A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WAS HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2008

Councillors Allen (P), Beavis (P), Carr (P), Champion, Cully (P), Dickson (P), Edwards (P), Mrs Forder (P), Forder (Chairman) (P), Mrs Salter, Salter (P) and Miss West (P).

18. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Champion and Mrs Salter.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 July 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

21. REPORTS TO BE RECEIVED

(i)   <u>CYCLE LANES WORKING GROUP</u>

The Chairman reported that there had been no real progress with regard to requests to meet with representatives of Hampshire County Council. He referred Members to his correspondence with the County Director of Environment.

Members felt there was a need to continue efforts to engage with Hampshire County Council but, given the response received from the County Director of Environment, Members would have to be clear about what was needed in the Borough regarding cycle lanes. It was agreed that the Cycle Lanes Working Group should meet again to clarify this and to decide on a strategy to obtain answers from the County Council.

RESOLVED: That a further meeting of the Cycle Lanes Working Group be arranged to:

a)   identify the Borough's cycle lane priorities; and

b)   decide upon a strategy to engage with the County Council.

(ii)   <u>NOISE MONITORING WORKING GROUP</u>

The Chairman reported that an officer from Hart District Council had been invited to the next meeting (22 October 2008) which was to be brought forward from 4.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

(iii)   <u>SCRUTINY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS</u>

The Chairman reported that a successful first training session, provided by the Chief Executive and the Borough Solicitor, had taken place on 16 September 2008.

It was agreed that an external trainer from the University of Birmingham be engaged to carry out training on questioning techniques. The preferred date and time was 17 December 2008 at 5.00 p.m.

RESOLVED: That:

a)   an external trainer from the University of Birmingham be engaged to carry out training on questioning techniques; and

b)   the training take place on 17 December 2008 at 5.00 p.m.

(vi)   <u>SELECTION AND PRIORITISATION OF TOPICS FOR SCRUTINY</u>

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Borough Solicitor which contained a checklist which could be used to assist in selecting topics for scrutiny. If approved, the document, including the checklist (Scrutiny Work Plan Prioritisation Aid), could be included on the Council's website where it may generate interest from the public. The criteria could also be used in the future to assist Members when referring "Calls for Action" to the Committee.

The checklist included the following questions to be considered before embarking on a scrutiny:

- Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population of Gosport?
- Is the issue strategic and significant?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's, and/or its partners', overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective outcomes?
- Will the scrutiny involvement be duplicating some other work?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
- Is it an issue of Community concern?
- Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?
- Is the Scrutiny activity timely?

RESOLVED: That the Criteria for choosing topics for scrutiny and Scrutiny Work Plan Prioritisation Aid be approved.

(v)   SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Borough Solicitor which advised that the Act had come into force on 23 August 2007. The principle aim of the Act was to promote sustainability of local communities. For Local Authorities this meant encouraging the improvement of the economic, social (including participation in civic and political activity), or environmental wellbeing of the Authority's area or part of its area.

The regulations and the Selector were still to be confirmed and the first invitation had to be issued at the end of October this year.   In these circumstances, it was suggested that the Committee note the contents of this report and that the Borough Solicitor provide an update report next year with details of proposals that had been made and approved or rejected by the Secretary of State.

Members were advised that in developing a Community Strategy, discussions needed to be held with the Council's partners on the Local Strategic Partnership.

The Borough Solicitor undertook to add the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 to the Committee Work Programme and brief the Committee again in six months time.

RESOLVED: That:

a)   the Borough Solicitor's briefing note be noted; and

b)   a further briefing take place in six months time.

(vi)   GOSPORT'S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY PROGRESS
        UPDATE

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Chief Executive which provided Members with a progress update on Gosport's Sustainable Community Strategy and its Local Strategic Partnership.

Members were advised that the Strategy concentrated mainly on transport and local employment.

Gosport's Big Day Out had been a particular success. It had been funded by the Local Strategic Partnership who had agreed to provide support next year.

Members raised the issue of travel behaviour and the possible high cost of solutions and were advised that, rather than providing funding, the Local Strategic Partnership looked at alternative suggestions and provided encouragement to create interest in transport problems and solutions. The Council was looking at encouraging its own staff to participate in car sharing. The internet was also useful in helping travellers decide what mode of transport to use for particular journeys, for example bus and train timetables.

It was noted that Bay House School was not represented on the Local Strategic Partnership Board although it provided a large number of 'A' Level entries. It was suggested that the Chief Executive, as Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership Board, may consider raising this issue.

RESOLVED: That the six-monthly scrutiny of Gosport's Sustainable Community Strategy be concluded.

22.   DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A.   REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

No requests for scrutiny had been received.

B.   WORK PROGRAMME

The updated Work Programme was noted

C.   OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

Two suggestions were made by Members:

- Provision of services for the elderly
- Review of the outturn budget

Provision of Services for the Elderly

It was felt that this subject would be important and high profile in the near future and that the Council would have a role to play. Currently, information was dispersed and many people did not take up benefits or services to which they were entitled.

The outcome of the scrutiny could be the publication of a booklet signposting elderly people to benefits and services and facilitating easier access. It was felt that this could add value to the lives of the elderly in Gosport and fitted in with the Council's priorities.

It was agreed that a working group be set up and the following Members were nominated to sit on it:

- Councillor Dickson - Conservative
- Councillor Mrs Forder – Liberal Democrat
- Councillor Forder – Liberal Democrat
- Councillor Miss West - Conservative

Review of the Outturn Budget

It was agreed that this subject should be scrutinised by the whole Committee at a future meeting. In the meantime the Borough Solicitor undertook to request the Borough Treasurer to make a presentation at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That:

a)   a Working Group be established to scrutinise the provision of services for the elderly in Gosport;

b)   Councillors Dickson, Mrs Forder, Forder and Miss West be nominated to sit on the Working Group; and

c)   the outturn budget be scrutinised by the whole Committee at a future meeting.

23.   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to discuss.

The meeting ended at 7.15 p.m.

CHAIRMAN