

**SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**  
**14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2012**

Present: Councillors: David Sheldon (Chairman), Brian Donnelly (Vice-Chairman) George Cockman, Leonard Crosbie, Laurence Deakins, Jim Goddard, Brian O'Connell, Jim Rae, Kate Rowbottom, David Skipp, Tricia Youtan

Apologies: Councillor: John Chidlow, Philip Circus, Andrew Dunlop, Josh Murphy

Also present: Councillors: Duncan England, Liz Kitchen, Gordon Lindsay, Claire Vickers

Officers in attendance: Natalie Brahma-Pearl, Director of Community Services; Katharine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resources; Jill Scarfield, Head of Strategic Planning and Performance

SO/101 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held 5<sup>th</sup> March 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SO/102 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SO/103 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

SO/104 **REPLIES FROM CABINET/COUNCIL REGARDING SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

(a) The Committee noted the response from Council to the recommendations of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee following the report by the Acorn Plus Working Group.

The Chairman of the Acorn Plus Working Group added that he was fully engaged when the various amendments were made by the Leader to some of the recommendations; the process had been very inclusive.

(b) The Committee noted the positive response to the recommendation from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee following the report by the Antisocial Behaviour Working Group.

The Director of Community Service added that the Council would be lobbying for continued funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner. It would also be proactive in looking at alternative funding.

SO/104 Replies from Cabinet/Council regarding Scrutiny and Overview  
Recommendations (cont)

The Committee would await further progress as solutions evolved.

SO/105 **PROPOSALS TO MERGE THE BUDGET REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE  
MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUPS**

The Chairman of the Committee reminded Members that the Scrutiny working groups were reviewed on an annual basis so the proposals presented to combine the Budget Review and Performance Management Working Groups were taking place within this context.

There was an increasing element of overlap in the information which was being delivered to both the Budget Review and Performance Management Working Groups and therefore it was proposed that the two groups be combined to look at both budgetary and non-budgetary performance. This group would also link in with the Business Improvement Working Group whose role would be to look forward at business improvement proposals and address any concerns arising out of the joint group.

There had been a full discussion regarding the proposals with the Members involved, at the recent Budget Review and Business Improvement Working Groups.

The Head of Strategic Planning and Performance presented a set of draft terms of reference for the new combined Budget Review/Performance Management Working Group, also presented was an amended set of draft terms of reference for the Business Improvement Working Group taking into consideration the new responsibilities for the Group if the merger was approved.

The Committee noted that the Working Group Members had already agreed to the proposals in principle.

The next stage would be for the Head of Strategic Planning and Performance and the Head of Financial and Legal Services to produce a timetable on when the financial data and performance indicator information would be available for Members in order to schedule the timetable of meetings. This, along with the draft terms of reference would also be presented to the first meeting of the joint working group.

The Committee also noted the suggested membership of the combined group.

The Committee agreed the proposals.

SO/105 Proposals to merge the Budget Review and Performance Management Working Groups (cont.)

RESOLVED

- (i) That the proposals to combine the Budget Review and Performance Management Working Groups be approved
- (ii) That the Terms of Reference for that group and also for the Business Improvement Working Group be approved

REASON

All Scrutiny and Overview Working Groups are to be approved by the Committee

SO/106 **BUDGET REVIEW WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 19<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2012**

The Chairman of the Budget Review Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

At its meeting the Working Group had discussed in detail the proposed merger of the two working groups. Members of Budget Review Working Group suggested that the combined group be trialled for 12 months initially.

There was some concern regarding the number of the meetings throughout the year, but this would be discussed at the first meeting of the combined group once the timetable was available.

The Working Group had also discussed the Repairs and Renewals Fund. Members were concerned and suggested that in the new Council year there be a review of the Council's assets and how the Council undertook the maintenance of its assets.

The Committee agreed that a small informal sub group be established with three Members to review this specific issue. The Chairman of the Committee along with the Chairman of the Working Group would draft some terms of reference for a sub group.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the notes of the Budget Review Working Group meeting held 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012 be received
- (ii) That the suggestion to establish a sub group to review the Repairs and Renewals Fund be approved

SO/106 Budget Review Working Group – To receive an update from the Chairman and notes of the meeting held 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012 (cont.)

REASON

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

SO/107 **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2012**

The Chairman of the Business Improvement Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

The Working Group was expecting a technical officer to attend the meeting regarding the continuing review on the use of consultants, however this had been postponed until the following meeting as the Chief Executive wanted to meet with the Chairman of the Working Group, along with the Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources, to discuss the most suitable way to take this review forward.

Following this the Group would be able to finalise the review and bring any recommendations to the Committee.

The Working Group also discussed the proposed merger of the Budget Review and Performance Management Working Groups and the implications for the Business Improvement Working Group. Members identified no issues.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Business Improvement Working Group meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012 be received

REASON

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

SO/108 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP –CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

There had been no further meetings of the Performance Management Working Group.

RESOLVED

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

SO/108 Performance Management Working Group –Chairman’s update (cont.)

REASON

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

SO/109 **SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE THE FINAL REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF DISABILITY ACCESS TO THE COUNCIL’S SERVICES AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2012**

The Chairman of the Social Inclusion Working Group presented the final report on the review of Disability Access to the Council’s Services.

The Chairman thanked the Equalities Officer for his support during this review.

The Council’s definition was explained in the report along with what the Council was currently doing in terms of disability access.

The Working Group found the review very useful.

The Committee was alarmed by the significant proportion of people over 65 in the District who were deaf or had a hearing impairment. There were considered to be limited facilities in the area for deaf people and the Committee asked whether anything could be done to address this. The Equalities Officer would be asked to circulate the information regarding the current facilities for deaf people in Horsham.

One suggestion was that Members receive training on public speaking at Committees i.e. using the microphones in the Council Chamber.

The Committee emphasised how it was important to ensure that the Council was communicating clearly. There was concern regarding information which was sent from the CenSus partnership as often these letters were of a complicated nature.

The Working Group made a number of recommendations in the report which the Committee approved.

The Chairman of the Working Group also presented the notes of the meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

At its next meeting the Group would begin its review on Southern Water’s Metering Programme and a representative from Southern Water would be attending.

As part of the discussions on health matters in the District the Working Group had also made a suggestion that a committee be established to facilitate the expansion of Horsham Hospital.

SO/109 Social Inclusion Working Group – To receive the final report on the Review of Disability Access to the Council’s Services and notes of the meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012 (cont.)

The Committee noted that the Council was represented on the West Sussex Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee which addressed health matters across the County.

The Committee noted that SASH (Surrey and Sussex Healthcare Trust) was keen to provide services for the residents of the Horsham District through Horsham Hospital, Councillor Skipp felt that the Council needed to be more proactive in encouraging this.

The Chief Executive and Leader of both Horsham District Council and Crawley Borough Council would be meeting to look into increasing services at Horsham Hospital.

The Committee asked that the Council keep pressure on Sussex and Surrey Hospitals (SASH) and influence Sussex Community NHS Trust in taking this forward. This could be addressed by the Cabinet Member’s Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group.

It was agreed that a sub-group of the Social Inclusion Working Group could be established to look into this further; this could be led by Councillor Skipp. In addition the Committee would make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for a Safer and Healthier District.

**RECOMMENDED TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR A SAFER AND HEALTHIER DISTRICT**

Arising from the report on Disability Access to the Council’s Services, that the Cabinet Member:

1. Actively seek feedback at strategic intervals from local disabled people with a range of disabilities, namely, visual impairment, deafness and learning disabilities to ensure our communication is accessible.
2. Awareness training for frontline face to face staff around communication with disabled people.
3. Consistent application of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to key decision making and service changes to ensure that disabled people are involved and consulted and are not indirectly discriminated against.
4. Proactive actions to foster good relations between disabled people and non disabled people, and to highlight that we need a mixture of communication techniques (eg making sure that any podcasts/Youtube

SO/109 Social Inclusion Working Group – To receive the final report on the Review of Disability Access to the Council’s Services and notes of the meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012 (cont.)

clips have a written transcript or subtitles for Deaf and hard of hearing residents).

5. Calculate the estimated number of people and disabled people who are online in the District. It is likely, that as a percentage, more disabled people are not online compared to non disabled people. Efforts are needed to ensure communication reaches those without internet access, and to support those currently without internet access to get online.
6. Permanent inclusion of an access statement on the back of all HDC publications (this allows local disabled people to request information in their preferred format such as large print, or text on different coloured paper).
7. Develop a programme to review standard letter templates from the Council to ensure accessibility and plain English, possibly via the Customer Working Group, or the new transition team.
8. Raise awareness of TextRelay which is a telephone service used by Deaf and speech impaired people

Arising from the update on health matters in the District:

Issues of communication between SASH as the provider and the GP Commissioning Group were raised and therefore it was recommended by the Committee that the process could be hastened if the Cabinet Member for a Safer and Healthier District could encourage dialogue so that positive outcomes with benefits for residents could be achieved.

SO/110 **TRAFFIC IN VILLAGES WORKING GROUP – TO RECEIVE THE FINAL REPORT**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the final report.

This had been a difficult task as most of the responsibilities fell outside of the District Council’s remit and rested with West Sussex County Council or the police.

Witnesses from the police and the County Council were invited to the meetings to enable the Group to understand about traffic issues. A number of parish councils were also involved in the review.

SO/110 Traffic in Villages Working Group – To receive the final report (cont.)

Although the District Council had limited powers regarding traffic issues in villages, the Group found the exercise very useful and informative. It was useful to pull together all the information into one informative document which would be circulated to all parishes.

The report also referred to a letter which the Group had sent to the LGA regarding the promotion of a national speed limit policy, this would be circulated to the Committee for information.

RESOLVED

That the final report of the Traffic in Villages Working Group be noted.

REASON

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

SO/111 **SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES WORKING GROUP – CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE AND NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2012**

The Chairman of the Working Group presented the notes of the meeting held 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

The Group had met for the first time and was now awaiting information from officers and to hear from two parish councils, Ashington and Billingham and the Billingham Community Partnership at the next meeting in order to move forward with the review.

The Group agreed it would be more beneficial to focus on four villages or market towns for the review rather than trying to concentrate on the District as a whole.

RESOLVED

That the notes of the Supporting Local Businesses Working Group meeting held 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012 be received

REASON

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

SO/112 **TO RECEIVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW  
WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received four suggestions for the Scrutiny and Overview work programme.

(a) External Communications Policy

The Committee noted that the Council had recently undertaken a review of its communication which led to a series of changes which were being implemented and a new communication strategy was being adopted. It was suggested that it may be more helpful to have a review once the new protocols had been rolled out.

Therefore it was agreed that this be added to the work programme for approximately 12 months time.

It was also agreed that suggestions (a) and (b) be combined.

(b) How the Council communicates as a whole, with particular reference to the website

It was agreed that this suggestion be combined with suggestion (a) and a review of the new communications strategy be undertaken in approximately 12 months.

The Committee noted that although only 996 people had responded to the recent residents' survey, this was considered to be a representative sample of the District.

(c) How can the Council best engage with interest groups when making decisions

The Committee agreed that this could also be addressed as part of the communications review in 12 months. However, Members highlighted that often by engaging with interest groups may not reflect the opinion of the District.

(d) S106 grant process

This item was raised by a parish council in order to explain more fully to parishes how the process works and how effectively parish councils could gain access to funds. The Committee agreed that although it was clear what funding was available further clarification was required on how to make bids for funding.

The Committee agreed that this could be addressed by the Business Improvement Working Group to review the process and ensure that it was transparent and clear. It could also address the new CIL procedures.

SO/112 To receive any suggestions for the Scrutiny & Overview work programme (cont.)

The notes of the meeting could be circulated to all parish councils. It was not necessary to have a separate review.

SO/113 **TO NOTE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE 2011/12**

The Chairman presented the Annual Report of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee 2011/12.

The Annual Report was a way of communicating with the parish and neighbourhood councils about the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and its reviews.

The Committee was pleased with the report and the recent achievements of Scrutiny.

The Committee noted its thanks to the Scrutiny and Committee Support Officer.

The Report would be available on the Council's website and the link would be circulated to all parish and neighbourhood councils.

SO/114 **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA BUT CONSIDERED URGENT**

None.

The meeting finished at 6.38pm having commenced at 5.30pm.

CHAIRMAN