

**A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2010**

Councillors Bradley, Dickson, Forder (Chairman) (P), Foster-Reed (P), Geddes (P), Hylands (P), Jacobs, Jessop (P), Kimber (P), Scard (P), Mrs Searle (P) and Miss West.

19. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman formally advised Members of the death of County Councillor David Kirk who had been Hampshire County Council's Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and had met with the Committee on 17 February 2010. The support given by Councillor Kirk had been very much appreciated by Members and the Chairman undertook to write to Councillor Kirk's widow to express the Committee's sympathy.

20. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bradley and Jacobs.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Geddes declared a personal interest, as a Hampshire County Councillor, in agenda item no. 5(iii) (Dial-a-Ride).

22. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 July 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

23. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

A presentation was received from Mark Palmer and Janine Gill of South East Employers on the South East Charter for Elected Member Development. The purpose of the Charter was to achieve excellence in Member development, recognise strengths and successes, identify and address areas in need of improvement and meet best practice standards.

A copy of the Powerpoint presentation together with a copy of the South East Charter for Elected Member Development and Charter Plus is attached as Appendix A to these minutes.

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Mr Palmer emphasised the need for Member development and, by way of background information, explained that, ten or twelve years ago, relatively little importance had been attached to it. Central Government and the Local Government Association (LGA) had subsequently felt the need to champion Member development which had led to the establishment of a Charter.

Nationally 200 Councils had signed up at that time and support had been received from political leaders. However, the profile had not been high and needed backing up. Consequently, a new framework had been developed in 2005 with the aim of achieving excellence and good practice by Members.

Currently 235 (68%) of Councils in England had achieved or were committed to the Charter. South East Employers were the lead organisation in the South Eastern area, supporting those seeking the award. The Charter had become part of the culture of local government and provided tangible benefits.

Mr Palmer stressed that participation in the scheme should be non-political, open to all Members and link clearly to the priorities of the Council. It should not be regarded as a “bolt on”. All Members should be asked to identify their development needs and skill requirements. Section 5 of the Charter covered the impact on work in the community and how Councils should promote community leadership and good governance.

Mr Palmer advised that the cost to the Council of the award would be £3,000 for a three year period with any subsequent committal costing £2,000. The cost of the award of the Charter together with the Member Development Skills Portal would be at the discounted price of £3,500. There would be an officer time resource implication but the impact of this would lessen once the Charter became part of the Council’s culture.

With regard to the Members Development Portal, Mr Palmer explained that this was the confidential self-assessment process of identifying all Members’ development needs involving the following competencies to achieve national standards:

- local leadership
- partnership working
- communication skills
- political understanding
- scrutiny and challenge
- regulating and monitoring

The Chairman thanked Mr Palmer and Ms Gill for their attendance and presentation.

24. REPORTS RECEIVED

(i) MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

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Having received the presentation by Mark Palmer and Janine Gill, Members made the following observations:

- the scheme indicated whether or not Councillors had collectively met the required standard
- Members of Gosport Borough Council currently met many of the requirements
- it was important not to overtrain or carry out unnecessary training
- the Members Development Portal appeared to be useful
- it was important to encourage a culture of reflection where Members could question themselves
- Members of political groups on the Council should be committed if their group declared that commitment

The Chairman advised that the Standards and Governance Committee was also looking into Member Development but was awaiting the outcome of the scrutiny process before giving further consideration. It was agreed that officers should submit a report to the Standards and Governance Committee on 28 October 2010, summarising the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and recommending that the Council pursue committing to the Charter standard and achieving the award of the Charter.

It was anticipated that the report would explain how the successful award of the Charter would assist the Council in addressing the new national agenda, include details of current membership and how it would assist with any new statutory inspection. It would need to explain that the development should be Member led and signed up to by all the Council's Group Leaders and senior management.

It was agreed that any recommendation should include the establishment of a Member Development Working Group.

RESOLVED: That a report be submitted to the Standards and Governance Committee on 28 October 2010, summarising the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and recommending:

- a) that the Council pursue committing to the standard for the South East Charter for Elected Member Development and achieving the award; and
- b) the establishment of a Member Development Working Group.

(ii) GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Head of Policy and Performance which presented Members with a second annual report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the second year of its Gender Equality Scheme (GES) and its revised Action Plan.

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Members were advised that all actions had been completed. The scheme was entering its final year and was due to end in July 2011. However, it would merge into the Council's first single equality scheme as of April 2011 to reflect the wider equality provisions included in the Equality Act 2010. This new single scheme would be replacing the existing stand-alone Gender, Race and Disability Equality Schemes and would also include the protected characteristics of age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender-reassignment.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Head of Policy and Performance be noted.

(iii) DIAL A RIDE

Councillor Hylands reported on behalf of the Dial a Ride Working Group and advised that a meeting had taken place with representatives of Gosport Voluntary Action and Fareham Community Action who had responded to questions from the Working Group. A meeting of the Working Group was scheduled for 27 September 2010 to consider the responses to the questions.

Councillor Hylands advised that there were concerns that many issues were not confined to the Dial a Ride scheme but to community transport as a whole. This would be discussed by the Working Group on 27 September 2010.

(iv) POST 16 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The Chairman advised that, due to Carl Groves, the Principal of Fareham College, having been taken ill, the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 30 September would be cancelled. The Chairman undertook to write to Mr Groves' Personal Assistant on behalf of the Committee to wish him a speedy recovery.

The Chairman reported that Steve Wain, the Principal of St Vincent College, had obtained another post and had resigned from his current position. He would be leaving in November 2010 and his current post had been advertised.

It was understood that County Councillor Roy Perry would be replacing Councillor Kirk as Executive Lead Member for Children's Services.

It was reported that Gosport College had achieved its enrolment target. The County Council was not losing sight of the situation in Gosport and more autonomy was being passed down to the educational institutions. There was a need for the Borough Council to maintain its involvement by speaking up for Gosport and working closely with the County Council.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive would be reporting back to the Committee at a later date.

(v) NURSERY WORKING GROUP

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Councillor Kimber thanked the Working Group for the work it had carried out in respect of this scrutiny in which Councillor Wright was now taking part.

Discussions had been held with managers and staff of the Nursery and a visit to Bournemouth Borough Council's nursery had taken place. A visit to Fareham Borough Council had been arranged where a different method of working was in place.

A meeting with the Environmental Services Manager had been arranged for 27 September 2010 and Nursery finances would be discussed with the Financial Services Manager. The Working Group was on course to submit its report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 November 2010.

Councillor Kimber thanked staff for the assistance they had provided.

25. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A) REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

No requests had been received.

B) WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

C) OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

No requests were received.

26. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

The meeting ended at 7.40 p.m

CHAIRMAN