

A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WAS HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2007

Councillors Carr (P), Davis (P), Dickson (P), Farr (P), Foster (P), Jacobs (P), Kimber (P), Philpott (P), Redrup (P), Mrs Salter (P), Train (P) and Ward (P)

Reference was made to the change in the administration of the Council with effect from 8 December 2006 and it was confirmed and noted that Councillor Train would remain Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2006/2007.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

10. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 6 December 2006 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

11. REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

It was reported that no requests for matters to be scrutinised had been received by the Borough Solicitor and Members were invited to suggest any issues that they felt could be the subject of a scrutiny investigation.

The Chairman suggested that there were possibly two areas of concern that might be investigated, i.e. (i) the Health Authority and (ii) Southern Water Company.

With regard to (i) – Health Authority, the Chairman felt that the representatives from the Primary Care Trust should be invited to outline their future plans for health provision in the borough as there seemed to be little liaison and communication with Gosport Borough Council. It was acknowledged that Hampshire County Council had the remit for scrutiny of health issues on a county-wide basis and Members felt that this matter was not an area of investigation that should be undertaken by this Committee. Information regarding health provision was available on the Hampshire County Council website.

With regard to (ii) – Southern Water, Members discussed the aim of a scrutiny investigation and the expected outcome from the process. Officers informed the Committee that regular updates on works in the Borough were available from the Environment Agency and that the areas of flooding in Bridgemary were being addressed by Southern Water. However, the Committee considered that it would be useful to have a dialogue with the water company to ascertain their future plans for investment in the infrastructure in Gosport and to discuss their business plans for the area.

RESOLVED: That:-

- (i) a scrutiny investigation of the Health Authority not be undertaken; and
- (ii) Councillors Davis and Train to draft the scope of the scrutiny in respect of Southern Water and submit for approval to a future meeting.

12. TOURISM PROMOTION - UPDATE

The Leisure and Cultural Services Manager provided a briefing note to update the Committee on progress made on various developments in the promotion and marketing of tourism in Gosport. A copy of the new Tourism Guide 2007 was tabled at the meeting.

The Committee were informed of ways being explored to use the Borough Crest in appropriate tourism promotion and that, following the launch of the new website, arrangements were in hand to translate the home page into French and Spanish. The impact of this would be evaluated before considering whether this facility should be expanded further.

Members were heartened that the Committee's views on ways to expand the promotion of tourism had been taken into account and thanks were extended to officers and the Tourist Office personnel for their work in this regard.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Manager informed the Committee that officers would continue to monitor progress and work on further promotion aspects. Any relevant issues would be reported to the Community and Environment Board and if further scrutiny investigation was required matters would be referred to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Leisure and Cultural Services Manager on tourism promotion in Gosport be noted and that scrutiny of the matter by the Committee is now concluded.

13. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (BVPIs)

Consideration was given to a report of the Development Services Manager in respect of performance information related to BVPIs and actions agreed by the Chief Officers Management Team.

An appendix to the report provided Best Value Performance Indicator information by Service Unit showing the proposed percentage targets, the targets achieved at the 2nd quarter review 2006/2007, the assessment on whether targets were likely to be met and, in some cases, the remedial action proposed where targets were unlikely to be met.

Discussion ensued and Members questioned or commented on the following BVPIs and the Officers responded accordingly:

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		Questions/Comments
	CORPORATE HEALTH	
BV2b	The duty to promote race equality.	Explanation was sought and given, although the percentage did not give a full picture of criteria.
BV8	The percentage of invoices for commercial goods and services which were paid by the authority within 30 days of such invoices being received by the authority.	This BVPI showed a marked improvement and the Financial Services Manager clarified the definition and reasons for improvement that was due to training and a new creditor system.
BV11b	The percentage of top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic communities.	Members questioned how these areas were being addressed and how it related to BV2b.
BV16a	The percentage of employees declaring that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 disability definition compared with...	The Chief Executive explained that the Council did not discriminate when recruiting and employment did not relate or refer to the definition in BV2b
BV16b	...the percentage of economically active disabled people in the authority area.	
BV17a	The percentage of employees from minority ethnic communities compared with...	
BV17b	...the percentage of the economically active minority ethnic community population in the authority area.	
BV156	The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people.	It was reported that Council buildings were as compliant as it was possible to be within the requirements of the DDA Act. Regular audits were carried out.
	HOUSING SERVICES	
BV164	Does the authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice in rented housing and follow the Good Practice Standards for social landlords on tackling harassment included in the Code of Practice for Social Landlords: Tackling Racial Harassment?	The Housing Services Manager reported that this BVPI was likely to be met but that at present there were additional criteria to be met to meet the target.
BV184a	a) The proportion of LA homes which were non-decent at the start of the year (1 April).	The Housing Services Manager confirmed that the Council were on target to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
BV184b	b) The percentage change in proportion of non-decent LA homes during the year.	
BV212	Average time taken to re-let authority housing.	Performance for this indicator had significantly improved.

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HOUSING BENEFIT and COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT		
BV76a	The number of claimants visited, per 1,000 caseload.	This BVPI was on target to be met.
BV79a	Accuracy of processing: a) Percentage of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct on the basis of the information available for the determination, for a sample of cases checked post-determination.	<p>Members sought an explanation and clarification of these indicators and what was deemed unrecoverable. The Financial Services Manager informed the Committee that there were several categories of overpayments, that Benefits was a very complex area of work and that write-offs were kept to a minimum.</p> <p>However, a briefing note would be presented at the next meeting to include explanation and guidance on these performance indicators</p>
BV79b(i)	The percentage of recoverable overpayments recovered (HB) The amount of HB overpayments recovered during the period as a percentage of HB deemed recoverable overpayments for the period.	
BV79b(ii)	The percentage of recoverable overpayments recovered (HB) HB overpayments recovered during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt o/s at the start of the period plus the amount of HB overpayments identified in the period.	
BV79b (iii)	The percentage of recoverable overpayments recovered (HB) HB overpayments written off during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt o/s at the start of the period plus the amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.	
ENVIRONMENT		
BV91b	Percentage of households resident in the authority's area served by a kerbside collection of at least two recyclables.	Full recycling facilities/service were to be offered to multi-occupancy premises next month. Officers had been recruited to educate residents and promote recycling.
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH		
BV217	Percentage of pollution control improvements to existing installations completed on time.	Inspection programme was targeted for the next quarter.
COMMUNITY SAFETY		
BV127a	Violent crimes per year, per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area.	<p>Members commented on incidents of domestic violence and alcohol related offences and questioned whether discussions with the police were carried out. The Environmental Services Manager informed the Committee that there was regular contact with the police regarding licensing of premises and the suitability of objections to applications. There was concern about the rise in crime in the Borough.</p>
BV127b	Robberies per year, per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area.	
BV225	Actions against domestic violence - the percentage score against a checklist of 11 questions.	

RESOLVED: That

- (a) the report of the Development Services Manager be noted;
- (b) A briefing note to include guidance and clarification on Best Value Performance Indicator BV79 to be provided at the next meeting of the Committee; and
- (c) Members were satisfied that their consideration of the performance information relating to the Best Value Performance Indicators concluded their scrutiny of the Best Value Performance Plan.

14. WORK PROGRAMME/TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the development of a work programme.

As discussed earlier in the meeting, the Committee had approved that Councillors Train and Davis would pursue the scope of the scrutiny on Southern Water's plans for investment in infrastructure in the Borough.

It was further considered that scrutiny of waterfront zoning, set up by the previous Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, should continue with a working group on a 1:1:1 basis.

The Chairman had requested the Borough Solicitor to explore a scrutiny training programme for Members. The Borough Solicitor reported that she had obtained a DVD 'What has scrutiny ever done for us?' from Local Government Association /South East Employers which she felt could be a useful tool as part of a training programme. The content consisted of a series of modules about effective scrutiny and could be tailored to meet the Council's needs.

The Borough Solicitor suggested that module 1 'Why scrutiny matters' could be used as part of a seminar session on 8 February and that all Members of the Council could be invited.

RESOLVED: That the work programme for the Committee be as follows:

- (a) **Southern Water** – Councillors Train and Davis to progress as set out above;
- (b) **Waterfront Zoning Working Group** – comprising Councillors Philpott, Train and Liberal Democrat representative;
- (c) **Training seminar** be held on Thursday 8 February 2007 at 6.00pm to which all Members of the Council be invited.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business discussed.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 7.52pm

CHAIRMAN