

**A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 10 JUNE 2010**

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

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Orders, Councillor Ronayne had been nominated to replace Councillor Scard for this meeting.

6. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bradley, Scard, Mrs Searle and Miss West.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

8. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 25 March and 19 May 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman as true and correct records.

9. WELCOME TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman welcomed new Members and explained the function and role of the Committee and its Working Groups which included investigation, evidence gathering, involvement of the public and other bodies and the compilation of reports. The Chairman also acknowledged the role played by officers.

10. REPORTS RECEIVED

(i) DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Head of Corporate Policy and Performance which provided an update on the scheme's progress and information on the future consolidation of the Council's statutory equality schemes in line with new legislation.

Members were advised that this was the third and final Annual Report of the Council's first Disability Equality Scheme which had run from February 2007. This scheme would become part of the Single Equality Scheme in 2011.

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Twenty six actions from the Action Plan had been completed over the past three years and four ongoing actions had been transferred onto the Interim Equality Scheme Action Plan for 2010/11. There had been significant achievements during that time and good relationships had been forged with other bodies.

Members commended the work carried out by officers but noted that some of the statistics contained in the briefing note were becoming of concern as they affected society generally.

RESOLVED: That:

- (a) the report of the Head of Corporate Policy and Performance be commended; and
 - (b) the final Annual Report on the Disability Equality Scheme 2007 – 2010 be noted together with the Interim Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan for 2010/11 as preparatory work to the development of a Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan from April 2011 compliant with the Equality Act.
- (ii) GOSPORT'S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY – PROGRESS UPDATE

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

The structure of the Local Strategic Partnership was set out in the report together with details of the Action Plan which focused on strategic priorities which were:

- Reducing traffic congestion
- Increasing employment opportunities
- Health and Wellbeing.

The council faced a number of key challenges in delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy over the next year which would be:

- Providing support to the Local Strategic Partnership where public sector funding cuts could affect resources
- Developing an approach to Total Place and seizing the opportunity to be the main driver of this in Gosport

In answer to a Member's question, officers advised that the Credit Union Service helped to combat problems relating to loan sharking.

With regard to teenage pregnancy and childhood obesity, Members were advised that a report would be taken to the Local Strategic Partnership Board on 23 June 2010. There were sub-groups of the Board, particularly in the education field, working with schools on these issues. The figures for Gosport were not encouraging when compared to the rest of Hampshire and it was understood that the Health Services wished to put more resources into tackling these problems in Gosport. A key area was to educate children in these areas at an early age.

Councillor Kimber advised that the Youth Council Forum had chosen the theme of Pregnancy at School for discussion and it was felt that there was more that could be done by the schools to help educate young people in this area.

The Chief Executive advised that it was recognised that this was a partnership issue and very much revolved around the aspirations of young people.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Chief Executive be noted.

(iii) GOSPORT'S CULTURAL STRATEGY PLANNING

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Director of Planning and Economic Development Services which outlined the approach to the formation of the strategy and the work undertaken to understand the expectations and outcomes.

Members were advised that the Cultural Strategy was a collaboration between Gosport Borough Council and Hampshire County Council using the services of Audiences South.

Members were advised that the last Cultural Strategy had expired in 2007 and it was felt that this was the right time to carry out research and an audit. Hampshire County Council had shown a desire to work with the Borough Council in this area. Adelaide Morris of Audiences South advised that the research would take the form of a Residents Postal Survey and a Youth Survey which would be devised to obtain the best possible response. Work would be undertaken with the Gosport Youth Forum. Interviews would take place with Gosport Stakeholders, including Gosport Borough Councillors, and those in the wider Portsmouth area who had an interest. Feedback would be given to Gosport Borough Council and Hampshire County Council after which the Cultural Strategy would be drafted. This would then be fed back to the public for views and secondary research would be undertaken on current cultural provision.

Members were advised that the type of questions contained in the survey would include which cultural activities were engaged in by the public, where and how often. It would be very wide ranging from activities such as art and events to support the retail sector, through to sailing for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. A postal survey return of 15% would be considered good. There would also be an on-line version. To obtain maximum benefit, the survey was scheduled to be undertaken over a period of approximately six months.

Councillor Kimber advised that a Market Town Initiative survey had been carried out two years ago in Lee - on - the - Solent. The results of the survey were included on the Lee on Solent Residents Association website. This could be a useful source of information.

Members felt that there was considerable unrealised cultural potential within Gosport but this was not currently being properly exploited. Pride in the Borough and its heritage were considered to be important.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Director of Planning and Economic Development Services be noted and the importance of it be endorsed.

11. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A) REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

No requests had been received.

B) WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That:

- a) Post 16 Vocational Education be included on the Committee Work Programme but no date be yet set for reporting back to the Committee; and
- b) the Work Programme be noted.

C) OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

Dial A Ride

This topic was suggested for scrutiny due to concerns as to whether the level of service to people who needed help justified the funding supplied by the Council. It was felt that the scheme had given rise to concerns for a number of years. Currently 80% of its usage was by residents of Fareham and Gosport Borough Council's budget for 2010/11 included £23,500 for this scheme. The scheme was currently operated by Fareham Borough Council.

The Nursery

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Members expressed concern regarding the costs associated with the operation of the Nursery and whether or not the Council was receiving value for money. It was felt that scrutiny of this area should identify how costs could be reduced. Officers advised that the Nursery in its current state was of a very outdated design and there were problems with the boiler and insulation. A decision would need to be made whether to invest in and keep the Nursery or to dispose of it. Scrutiny of this area would assist in making this decision.

It was felt that such a scrutiny should be carried out by a Working Group.

Audit Commission Report

It was suggested that as the Council's Use of Resources score within the Audit Commission Report was only adequate, this area could be scrutinised to discover whether there were any ways to improve the score and also improve the public perception of the Council.

The Chief Executive advised that both National Performance Indicators and Use of Resources were included in the Direction of Travel report which would have been due shortly but it had been delayed by the Government. It was felt that the new Government may abolish this scheme altogether. The Council currently did well with regard to National Performance Indicators but it was acknowledged that there was a difference between the level and quality of services provided by the Council and public perception.

Member Development

It was suggested that the issue of Member Development be scrutinised, particularly as it seemed there was a lack of clarity as to what could be achieved by such development, its purpose and commitment to it. It was felt important that Members should take the opportunity to learn and develop as Councillors.

The Chairman undertook to investigate this issue further and report back to the next meeting of the Committee.

Leadership, Public Image and Civic Pride

It was suggested that these areas could be looked at as part of scrutiny which may lead to improvements, particularly in how the Council was perceived by members of the public.

It was felt that public perception had not been helped by the fact that the Council often appeared to be in conflict.

It was considered that the cultural strategy would go some way to addressing some of these problems.

It was decided that:

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- a) a report on Dial a Ride be brought to the Committee on 22 July 2010;
- b) Member development be scrutinised by the whole Committee; and
- c) a Working Group be established to scrutinise the Nursery.

Councillors Foster-Reed, Jessop and Kimber were nominated to serve on the Nursery Working Group. It was decided that Councillor Mrs Searle be invited to serve on this Working Group.

The Chairman undertook to investigate how the Committee should proceed with the scrutiny of Member development.

Councillor Kimber was elected Chairman of the Nursery Working Group.

It was anticipated that the Nursery Working Group would report back to Committee before December 2010.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) a report on Dial a Ride be brought to the Committee on 22 July 2010;
- b) Member development be scrutinised by the whole Committee;
- c) a Nursery Working Group be established to scrutinise the Nursery;
- d) Councillors Foster-Reed, Jessop and Kimber be nominated to serve on the Nursery Working Group;
- e) Councillor Kimber be elected Chairman of the Nursery Working Group; and
- f) Councillor Mrs Searle be offered the opportunity to serve on the Nursery Working Group.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

The meeting ended at 7.15 p.m

CHAIRMAN