

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
5TH MARCH 2012

Present: Councillors: David Sheldon (Chairman), Brian Donnelly (Vice-Chairman) John Chidlow, Philip Circus, George Cockman, Leonard Crosbie, Jim Goddard, Brian O'Connell, Jim Rae, Kate Rowbottom, Tricia Youtan

Apologies: Councillor: Laurence Deakins, Andrew Dunlop, Josh Murphy, David Skipp

Also present: Councillors: Roger Arthur, John Bailey, Duncan England, David Holmes, Chris Mason, Christian Mitchell, Claire Vickers

Officers in attendance: Trevor Beadle, Head of Housing & Community Services; Natalie Brahma-Pearl, Director of Community Services; Helen Peacock, Environmental Co-Ordination Manager; Karen Spencer, Housing Needs Manager

SO/84 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held 16th January 2012 were approved as a correct record subject to an amendment under item SO/83 (b) paragraph 3, the word "reverted" be replaced with "changed".

SO/85 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/86 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chairman announced that, in future, the agenda item "To receive any replies from Cabinet/Council regarding Scrutiny and Overview recommendations" be moved to an earlier position on the agenda, as often visitors, such as Cabinet Members and officers were in attendance for this item.

SO/87 **MATTERS CALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 14**

There were no matters called in accordance with Rule 14.

SO/88 **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/89 **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/90 **ITEMS UNDER COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION**

There were no items under Councillor Call for Action.

SO/91 **TO AGREE THE PROPOSED CHANGE OF DAY FOR THE SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW**

It was proposed that the day of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee be changed from a Monday to a Thursday in the new Council year, as there was often a conflict with parish council meetings.

The Committee discussed the proposals and agreed that the meetings remain on a Monday, as Thursdays would be equally difficult for some Members. Instead it was agreed that the Committee would meet more frequently if there was the demand.

RESOLVED

That the meetings of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee be held on a Monday

SO/92 **BUDGET REVIEW WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 13TH FEBRUARY 2012**

The Chairman of the Budget Review Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 13th February 2012.

The Group had reviewed the way it monitored the Council's Budget and it had been suggested that each Member of the Group be allocated a number of departments across the Council, in order to work with officers throughout the year to monitor their individual budgets, these proposals would be discussed in more detail in the new Council year.

The Committee noted in the Chairman's update that the Group was uncomfortable with the uncertain future as a result of the changes New Homes Bonus and Business Rates.

Members of the Committee supported the Group's suggestion that the Leader encourage Cabinet Members and officers to attend conferences and training on local Government finances, in order to gain a better understanding of the changes ahead.

SO/92 Budget Review Working Group – To receive an update from the Chairman and notes of the meeting held 13th February 2012 (cont.)

The Members of the Working Group had also discussed the Council's Repairs and Renewals fund; the Group was concerned and suggested that a sum be set aside for an ongoing maintenance programme of the Council's assets. However no formal recommendation would be made at this stage, the Working Group would discuss this in the new Council year and make a recommendation if it felt it necessary. The Group also considered whether the proposition should be made that the maintenance programme for the leisure centres, be included in the Leisure contract and that the cost be spread over a number of years instead of within the next 12 months.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Budget Review Working Group meeting held 13th February 2012 be received

REASON

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

SO/93 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 24TH JANUARY 2012**

In the absence of the Working Group Chairman, a Member of the Business Improvement Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 24th January 2012.

The Working Group continued to review of the Council's Use of Consultants; two Members of the Working Group had prepared a report on the "Principles and Processes for Managing the Use of Consultants". The Group had discussed in detail the report and made some suggestions. A technical officer would be invited to attend the next meeting and to discuss the framework for establishing a business case for the use of consultants at the Council.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Business Improvement Working Group meeting held 24th January 2012 be received

REASON

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

SO/94

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP –CHAIRMAN’S
UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 8TH FEBRUARY 2012**

In the absence of the Working Group Chairman, a Member of the Performance Management Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 8th February 2012.

The Working Group discussed the high number of households in temporary accommodation and how Bryce Lodge would help reduce these figures.

The Group had also questioned the Council's Vehicle Procurement Policy. Although the Chairman was satisfied that there was a sound criteria in place for the purchase of Council vehicles, there continued to be some concern regarding the purchasing process. It was suggested that this could be addressed by the Business Improvement Working Group.

The Working Group also discussed the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and emphasised how the parish councils would require additional support when CIL was introduced in 2014.

The Committee was pleased to hear that, in relation to the District Plan Priorities for Living, Working Communities, over a two year period, to the end of the current financial year, there would have been 470 starts on building affordable homes.

The Committee also urged the Performance Management Working Group to look at how the Council was doing in terms of the District Plan Priority for Economic Development.

In respect of District Plan Priority for the Environment, the Committee noted that £600,000 was available in the County to make homes more thermally efficient. Members requested that the details of the scheme be made available.

The Committee highlighted the fact that the Waste Management figures under the Key Performance Indicators were received from West Sussex County Council a quarter in arrears and questioned whether representation should be made to the County Council.

As part of the quarterly updates for the Working Group, Members also received the CMT Tracked Projects List for the first time. This was produced by the Project Assurance Core Team (PACT). Members felt this tool was very useful in order to ensure CMT and the Chief Executive could keep close track of the Council's major projects. The Group was confident that in future, unexpected and negative outcomes from any major projects were unlikely.

The Committee noted there had been some initial discussions on the potential to merge the Performance Management and Budget Review Working Groups. At the next meeting of the Working Groups a draft set of

SO/94 Performance Management Working Group – Chairman’s update and notes of the meeting held 8th February 2012 (cont.)

terms of reference would be presented allowing Members of each Group to discuss the proposals before they were presented to the Committee.

The Committee noted the suggestion arising from the notes of the Working Group, to formalise the link between the Head of Service and the Cabinet Member to share progress on the CMT tracked projects. There was no formal recommendation at this stage; the Working Group would consider this further.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Performance Management Working Group meeting held 8th February 2012 be received

REASON

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

SO/95 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE**

There had been no further meetings of the Working Group since the Committee had last met but the Chairman of the Working Group updated Members on the progress of the Group.

At its next meeting the Group would receive a report on Disability Access to the Council’s Services, primarily in the way it communicates with residents, which had been prepared by the Equalities Officer.

The following two items for review by the Working Group were Southern Water’s Metering Programme and Poverty Amongst an Ageing Population.

Members suggested that the Working Group explore how the Council was represented on external organisations i.e. the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Working Group would review this.

RESOLVED

That an update be given in respect of the Social Inclusion Working Group

REASON

All Working Group updates are to be received by the Committee.

SO/96 **ACORN PLUS WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE THE FINAL REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 1ST FEBRUARY 2012**

The Chairman of the Acorn Plus Working Group presented the final report of the Working Group and the notes of the meeting held 1st February 2012.

This had been a lengthy review and much consideration had been given to the draft reports. Members of the Group were adamant about the wording which was used in the final version which was presented to the Committee.

The Chairman wanted to emphasise that overall the Acorn Plus Project was a success and residents were satisfied. The Working Group was not disputing this.

As part of the review the Group examined the budget for the Project, it also looked at the relationship between the Cabinet Member and the Directors and Heads of Service and studied the Council's role profiles for the Directors.

Members felt that the report could not ignore the role of the Leader and Deputy Leader, so these were also considered as part of the review.

The Group studied a selection of other council's terms of reference for Cabinet Members, as part of the research.

The Members of the Working Group wished to record their thanks to the Chairman for the extensive research and work which went into the review and final report.

The Committee discussed the use of the word "accountable" under 5(d) and (e) in the Member Role Profiles and Responsibilities (Appendix A) and whether this should be replaced with "responsible".

It was agreed that the meaning of the words was not dissimilar and the meaning of the clauses was not altered by using the alternative word, therefore the suggested change was not made.

The purpose of the report was to identify who was accountable for the delivery of services and the financial provision under each portfolio of services the Working Group identified that the responsibility should lay with the Cabinet Member.

If the report was approved by the Committee and the recommendations were then made to Council, there would be consultation with the Council's solicitors to approve the terminology before the role profile was integrated into the Constitution.

The Chairman of the Working Group emphasised that it did not attach any blame to any particular Cabinet Member, but tried to identify responsible individuals to enhance democracy and endorse the Cabinet system.

SO/96 Acorn Plus Working Group – To receive the final report of the Working Group and notes of the meeting held 1st February 2012 (cont.)

The Committee agreed that this was one of the best examples of the Scrutiny process and welcomed the report.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- (i) That the revised scheme of “Member Role Profiles and Responsibilities” (Appendix A) be adopted
- (ii) That the two additional clauses for the Director’s contracts be approved

SO/97 **TRAFFIC IN VILLAGES WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 30TH JANUARY 2012**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 30th January 2012.

The Working Group had met for the final time and the final report from the review would be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman wanted to thank West Sussex County Council, Sussex Police and the parish council’s for their contribution to the review.

Most of the issues considered by the Group were outside of the powers of the District Council and fell within the County Council’s responsibility. But the report would become a useful document to explain what could and could not be done in terms of traffic issues and who was responsible.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Traffic in Villages Working Group meeting held 30th January 2012 be received

REASON

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

SO/98 **ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE THE INTERIM REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 25TH JANUARY 2012**

In the absence of the Chairman, a Member of the Antisocial Behaviour Working Group presented the interim report and the notes of the meeting held 25th January 2012.

Antisocial behaviour was often referred to as low level crime but could be depressing and intimidating.

SO/98 Antisocial Behaviour Working Group – To receive the interim report of the Working Group and notes of the meeting held 25th January 2012 (cont.)

All the statistics displayed that Horsham was a “very safe” or “fairly safe” place to live. The Antisocial Behaviour Unit based at Horsham Police Station was a key group in tackling antisocial behaviour and worked hard to keep figures in the District low. However there was competition for funding.

In November 2012 a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) would be elected and the funding for the County would, in future, be at their discretion. The Working Group feared that the Police and Crime Commissioner would identify at the antisocial behaviour hotspots and target funding towards those areas, such as Brighton.

The Working Group was concerned and felt that this needed to be addressed. Funding needed to be confirmed for the Antisocial Behaviour Unit as a lot of hard work had been carried out over the years in order to achieve low levels antisocial behaviour in the District.

Some Members were concerned that a number of duties had been passed on from the police to the responsibility of the Council, however the Director of Community Services explained that the Council had a legal duty to promote community safety and reduce antisocial behaviour and therefore received funding for the team. The future funding cuts would be a concern for all local authorities in Sussex as the funding for community safety would be diverted to the PCC.

The Committee noted that the Director of Community Safety would put forward a case, to the PCC, on behalf of the District Council, explaining how it dealt with and tackled antisocial behaviour mainly through early intervention and prevention.

Members noted that the Antisocial Behaviour Unit also worked with partners such as youth services and housing associations. In its bid, the Council would request that the PCC set aside funding for the Unit to continue with its preventative programme.

70 per cent of the 339 referrals the team received in 2011 did not return to the Antisocial Behaviour Unit.

The Committee noted that there would also be cuts to the police services.

The Committee noted that it would be more costly to deal with the consequences if the PCC decided that Horsham was an affluent area and the funding was not required. The reason the Council benefitted from low crime rates was as a result of the preventative work of the Unit.

The Group had noted during its review that crime and disorder is a major issue for residents and therefore a key priority for the Council.

SO/98 Antisocial Behaviour Working Group – To receive the interim report of the Working Group and notes of the meeting held 25th January 2012 (cont.)

Approximately 15 per cent of the 339 referrals in 2011 were from social housing, the Council had written to all housing associations inviting contributions to maintain services.

There had also been a reduction in youth funding from West Sussex County Council and it was likely that this would impact on antisocial behaviour as well. The Senior Youth & Older Persons Officer had responded to this problem and had carried out a lot of work to address the problem, i.e. youth workers being funded by parish councils to help bridge the gaps in services.

The Committee supported the report by the Working Group and supported the Antisocial Behaviour Unit.

The Committee suggested that the ongoing monitoring of this area be done through the Social Inclusion Working Group and if it was required, the Antisocial Behaviour Working Group could be re-established to discuss any matters.

RECOMMENDED TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR A
SAFER AND HEALTHIER DISTRICT

That the Council should be prepared for no further funding for the Antisocial Behaviour team after 2013 and therefore explore any alternative sources of funding and reorganise priorities, in order to maintain the services which the Council is currently providing.

SO/99 TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME

There were no suggestions for the Scrutiny & Overview work programme.

SO/100 REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) The Committee noted the comprehensive response from the Cabinet Member for the Environment to the recommendations following the review of the Progress on Climate Change Working Group. There were no further comments.

(b) The Committee noted the letter and response from the Chairman of the Horsham District Community Partnership (HDCP), following the recommendations by the Social Inclusion Working Group. The Chairman of the Working Group wanted to note her gratitude for the response from the Chairman of the HDCP for his support for the Working Group's reviews of the Partnership.

SO/100 Replies from Cabinet/Council regarding Scrutiny and Overview
Recommendations (cont.)

(c) The former Cabinet Member for a Safer and Healthier District attended the meeting following concerns raised by the Performance Management Working Group regarding the performance indicators.

The Cabinet Member explained that the homeless admissions policy was currently under review and a number of houses were being purchased to reduce the number of families living in Bed & Breakfast.

At present 95 households were in temporary accommodation and 45 of these were in Bed & Breakfast. 10 properties had been purchased in the previous 12 months. There was also a new Saxon Weald affordable housing development which would become available by the end of March and this would reduce the backlog of homeless. However this was likely to increase again. The Housing Services department were working to meet the demand, but due to the uncertainty of the situation the Council was keen not to over-purchase and then have a number of vacant properties.

The Committee noted that the department would be within budget at the end of the financial year.

The meeting finished at 7.31pm having commenced at 5.30pm.

CHAIRMAN