

29 January 2009

**A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2009**

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

30. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Champion.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dickson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the element of agenda item 4 relating to the Travel Token Scheme.

32. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

33. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A) REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

It had been reported to the Committee on 27 November 2008 that a request had been received from Councillors Carter, Edgar and Hook for the Review of the Stokes Bay Festival to be scrutinised. A resolution had been made at Council on 26 November 2008 that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to carry out a comprehensive review of the Stokes Bay Festival held from 31 July to 3 August 2008, inviting all outside bodies such as the Friends of Stokes Bay, the Police, Fire and Rescue, traders, the events organiser and others to put forward their observations for a safer festival for the future.

Members had considered that, as the subject had been debated so recently at Council, it would be appropriate to allow a longer period of time between the debate and making a decision on whether or not to scrutinise this matter. It was therefore decided that such a decision should be deferred until this meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was agreed that, as other investigations in relation to this matter were currently being carried out, it would be inappropriate to scrutinise the Review of the Stokes Bay Festival at this time.

B) WORK PROGRAMME

Travel Token Scheme

(**Note:** Councillor Dickson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the element of agenda item 4 relating to the Travel Token Scheme, left the meeting room and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon).

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Financial Services Manager which asked the Committee to consider whether or not it wished to pursue the scrutiny of this service.

In view of the concerns expressed by Members of the Community and Environment Board, the risk of additional costs being incurred should a Smart Card scheme be adopted and because the scrutiny no longer appeared timely, the Committee decided not to pursue the scrutiny of the Travel Tokens Service and to remove it from the Work Programme.

The updated Work Programme was noted.

C) OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

Councillor Carr raised the issue of footpath and highway maintenance and suggested that this may be an area to be scrutinised.

Members felt that there were already fora in existence where such issues could be examined but, should this approach be unsuccessful, this may be an area for scrutiny at a later date.

Councillor Carr also suggested that the Committee may wish to scrutinise assistance provided to ethnic groups in Gosport. Councillor Carr's suggestion was noted as a possible future scrutiny item.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) scrutiny of the Review of Stokes Bay Festival be not carried out at the present time;
- b) scrutiny of the Travel Token Service be not pursued and be removed from the Work Programme;
- c) scrutiny of footpath and highway maintenance be not scrutinised; and
- d) the suggestion to scrutinise assistance provided to ethnic groups be noted as a future possible scrutiny item.

34. REPORTS RECEIVED

(i) CYCLE LANES WORKING GROUP

The report of the Cycle Lanes Working Group was introduced by Councillor Beavis who advised that the provision of cycle lanes in Gosport was considered a low priority by Hampshire County Council despite 20% of all journeys in the town being made by bicycle.

The report contained five priority schemes for improvements to cycle lanes, namely:

- Holbrook to Tichborne Way.
- Newgate Lane.
- Gomer Lane and Stokes Bay No.2 Battery.
- Browndown Road
- Lee on the Solent, Marine Parade East and West

The priorities reflected the use of cycle lanes for school, work and shopping purposes.

Litter problems on the cycle lanes had been dealt with by Streetscene but shrub clearance was not felt to be satisfactory and it was recommended that the responsible authority, Hampshire County Council, be written to on this issue.

The Gosport Borough Council website did not contain enough information on cycle lanes and the maps were out of date. Recommendations for improvements were included in the report.

The strategy relating to cycling needed to be updated. Discussions had taken place with Groundwork Solent regarding the role of the Gosport Transport and Sustainability Partnership (GTSP). Matched funding was available in some areas and the report recommended that GTSP continue to lead on the promotion of cycling and the production of promotional material, maps and secure cycle parking.

Concerns were raised that, at a recent Bus Rapid Transit briefing, an accompanying cycle lane had been omitted from the plans despite earlier suggestions that it could be included.

The Chairman reported on discussions he had had on this subject with Gosport County Councillors and County officers present at the meeting.

Following some discussion, the Chairman agreed to send copies of the report to Alison Quant, the County Director of Environment, and the relevant County Council Executive Member.

The Chief Executive further advised that this issue had been raised by Gosport Councillors at a Hampshire Action Team meeting. A report had been requested by the Hampshire Action Team to explain why cycle lanes had not been included and why a scheme valued at £20 million included £4 million in fees.

(ii) NOISE MONITORING WORKING GROUP

The report of the Noise Monitoring Working Group was presented by Councillor Allen. It was felt that there was an identifiable gap in the current service provided by either the police or Gosport Borough Council. It was therefore recommended that the Community and Environment Board be requested to authorise the Head of Environmental Health to prepare a full report on the available options for the introduction of an 'out of hours' noise monitoring service for consideration by that Board.

Officers were thanked for their help in compiling the report, the recommendation, as detailed above, being accepted.

(iii) SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WORKING GROUP

The Chairman advised that the Working Group had met with Mr Frank Dunn from Help the Aged in order to establish terms of reference. It had been felt that loneliness and isolation amongst elderly people were key issues where Gosport Borough Council may be able to have some influence.

The Chairman subsequently met with representatives of the Housing Services staff to obtain evidence regarding loneliness and isolation amongst the elderly.

The Working Group would be meeting on 18 February 2009 to question Margaret Wilkinson of the Carers Centre Adult Services Department and Jean Legg, Befriender Co-ordinator and a copy of a set of possible draft questions was tabled in preparation.

It was anticipated that a report would be prepared for the meeting of the Committee on 26 March 2009 which would include elements on unfulfilled need, provision in other local areas and evidence and views obtained from the meeting on 18 February 2009 with the representative from Adult Services and the Befriender Co-ordinator.

Members raised the issue of sheltered accommodation and were concerned that, where scheme managers were no longer resident, it amounted to residents having to live independently. The Working Group was asked to take this into consideration when carrying out its investigations.

(iv) RACE EQUALITY SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Head of Policy and Performance which presented the first annual report to the Committee on the first year of the Race Equality Scheme and its revised Action Plan.

Members were advised that 91% of the actions contained in the Race Equality Scheme had been completed.

The Committee noted the report of the Head of Policy and Performance.

(v) THE NURSERY

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Chief Executive which requested the Committee to look at the future of the Nursery and take the following areas into consideration:

- the most economical way for the Council to source its bedding plants
- the future of the Nursery and whether it could be made to operate on a more economical basis
- the sale of excess plants to other Councils/Organisations
- the types of plants the Nursery should propagate
- whether the Nursery could be used for other purposes
- the community benefits the Nursery could provide

Members took the view that there was no need for scrutiny to take place as the Grounds Maintenance Working Group had previously discussed the future of the Nursery and it was felt that this was the correct forum for such discussions. The Working Group had last met on 10 March 2008.

Members of the Committee considered the Nursery to be very popular with residents of Gosport and that Councillors wished it to be retained and the necessary capital investment made to successfully achieve this.

Members were advised that officers had looked into agreements to supply produce to other Councils but Gosport Borough Council did not have the capacity on site to provide such a service.

Members were informed that pupils of Bay House School may have the opportunity to gain work experience by helping to maintain Stanley Park and there could be a role for the Nursery in this project.

Architects for the Rowner Regeneration Partnership were currently preparing proposals for a new nursery which would be at no cost to the Council and would enable the Partnership to obtain additional land.

In conclusion, officers suggested that a further meeting of the Grounds Maintenance Working Group would be organised shortly at which the future of the Nursery would be discussed. Any recommendation for capital investment would have to be made to the Community and Environment Board.

RESOLVED: That:

- a)
 - i) the Council engage with Hampshire County Council (HCC) on the issue of funding for, and promotion of, the cycle lane network in Gosport Borough via the HCC Area Director for Transport and the Hampshire Action Team Forum;
 - ii) the Council, via the Community and Environment Board, include the 5 schemes set out in Paragraph 4.1.1 of the Cycle Lanes Working Group's Report as priorities for improvements and for them to be included in the next Local Transport Plan;
 - iii) the Council write to the Area Manager of Hampshire Highways regarding the problems with the inspection regime and standards of shrub clearance;
 - iv) GTSP continue to lead on promoting cycling and the production of promotional material, maps and secure cycle parking and Gosport Borough Council support GTSP in this role;
 - v) improvements be made to the Gosport website as suggested in the report of the Cycle Lanes Working Group, consistent with the initiatives of the GTSP; and
 - vi) The Chairman make arrangements to send copies of the report to the County Director of Environment and the relevant County Council Executive Member.
- b) the Community and Environment Board be recommended to authorise The Head Of Environmental Health to prepare a full report on the available options for the introduction of an "out of hours noise monitoring service", for consideration by that Board;
- c) the report of the Head of Policy and Performance on the Council's Racial Equality Scheme be noted; and
- d) a meeting of the Grounds Maintenance Working Group be arranged shortly to discuss the future of the Nursery.

35. ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Chairman advised that there was a requirement for an annual report on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be produced. It was agreed that the Chairman draft such a report for the meeting of the Committee to be held on 26 March 2009.

RESOLVED: That an annual report on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be drawn up by the Chairman and presented to the Committee on 26 March 2009.

29 January 2009

The meeting ended at 7.15 p.m.

CHAIRMAN