

11 June2009

## **A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WAS HELD ON 11 JUNE 2009**

Councillors Beavis (P), Bradley (P), Carr (P), Champion, Dickson, Mrs Forder (P), Forder (Chairman) (P), Foster-Reed (P), Geddes (P), Mrs Searle, Smith and Miss West (P).

### **5. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Champion, Dickson and Smith.

### **6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **7. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18 March and 14 May 2009 be approved and signed by the Chairman as true and correct records.

### **8. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME**

#### **A) REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY**

No requests had been received.

#### **B) WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman referred to the Work Programme and proposed that, at its meeting on 23 July 2009, the Committee would be looking at Performance Information and reviewing the 2008/09 Outturn Budget. It was probable that considerable time would have to be devoted during the meeting to the review of the Outturn Budget. The proposal was agreed.

On 24 September 2009 the Committee was due to consider the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 and Calls for Action and Local Petitions. The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, that the Committee consider these areas as one report together with recent and impending legislation affecting local authorities.

With regard to the Conference on Services for Older People, the Chairman advised that this would be taking place on 8 October 2009. Currently invitations to the conference were being drawn up.

RESOLVED: That

- a) a report covering the Sustainable Communities Act 2007, Calls for Action and Local Petitions and recent and impending legislation affecting local authorities be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 24 September 2009; and
- b) the updated Work Programme be noted.
- c) OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

The Chairman proposed that the Committee carry out a scrutiny of the provision of vocational education for post 16 year olds.

Currently there were two providers (St Vincent College and Bay House Sixth Form College) in Gosport and two outside the Borough, namely Fareham College and Highbury College. A schedule (attached to these minutes as Appendix A) showing which colleges were subsequently attended by 16 year olds leaving school in the Gosport and Fareham area in 2007/08 was circulated.

The Chairman advised that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) had, over the past six years, reviewed provision in Gosport and had published its reports which included the following:

- Low attainment by sixteen year olds in Gosport compared with the rest of Hampshire
- There was great demand for vocational education but provision in Gosport was more about traditional, academic education
- There was more than adequate provision for Level 3 (A Level) education in Gosport
- Provision of vocational education in Gosport was inadequate
- Many students resident in Gosport attended Fareham or Highbury College as they provided more vocational courses
- Some Gosport students attempted Level 3 courses with which they were unable to cope leading to a high “wastage rate”
- There was high absence rate resulting from lack of motivation due to inappropriate provision of courses

The Chief Executive reported that, last year, Gosport had been fairly successful in providing courses for teenagers not in education. However, there were currently no figures available to show how long they remained on their courses.

The development of the Bridgemary School Skill's Centre, catering mainly for Bridgemary students, was currently on hold due to funding issues.

The LSC had wished to provide a college on the Daedalus site but this was not, at the moment, going ahead.

The Chairman advised of other ‘breaking’ issues which were:

- The raising of the school leaving age to 17
- Where schools would be built under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative
- The establishment of children's trusts (one would be provided in Gosport) to provide an oversight of education provision amongst other things

The Chairman suggested the establishment of a Working Group to enable Gosport Borough Council to engage with the issue and make a contribution to the debate and help secure improvements. It was envisaged that the Working Group would carry out visits and question appropriate people connected with the post 16 year old education service.

The Chief Executive advised that there had been disagreement between St Vincent College and the secondary schools regarding the proposed college on the Daedalus site. The LSC may propose a further 200 places for vocational education in Gosport which could reduce the profile of St Vincent College. Should the Bus Rapid Transport system be developed, it was probable that many students from Gosport would travel to Fareham College. It was important for Gosport Borough Council to understand the situation and be prepared to take a view at the appropriate stage.

The Chief Executive advised that the LSC would cease to exist in a year's time and its responsibilities would be taken over by the County Council. The BSF initiative would provide funding for Havant in the first phase and Gosport in the second.

It was proposed and agreed that appropriate representatives from the LSC be invited to meet with the Committee at a later date to provide information and respond to Members' questions. This would help Members decide whether it would be appropriate to take an investigation of this issue further. The point was made that, if a formal scrutiny was to be undertaken, terms of reference would need to be clearly defined.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the Work Programme of the Committee be noted; and
- b) representatives from the Learning and Skills Council be invited to meet with the Committee to provide information on education provision for post 16 year olds and to respond to Members' questions.

## **9. REPORTS RECEIVED**

### **(i) DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive which presented the annual report to the Committee on the second year of the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and its revised Action Plan.

11 June2009

The Chief Executive advised that the Council was doing well in this area and had a good relationship with the Gosport Access Group and Disability Forum.

There would be changes following the new Equality Bill in that there would be more recognition of equality relating to a person's background, taking into consideration issues such as finance and education.

RESOLVED: That the annual report on the Disability Equality Scheme and the updated action plan for 2009/10 be noted.

## **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business to discuss.

The meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN