two years.	Head of Personnel in consultation with Unison Branch Secretary	Dec 2009 Dec 2011	Will be completed in December 2009.
	4b. Results are analyzed and compared to the results of the previous Audit to assess for improvements, changes or action needed to address.		Dec 2009 Dec 2011	Will be completed in December 2009
	4c Review results of the Equal Pay Audit to identify any inequalities and resulting new actions.		Jan 2010	
5. Skills development training and networking opportunities are promoted to local businesses and their employees, including women-only support and training services	5a. Attendance and feedback from partnership training courses and networking events are monitored by gender to inform future courses and events to meet local skills development needs.	Head of Economic Prosperity	Quarterly	Information is being recorded on the number and gender of participants attending training. Services are specifically targeted to increase the take up of women on training courses and to increase number of new business start-ups. Women are sign posted to appropriate "women only" business support services and childcare is available.

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
<p>6. Barriers to employment among working age adults are addressed through partnership initiatives, including access to childcare and transport.</p>	<p>6a. Ensure that barriers to employment are addressed through partnership and/or Council actions identified in the Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2011.</p>		<p>July 2009</p>	<p>✓ All new partnership initiatives have been considered for actual/potential barriers including:</p> <p>Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) pilot called 'Fastforward' – held locally. Clients needs are fully assessed at first interview, with support and 'supervised' referrals provided - that include identification and addressing of barriers. This model is being emulated in other employment initiatives.</p> <p>An 'employability' network has been set up and brings providers together to share information and best practice, and addressing gaps. Next meeting Sept 09.</p>
<p>Objective 4: We will actively consider the diverse needs of our customers in the planning and delivery of our services.</p>				
<p>1. Gender equality is fully addressed in equality impact assessment process.</p>	<p>1a. Proposed and existing policies, strategies and functions relevant to gender equality are subjected to Equality Impact Assessments in all service areas and added to the corporate timetable.</p>	<p>All service areas to identify EIA lead officers for each assessment.</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>✓ EIA timetable is maintained by Corp. Policy Section and proposed items are added to the list during development</p>

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
	1b. A corporate timetable for completing EIAs is regularly updated and reviewed.	EDSG	ongoing	✓ Maintained by the Corp Policy section and reviewed by EDSG
	1c. Post completed EIAs on the Council's website and ensure guidance notes and forms for completing EIAs are updated and maintained on the Council's Infonet.	CPPS	ongoing	✓ Maintained by the Corp Policy section and reviewed by EDSG. Approved EIA's are constantly uploaded on GBC website.
2. Service areas review and develop consistent gender monitoring processes for their key areas of service provision to better identify any specific needs or gaps in service take up or provision which could be related to gender. Links to RES action plan Outcome 6.	1d. All EIAs are subjected to review and recommendations for further action.	EDSG, EIA Review Group	ongoing	✓ Review schedule maintained by Corp Policy section and recommendations forwarded to lead officers for follow up.
	1e. Incorporate findings and actions from the EIA process to inform service planning processes.	EIA lead officers and section heads	ongoing	Actions identified from EIAs are identified as service level equality objectives and are actioned through Service Improvement Plans.
	2a. Establish some corporate guidance for service areas on monitoring practices for all equality strands, including gender identity.	EDSG	Dec. 08	✓ Corporate Equalities Monitoring Framework (EMF) adopted by CMT in Oct. 08.
	2b. Review processes in each service area for consistent and appropriate monitoring of service take up, participation and satisfaction based on gender.	All service areas	Feb. 09	✓ Guidance provided to Section Heads on completing compliance statement of their service to the EMF and also statement of any service level equality objectives.
	2c. Analyse monitoring	All service	ongoing	To be completed as part of

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
	results for possible gender inequalities within services which may need to be addressed through alternative approaches or provisions.	areas		initial compliance assessment and statement of service level equality objectives and then annually through Service Improvement Plans.
	2d. Establish process for reporting any gender inequalities indicated from monitoring to EDSG for review.	EDSG via service representatives	Dec. 08	✓EMF adopted Oct 08, Section heads asked for annual compliance assessments annually by June. EDSG to review these annually as part of equalities performance monitoring review June-July
	2e. Build consultation links with Inscape and other groups to gain views of transgender people on Council service provision.	EDSG	ongoing	✓Sept 09 - meeting arranged in September to consult with Inscape. Awaiting feedback on any new actions.
3. The Council's Procurement Strategy promotes equality, including Gender Equality, in all of its procurement functions. Link to RES action plan Outcome 9.	3a. Review current procurement functions to ensure potential and existing external contractor understand and comply with the Council's commitment to Gender Equality.	Internal Audit	Annually – Jul 09	✓ 2009 New procurement strategy launched. Contracts Monitoring Group has been established to review procurement and equalities.
	3b. Collect post-contract monitoring data from contractors and review annually to assess compliance with the Council's equalities standards.	Internal Audit	Dec.09 Dec.10	Will be assessed by the Contract Monitoring Group.
4. There will be improved	4a. The BME Community	BME CDW	ongoing	Worker attends Domestic

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
understanding of experiences of BME women and key issues affecting their access to and participating in local services.	Development Worker (CDW) will establish effective networks with service partners and local BME service users to help identify any gender differences in provision, awareness and access to local services.	and HCC, GBC and Hants PCT		Violence Forum meetings and has attended local conference about honour-based violence and forced marriage issues. Has established links with several BME residents and groups to identify issues and involved in developing supports and better access to services.
	4b. CDW will facilitate BME people to find effective pathways across a range of statutory and non-statutory services and this work will help inform the Council's GES.		ongoing	CDW engages with health and wellbeing services across Borough. Gosport Wellbeing Network works to overcome barriers to accessing services, gender inequalities are also tackled. CDW signposts members to appropriate services.
5. Monitoring Progress on Meeting Objectives				
1.Key actions for this scheme will be further developed after the first full year in consultation with community groups, partner agencies and staff	1a. The action plan is monitored and updated regularly on the Council's website.	EDSG	ongoing	Updated action plan will be posted in Council's web pages.
	1b. A progress monitoring report is provided to CMT and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	EDSG	July 2009 July 2010 July 2011	Report going to CMT on 25 th August and O and S Committee on 16 th September.
	1c. Discuss action plan progress with key partners to identify new needs or trends and set new actions to address them.	CPPS	July 2009	✓Key partners consulted for new actions including Inscap and Domestic Violence Forum.
2. Full review of the GES and Action Plan 2008-2011 will inform	2a. Results of annual Action Plan monitoring,	EDSG	Sept. 2011	

Outcome	Actions to Achieve	By Whom	By When	Progress
the development of a new scheme	service monitoring, impact assessments and relevant consultation will be pooled to inform development of a new scheme.			
	2b. Research is undertaken on latest policy guidance and best practice to inform development of new scheme.	CPPS	Sept. 2011	

BRIEFING NOTE

To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date:	24 September 2009
Title:	UPDATE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION
Author:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE/BOROUGH SOLICITOR
Purpose:	For Information

REPORT

1. Sustainable Communities Act 2007

- 1.1 The latest news is that the Local Government Association have received nearly 300 proposals under the above Act from 90 different Councils. A full list of the proposals may be found on the LGA website. The proposals cover such things as finance, planning and regeneration, community safety and include such matters as giving Councils greater flexibility on how to spend ring-fenced grants, giving Councils the power to retain a proportion of the revenue from non-domestic rates so that it can be spent on local priorities or for local authorities to have the power to raise revenue through this mechanism by giving powers back to local authorities to set a local levy.
- 1.2 Proposals under the theme of children and young persons have included that food growing be introduced as part of the national curriculum, either on or off school sites. A large metropolitan borough council has made a proposal that they should be given responsibility for maintaining and sustaining the local post office network in their area. Another Unitary authority has asked that the financial and operational responsibility for local fire and rescue services be transferred from another body to the Unitary authority.
- 1.3 The next step is for the Local Government Association, as the selector body to draw up a list of proposals to be submitted to the Communities Secretary in December 2009. The Communities Secretary will then decide early next year which proposals will be given the go-ahead.

2. Councillors Calls for Action

- 2.1 Members may recall an earlier report in November 2008 which set out that the Government had provided for Councillors to be able to refer local government matters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that this was known as the Councillor Call for Action. The statutory provision was brought into force in April this year.
- 2.2 This new provision is seen as sitting in the context of the significant changes being made to local authorities more generally, particularly in the area of partnership working. Overview and Scrutiny functions have been enlarged to enable them to work more closely with partners across organisational boundaries, through for example joint committees, and in this way scrutiny is seen as being in a stronger position to resolve a wide range of policy issues including local issues arising through the Councillor Call for Action. The Councillor Call for Action is seen as helping councils resolve issues and problems on behalf of their residents, and should not be regarded as merely a scrutiny process.
- 2.3 Being able to use this power effectively may require the Council to consider making improvements in relation to a wider range of council functions, including support for Councillors' ward work, complaints process, call in petitions and other matters. There are matters which are excluded from the Councillors Call for Action and that is any matter which is vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable as being included in the agenda for all to be discussed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 The next step is for the Council to review its existing procedures in relation to Overview and Scrutiny, Notices of Motion, Petitions and to see what changes, if any, need to be made to those procedures, including the Constitution. It is proposed that a further report is brought back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee with such recommendations early in the new year.

3. Petitions

- 3.1 Members may recall that in the November 2008 report mention was made that the Government were consulting on how arrangements for local petitions could be strengthened. The consultation has now been concluded and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill, currently going through Parliament, includes provisions to take forward the Government's proposal to introduce a duty on local authorities to respond to petitions, which will give citizens greater powers to hold local authorities to account and to influence local services.

4. Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill

- 4.1 This Bill is currently going through Parliament and takes forward proposals published in the White Paper 'Communities in Control; Real People, Real Power' which aim to pass power into the hands of the local community. There is a communities progress report which can be found on the DCLG website.
- 4.2 The Bill also takes forward one of the key recommendations the Review of Sub National Economic Development and Regeneration published in July 2007 in that it places a new duty on County Councils and Unitary Councils to prepare an assessment of the economic condition of their area. Gosport Borough Council is actively involved with Hampshire County Council in the preparation of the assessment of the economic conditions of their area.
- 4.3 The Bill also introduces a duty on local authorities to promote democratic understanding, not only of the Council and its various functions but also of the main public service providers in the local area, such as the Police and health etc. It will also require local authorities to promote the opportunities for people to take on a number of specific roles such as Magistrates and members of Youth Offending Panels. The Bill also extends the duty to involve a number of partner authorities and introduces the title of Alderman for former elected Councillors, and to allow all local authorities to recognise the services of both Councillors and local people. The Bill also introduces a requirement on those Councils with local area group responsibilities to designate an officer to support the Overview and Scrutiny function and broaden the scope of what a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee may also consider.

AGENDA NO. 5(iii)

DRAFT.

Draft of a letter to Anne-Marie Mountifield – Partnership Director LSC; Mike Stoneman – Partnership Manager LSC; Brian Pope – Area Manager Local Authority; Bob Eardley – Infrastructure Local Authority.

These are the individuals attending the Gosport Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee's meeting on Post-16 Vocational Education in Gosport.

Dear....

Post-16 Vocational Education

I thought it be helpful if I wrote in advance of our meeting at 18.00 on Monday 12 October to give you an idea of our areas of interest, provide a structure for the meeting and allow you to prepare appropriately. I have discussed the contents of this letter with other members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We are holding this meeting because some of our members are concerned about vocational provision in Gosport and its impact on the local economy. However members are also interested in more general educational issues and feel that they could be better informed about this important and rapidly changing subject.

I suggest we deal with issues in the following sequence, allowing Committee members to ask follow-up questions after each topic.

We would be grateful if you could:

1. Describe levels of educational achievement at 16+ in Gosport relative to those in other parts of the county and country. We would also be interested in hearing your theories that might explain variations from national and county norms.
2. Explain the possible consequences for the local economy and employment.
3. Outline the LSC's involvement with the subject, its past recommendations and proposals, their fate and the possible reasons for it.
4. Explain the implications for Gosport of the 'wind-up' of the LSC?

5. Provide an assessment of where we stand now and what needs to be done.
For example, how do you see the national agenda for partnership and schools working together playing out in Gosport?

I appreciate that you may wish to support your presentations with documentation. Please let me know if you would prefer that any were circulated in advance.

Finally I should explain that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprises twelve members all of whom have expressed an interest in attending. Other councillors may be there as observers.

Yours sincerely,

R.W. Forder, Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee