

**SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**  
**7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2011**

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

Apologies: Councillors: Gordon Brown, Jonathan Chowen, Brian Donnelly, Claire Vickers, Keith Wilkins

Also present: Councillors: John Bailey, Roy Cornell

SO/75 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011 were approved and signed as a correct record.

SO/76 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/77 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

SO/78 **MATTERS CALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 14**

There were no matters called in accordance with Rule 14.

SO/79 **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/80 **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/81 **ITEMS UNDER COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION**

There were no items under Councillor Call for Action.

SO/82 **BUDGET REVIEW WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 31<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2011**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meetings held 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011.

The Budget Review Working Group had made a number of recommendations to Council in its final report in respect of the Budget 2011/12.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Assets supported the recommendations of the Working Group and assured Members that these would be addressed.

The Committee noted some dissatisfaction with the Budget debate at the Council meeting, in respect of the consideration and response given to the recommendations made by the Working Group. Therefore it was agreed that the Committee would request a written response from the Cabinet Member for Finance & Assets on the outstanding recommendations presented to the Council.

At the next meeting of the Working Group the Members would ask for feedback on the recommendations in order to monitor their progress.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the notes of the Budget Review Working Group meeting held 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011 be received
- (ii) That the Cabinet Member for Finance & Assets be requested to provide a written response to the outstanding recommendations, made by the Working Group, on the Budget 2011/12

REASON

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

SO/83 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP - CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2011**

• **REPORT ON THE USE OF CONSULTANTS**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

The Members had questioned the future of the Working Group and whether its role as a standing group continued to be necessary.

However, at the start of the upcoming new Council year all Scrutiny working groups, their terms of reference and their membership would be reviewed.

SO/83 Business Improvement Working Group - Chairman's update and notes of the meeting held 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011

- Report on the Use of Consultants (cont.)

The Chairman explained that at the meeting the Group had indicated that it would be prepared to look at the problems in relation to the overspend, including the action plan which was being produced by the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team, to address the systemic management failures.

The Committee noted that it was the responsibility of the Cabinet Member to monitor performance against the action plan, and it was the responsibility of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee to hold the Cabinet Member to account, it was agreed that this would be carried out through the Business Improvement Working Group.

In respect of the Group's discussion on consultants the Committee noted that, in addition to the consultants reported in the notes of the meeting, the Members of the Working Group had since received an additional report on Abacus Insight.

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the Group's report on the Use of Consultants; the Committee noted that the Business Improvement Working Group had concluded that the use of consultants at the Council was not well managed, however no evidence was found for the inappropriate use of consultants.

The Committee noted the list of concerns raised by the Working Group in its report. Members agreed that there was a need for a review of the Council's procedures for the recruitment of consultants.

The Members of the Committee approved the recommendations, and it was suggested that in addition, a recommendation be included that consideration be given to what the Council was doing to dovetail with the work of other local authorities to share knowledge and experience.

Members agreed that once a framework for the recruitment of consultants had been formulated it should be presented to the Committee for approval. The Working Group would then revisit this in the future to review how procedures had changed following adoption of the framework.

The Director of Corporate Resources explained that if a framework was adopted, although it would form useful guidance it may not be applicable for the recruitment of all the Council's consultants.

SO/83 Business Improvement Working Group - Chairman's update and notes of the meeting held 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011

- Report on the Use of Consultants (cont.)

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

- (i) That Cabinet note the concerns and findings of the report by the Business Improvement Working Group and put in place procedures to improve how the use of consultants was managed
- (ii) That the list of recommendations from the Working Group be addressed (page 3 and 4 of the report) with the addition of a recommendation to consider whether the required information or advice could be gained through other local authorities or the Local Government Association
- (iii) That once a framework for the recruitment of consultants had been drafted that this be it be presented to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee for consideration

SO/84 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

There had been no further meetings of the Social Inclusion Working Group since the last meeting of the Committee.

The Committee noted that the Council continued to await a formal response from the Chief Executive at NHS West Sussex regarding the Horsham Hospital Minor Injuries Unit and the decision not to extend the opening hours, and a response to the outstanding recommendations arising from the North East Review.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

That the Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Development write to the Chief Executive of Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust expressing the Council's support for investigation into opportunities to increase the Minor Injuries Unit opening hours at Horsham Hospital.

SO/85 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP - CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 2<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2011**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2011.

As part of the discussions on Corporate Plan Priorities Members discussed the Horsham District News magazine and its cost. The Committee noted that

SO/85 Performance Management Working Group - Chairman's update and notes of the meeting held 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2011 (cont.)

the cost of the magazine was only 50 pence per household and it was considered both cost effective and the most effective method of communication with the District.

The Group had discussed Performance Indicators, the Committee wished to highlight its concern regarding the number of households living in temporary accommodation. The Committee would monitor this through the Working Group.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Performance Management Working Group meeting held 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2011 be received

REASON

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

SO/86 **ENFORCEMENT WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE THE FINAL REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the Group's final report.

The review touched on all aspects of enforcement within the Council. The Chairman talked the Committee through the report.

The main aspect of the review was the proposal to combine certain enforcement functions within the Council.

The Community Safety Manager had presented the Group with a report proposing the combination of certain services, the potential options for a more joined up service which would also demonstrate long term financial savings.

The Working Group supported the implementation of the proposals to combine certain enforcement services.

In respect of the second recommendation from the Working Group, the Director of Corporate Resources explained that although there was not a charge to the West Sussex County Council and the police for collection of Council Tax on their behalf, the County Council and police did allow the District Council to hold the money for a number of days allowing the Council to accumulate the interest.

However, with interest rates at a low, it was questionable whether the amount of money with the Council received was negotiable. Therefore it was suggested that the wording of the recommendation be amended to reflect this.

SO/86 Enforcement Working Group – To receive the final report of the Working Group (cont.)

The Director of Corporate Resources also advised that the collection of National Non-Domestic Rates on behalf of central government would be non-negotiable.

The following amended wording of recommendation two of the Group's report was agreed:

“That consideration be given to increasing the financial benefit for the Horsham District Council for the collection of Council Tax on behalf of West Sussex County Council.”

The Committee complimented the report by the Enforcement Working Group and the engagement of the Members with the officers to gather the necessary evidence.

Under the Localism Bill it was indicated that Local Authorities would not be restricted by central government if they were trying to improve services such as enforcement.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

- (i) That the Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Development support the implementation of the proposal to combine Street Scene Officers, Parking Services staff, the mobile security function and other services areas which have a compliance function
- (ii) That the Cabinet Member for Finance & Assets contact West Sussex County Council in respect of the amended recommendation two, that consideration be given to increasing the financial benefit for the Horsham District Council for the collection of Council Tax on behalf of West Sussex County Council

SO/87 **BILLINGSHURST RAIL SERVICE WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 24<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2011**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

The Committee noted that at the meeting the Group had heard from representatives from Tesco and Southern Rail, in respect to the problems at the level crossing in Billingshurst.

SO/87 Billingshurst Rail Service Working Group – Chairman’s update and notes of the meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011 (cont.)

The Group was awaiting responses from the witnesses to a number of questions and solutions raised at the meeting, for inclusion in the Group’s final report.

The Group anticipated that the final report would be ready for presentation to the Committee at its next meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011; however a draft report may be circulated before this date.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Billingshurst Rail Service Working Group meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011 be received

REASON

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

SO/88 PROGRESS ON CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 7<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2011

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

At the first meeting of the Working Group Members agreed the direction of the review and amended the Terms of Reference for the Group.

The Committee noted that the Council’s Climate Change Strategy was now on the homepage of the Council’s website.

The Committee was asked to approve the amended Terms of Reference for the review.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the notes of the Progress on Climate Change Working Group meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011 be received
- (ii) That the Terms of Reference for the review be approved by the Committee

REASON

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

SO/89 **ROLES AND PERFORMANCE OF CABINET MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ACORN PLUS WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 16<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2011**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

There would be no further meetings of the Working Group until outstanding matters had been resolved.

The first meeting had taken place for the formalities to be addressed in order for the Group to commence the review as soon as practicable.

The Group had amended its Terms of Reference at its first meeting.

The Committee noted that as part of the Group’s Terms of Reference, the review would extend to cover the role of Cabinet Members in general, as well as the role of Cabinet Members in respect of the Acorn Plus project.

The Committee noted that this item had been volunteered by the Chairman for review by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee, as it was not within the Council’s power to instruct the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the notes of the Roles and Performance of Cabinet Members in Respect of Acorn Plus Working Group meeting held 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011 be received
- (ii) That the Terms of Reference for the Review be approved by the Committee

REASON

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

SO/90 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted the work programme for 2011.

SO/91 **REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee noted the responses from the Cabinet meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011 to a number of recommendations made by the Committee in November 2010.



The meeting finished at 7.06pm having commenced at 5.30pm.

CHAIRMAN