

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
17TH JANUARY 2011

Present: Councillors: David Sheldon (Chairman), Ian Howard (Vice-Chairman) Jonathan Chowen, Philip Circus, George Cockman, Leonard Crosbie, Brian Donnelly, Duncan England, David Holmes, Chris Mason, Jim Sanson, David Skipp, Claire Vickers.

Apologies: Councillors: Gordon Brown, Keith Wilkins

Also present: Councillors: Roger Arthur, Christian Mitchell, Roger Paterson

SO/59 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held 8th November and 17th November 2010 were approved and signed as a correct record.

SO/60 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/61 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chairman of the Committee announced that at the Council meeting in December 2010 it had been agreed that a Scrutiny Working Group would be established to review the roles and performance of the Cabinet Members in respect of the Acorn Plus project.

The first meeting of the Group would be held at the end of January or beginning of February 2011, although the Group would only discuss the terms of reference at that stage; more in depth discussions would begin once the disciplinary proceedings was over.

A draft set of terms of reference would be drawn up and circulated to the Members of the Committee via email for approval.

It was announced that the 'Preparing for an Ageing Population' Strategy was under going review and the Committee would have the opportunity to review and comment on the new strategy at a presentation to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 7th March 2011 at 4.00pm, before the start of the scheduled meeting.

SO/62 **MATTERS CALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 14**

There were no matters called in accordance with Rule 14.

SO/63 **REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE USE BY THE EXECUTIVE OR AN OFFICER OF RULE 15 (URGENT POWERS) OR RULE 16 (SPECIAL URGENCY POWERS) OF THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROCEDURE RULES**

There were no matters called in accordance with Rule 15 or 16.

SO/64 **MATTERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH CRIME AND DISORDER UNDER THE POLICE & JUSTICE ACT 2006**

There were no matters in accordance with the crime and disorder under the Police & Justice Act 2006.

SO/65 **ITEMS UNDER COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION**

There were no items under Councillor Call for Action.

SO/66 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 6TH DECEMBER 2010**
• **REVIEW OF SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SPORT**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 6th December 2010.

The Working Group had received an update on the Horsham District Community Partnership; Members noted that the Annual Conference had been postponed and would be rescheduled for February/March 2011.

The Group had also received a presentation by the Community Development Officer on Arts, Culture, Heritage and Social Inclusion which Members had found very informative and the Working Group Chairman suggested having this presentation to the whole Committee.

The next item on the work programme for the Working Group was to begin the review on how the Council communicates with young people, this review would commence at the Group’s next meeting on 21st March 2011.

The Working Group had also received an update on health matters; the Committee noted that the proposal to extend the opening hours of Horsham Hospital Minor Injuries Unit, as one of the actions from the North East Review, was no longer going ahead. However, there had been no formal notification of this; the Director of Community Services was awaiting a response from the Primary Care Trust in respect of this action.

As part of the update from the Social Inclusion Working Group the Scrutiny & Overview Committee also received a presentation by the Sports Development Officer and Community Recreation Officer from Horsham Leisure Link on Social Inclusion and Sport.

SO/66 Social Inclusion Working Group – Chairman’s update and notes of the meeting held 6th December 2010 (cont.)

- Review of Social Inclusion and Sport

The officers from Horsham Leisure Link worked with a number of partners to provide services for disabled, younger and older people across the District, reaching out to the more rural areas and villages.

The officers explained the team structure and the pragmatic approach which they had adopted. The team was constantly seeking out new opportunities and ways to develop their services, they were action focused and led mainly by outputs and outcomes rather than strategies.

A vast number of activities and sessions were held in the District including ‘You can do it!’ a scheme for disabled children and their siblings, a disability football club, 50 plus table tennis sessions and health walks.

Many of the sessions were supported by volunteers; the Streetsports project was run by a dedicated officer funded through the National Lottery.

The department also worked with local leisure centres and village halls to support the Leisure Link’s programme.

The Committee noted that Leisure Link had been successful in gaining access to funding to provide these services, in addition, to train and develop leaders.

Horsham Leisure Link made a significant impact on delivering the Council’s priorities; it was well recognised and had a wide customer base.

The Committee congratulated officers and the department on their level of expertise and were encouraged by the wide range of services which they provided. The Committee noted the huge impact this area had on social inclusion across the District.

The Committee was concerned, after recent announcements that the Government was withdrawing funding, that this would have an impact on the work undertaken by the Leisure Link team.

Officers explained that although it would have an inevitable impact and officers would be forced to make certain choices; this was not expected to have a significant effect on the department.

The Committee noted that reductions in transport and access to after school sports may also be imposed; this would create another challenge for the department.

The officers explained that they were always considering ways to develop services, and were now looking at a ways to provide additional competitive foci to the disability sports services which they ran.

SO/66 Social Inclusion Working Group – Chairman’s update and notes of the meeting held 6th December 2010 (cont.)

- Review of Social Inclusion and Sport

In addition, other activities, currently not provided in the District, were being explored such as fencing and archery.

There was a constant demand on the team and they were always looking to develop and deliver services with limited growth options.

The Committee suggested that it may be useful for all Councillors to receive a copy of the report on Social Inclusion and Sport.

SO/67 **BUDGET REVIEW WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE THE INTERIM BUDGET REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WORKING GROUP (INTERIM) AND NOTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 18TH NOVEMBER, 13TH DECEMBER 2010 AND 10TH JANUARY 2011**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meetings held 18th November and 13th December 2010 and 10th January 2011.

The Committee noted that there had been no changes to the Budget for 2010/11 and the final position would be clarified at the end of the financial year.

One of the major areas of overspend was the Operational Services department. The Budget Review Working Group had expressed its concern regarding the overspend on two occasions during 2010. However, Members recognised the success of the Acorn Plus scheme.

At the meeting the Chief Executive presented the Operational Services Recovery Plan and highlighted savings amounting to £94,000 from the Operational Services budget.

The Committee noted that there had been a delay in the final Budget 2011/12 report as a result of the late announcement of the Government settlement, which had been lower than anticipated, resulting in the need to identify further savings.

The Director of Corporate Resources would present the Budget 2011/12 report to Cabinet on 27th January 2011, following that the Budget Review Working Group would meet on 31st January 2011 to consider the report and prepare the final report from the Scrutiny & overview Committee. This would be circulated to Members for comment.

The Committee noted that many of the comments made by the Working Group had been taken into consideration and implemented in the draft Budget, for example the decision not to reduce Discretionary Rate Relief or remove the post of the Director of Corporate Resources.

SO/67 Budget Review Working Group – To receive the interim Budget report by the Chairman of the Working Group (interim) and notes of the meetings held 18th November, 13th December 2010 and 10th January 2011

Members noted that the budget proposals had been made on the basis of a 0% increase in Council Tax in 2011/12. This offer would not be available for the following year and future budget projections assumed a Council Tax rise of 2%.

RESOLVED

That an update be given in respect of the Budget Review Working Group.

REASON

All Working Group updates are to be received by the Committee

SO/68 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP - CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

There had been no further meetings of the Business Improvement Working Group since the Committee and met last.

The Chairman updated the Committee that the Members of the Group had been active in researching how the Council used consultants as part of the Group's review.

RESOLVED

That an update be given in respect of the Business Improvement Working Group.

REASON

All Working Group updates are to be received by the Committee

SO/69 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP - CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

There had been no further meetings of the Performance Management Working Group since the Committee had met last.

The next meeting was 2nd February 2011.

SO/69 Performance Management Working Group - Chairman's update (cont.)

RESOLVED

That an update be given in respect of the Performance Management Working Group.

REASON

All Working Group updates are to be received by the Committee

SO/70 **ENFORCEMENT WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 29TH NOVEMBER 2010**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 29th November 2011.

At the meeting the Working Group received a report by the Community Safety Manager on combining existing enforcement and compliance services within the Council. Members welcomed the positive proposal as it would allow more flexibility in the system and allow officers to carry out services more effectively, it would also generate a saving of around £44,000 for the Council.

The Principal Solicitor also attended the meeting to discuss the legal implications of enforcement.

At the next meeting of the Working Group Members would consider the proposals to combine enforcement services in more detail with a second report. The Group would also receive a presentation by the CenSus staff on Council Tax enforcement.

It was anticipated that the final report of the Working Group would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting on 7th March 2011.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Enforcement Working Group meeting held 29th November 2010 be received

REASON

All notes of Working Group meetings are to be received by the Committee.

SO/71 **BILLINGSHURST RAIL SERVICE WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

There had been no further meetings of the Billingshurst Rail Service Working Group since the Committee had met last.

SO/71 Billingshurst Rail Service Working Group – Chairman’s update (cont.)

The next meeting would be on Monday 24th January 2011.

RESOLVED

That an update be given in respect of the Billingshurst Rail Service Working Group.

REASON

All Working Group updates are to be received by the Committee

SO/72 TO RECEIVE THE REPORT ON THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT OF THE COSMIC CYCLE

The Chairman of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee presented the report on the Project Management of the Cosmic Cycle following a seminar held by the Building Maintenance & Projects Manager in October 2010.

The Chairman suggested that a recommendation be made, that Cabinet consider what might happen if the fountain was to fail catastrophically and to have in place a plan for the future of the fountain if it could no longer be repaired, or it was not economically viable to do so.

The Committee requested details of the financing of the fountain and the repairs; the Director of Development & Environment would provide Members with this information.

The Committee agreed that the recommendation be made.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

That Cabinet consider what might happen if the Cosmic Cycle failed catastrophically and that a plan be put in place for the future of the fountain should it no longer be possible to repair.

SO/73 TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME

(i) Southern Rail’s Performance in Severe Weather

The Committee received a suggestion for the Scrutiny & Overview Committee work programme to consider Southern Rail’s performance in the Severe Weather.

The objective of this review would be to raise any issues and highlight how the rail company’s service and performance had not been acceptable.

SO/73 To receive any suggestions for the Scrutiny and Overview work programme (cont.)

The Committee agreed that this item would be added to the work programme, but Members suggested it may be more appropriate as an item for joint scrutiny under the new joint scrutiny arrangements. With the support of the other district and borough councils, along with that of West Sussex County Council, the review may be more effective.

The terms of reference would be refined and Members also suggested that the Rail Users group be invited to participate in this review.

(ii) Draft terms of reference following the suggestions made by the parish councils

At the last meeting of the Committee Members selected three items for review by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee following a number of issues raised by parish councils at the Horsham District Community Partnership annual meeting.

Draft terms of reference had been developed for the three selected items and the Committee was asked to approve these.

Members agreed that it was important to consider these items as they had been raised as top issues or areas of concern by the local parish councils.

(i) Review of Support for Local Businesses

The Committee approved the terms of reference and Members suggested that this include village post offices and that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development be invited to provide information for this review.

(ii) Review of Anti-social Behaviour in the District

The Committee approved the terms of reference and suggested that a representative from the Horsham District Community Safety Partnership be invited to contribute to this review.

(iii) Review of Traffic in the Villages

The Committee approved the terms of reference and expressed the importance in inviting the parish councils to all of the reviews.

Some of these items may be addressed through a seminar rather than a working group.

SO/73 To receive any suggestions for the Scrutiny and Overview work programme (cont.)

RESOLVED

- (i) That the new item for the work programme be approved by the Committee
- (ii) That the draft terms of reference for the Review of Support for Local Businesses be approved by the Committee
- (iii) That the draft terms of reference for the Review of Anti-social behaviour in the District be approved by the Committee
- (iv) That the draft terms of reference for the Review of Traffic in Villages be approved by the Committee

REASON

All terms of reference for new working groups be approved by the Committee

SO/74 **REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

(i) Update from the Cabinet Member on Operational Services Complaints Procedure

Concern had been raised by the Members of the Performance Management Working Group that complaints received by Hop Oast were not being fed into the corporate complaints system.

The Committee had received some information addressing this at its last meeting, and Members had requested a progress update.

A report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Operational Services which detailed the current position.

The Committee noted that all complaints and contacts were recorded on Lagan Customer Relationship Management System, however this system to date did not have the ability to record non-property issues such as litter bins. Members noted that the Lagan system was due to be upgraded and officers were considering the specification required from the new upgraded system, to allow for the information to be fed into the system and subsequently recorded correctly.

The officers had tried to avoid having an impact on the normal process of business whilst highlighting the key objectives.

SO/74 Replies from Cabinet/Council regarding Scrutiny and Overview recommendations (cont.)

The Committee noted that data would continue to be collected even if it could not be logged at this stage. The data would be provided at the next Performance Management Working Group as part of its update on complaints received by the Council over the quarter.

Officers had been forced to strike a balance between providing frontline services and recording data.

The Committee concluded that the problem regarding data not being recorded, identified by the Performance Management Working Group, was in the process of being addressed.

(ii) Update for the Cabinet Member for Performance & Service Delivery on the recommendations made by the Severe Weather Working Group

The Committee received an update on the progress of the recommendations made by the Severe Weather Working Group in May 2010.

The Committee congratulated the officers on the Council's response to the recent severe weather.

Most of the recommendations made by the Working Group had been delivered.

Members supported the suggestion that more consideration be given to dealing with responding to severe weather if it was to occur on a weekend or holiday and reduced resources were available.

The Committee noted that on each subsequent incident of severe weather the Council's response was becoming stronger and more refined.

There were still some aspects outstanding, for example, parish councils had been asked to submit winter maintenance maps and locate suitable drop sites for grit bins in their area.

Members noted that the Council's resilience was tested through a Sussex Resilience Forum, to test how the Council, amongst other agencies responded to severe weather.

Internal resilience testing of the Council's departments would also be carried out in line with the business continuity programme and emergency plan.

The Committee thanked the officers for their work and agreed that the Severe Weather Working Group meet again in spring 2011 to revisit the issues which had been raised in the report.

SO/74 Replies from Cabinet/Council regarding Scrutiny and Overview recommendations (cont.)

In addition Members suggested that officers put together a list of equipment requirements; equipment which would assist with the severe weather and snow clearing and that this list be presented to the Councillors.

The meeting finished at 8.45pm having commenced at 5.30pm.

CHAIRMAN