

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

24 July 2012

Present:

Councillor Philippa Broom (Chairman)
Councillor Joanne Sexton (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

A. Ayub	A.C. Harman	A.C. Patterson
Mrs M. Bushnell	Mrs I. Napper	Miss S. Webb
A.E. Friday	Mrs C.E. Nichols	

Apologies: Councillors R.D. Dunn, M.P.C. Francis, A.J. Mitchell and Miss D. Patel

In Attendance

Councillor Penny Forbes-Forsyth, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Young People, Councillor Dipak Gohil, Chairman of Audit Committee, Councillor Vivienne Leighton and Councillor Robert Watts, Cabinet Member for the Environment.

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chairman, Councillor Philippa Broom, welcomed the councillors newly appointed to serve on the committee. The Chairman also congratulated Councillor Joanne Sexton on her appointment of Vice Chairman to the committee.

206/12 Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures were made.

207/12 Minutes

The Chairman reminded councillors that they were only able to take part in confirming the minutes of the meetings if at that time they were a member of the committee.

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 and 24 May 2012 were approved as a correct record.

208/12 Matters arising

No matters reported.

209/12 Call in of Cabinet Decisions

No decisions had been called in.

210/12 Matters Arising from the Minutes 16 May 2012

The Chairman reported that there were two items to discuss.

(1) Code of Conduct

Michael Graham, Head of Corporate Governance attended the meeting to update the Committee on the progress of the Member Code of Conduct and the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest regulations. The comments of the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee were provided to Cabinet in accordance with the wishes of the Committee. Various suggestions of the Committee were incorporated into the final proposals which went to Council on 27 June 2012. The details of the new regulations were published on Friday 8 June and sent to the Chairman the following week. It was noted that the Committee would have wished to have considered the matter again; however time did not permit any further debate on the regulations prior to the implementation of the new regime on 1 July 2012.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) If a similar situation arises in the future where it is not possible to meet the request of the committee then the Chairman /Vice Chairman and committee members be advised of the reasons and be kept up to date with the progress being made and views being obtained; and
- (b) The Support Officer to ensure that in future all recommendations / resolutions from the committee are clearly defined and can be measured.

(2) Ashford Recreation Ground

At the meeting on 16 May 2012 the committee asked that the officers look into the reason for the lack of communication over the playground for disabled children created at Ashford Recreation Ground and advice members of the committee.

Councillor Mrs Napper reported that the official opening of the play area would take place on Saturday 11 August at 11.00am with everyone that participated in the consultation including members of the Parks and Open Spaces Task Group being invited to attend.

RESOLVED that the action and arrangements being made for the official opening be endorsed.

211/12 **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Arrangements**

The Chairman reported that usually at the first meeting of the new Municipal Year the Vice Chairman presented a report on the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This year it would be more of an interactive discussion involving all committee members, including forming into small discussion groups with the Lead Member of that Group reporting back on their findings.

The discussion was split into four main areas (a) the role of the Committee (b) review of the work undertaken during 2011/12 (c) Task Groups and (d) identifying core areas / themes the committee could look at in the year ahead.

The Chairman reported that the outcomes of these discussions would form the bases for developing the work programme for this Municipal Year.

The first area of discussion was the question 'What is scrutiny about?' with the areas being identified as:

- Acting as a critical friend
- Challenge to status quo
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Responsiveness to community needs
- Ensuring excellent delivery of services
- Ensuring that decisions made are for the benefit of residents
- Value for money
- Talk shop / discussion

RESOLVED that the key focus of the committee to be: Delivery of Service / Value for Money / Accountability and Transparency.

The second area was based on the outcome of the discussion held at the meeting on 16 May 2012 which had responded to the following questions

- What have we done well and where have we achieved impact?
- What can we improve on?
- When scrutiny works – Why does it work?
- What do you consider is outstanding from the work programme and that needs to be carried forward?

The third area covered a discussion on the current task groups and how best to improve on the processes that could be used.

The committee acknowledged that the Food Waste Task Group had successfully completed its work but that a further review could be considered in 12 months time.

The committee discussed the need for the Planning Post Implementation Review Panel established to assess the effectiveness of the changes implemented following the TRA review to continue. Discussion also took

place as to whether the terms of reference should be extended to include the Local Development Framework. In considering the membership of the Panel it was felt that for continuity purposes the councillors previously appointed to serve on the group should remain the same.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The Planning Post Implementation Review Panel be reconstituted with the existing terms of reference;
- (b) The membership of the Review Panel be Councillor Miss D. Patel (Lead Member), Councillors R. Dunn, A.E. Friday, Mrs I. Napper and Miss J. Sexton; and
- (c) Councillors D. Gohil and Mrs M. Rough being invited to participate in the work of the Panel.

In relation to the Parks and Open Spaces Task Group the committee received an update from Councillor Webb, Lead Member, for the skate parks aspect of the Task Group. Councillor Webb placed on record her thanks and appreciation to all those who attended the Task Group meeting on 1 May 2012, which had involved the majority of interested parties and had been very constructive. The main outcome of that meeting was to confirm that there was a need to enhance the facilities on the site by providing CCTV, lighting, rain shelter and fencing.

She confirmed that the original work carried a ten year guarantee and that the contractors had visited the site. However she expressed concern that she had not been notified when they would be visiting the site so that she could have met with them.

Discussion continued of what had been learnt from the Sunbury skate park project that could be taken on board for the Shepperton skate park project. It was noted that the project for Shepperton included providing CCTV and lighting. Consideration was also given to the reasons why one project had not been completed before the second project had commenced and the need for project management arrangements to be reviewed. It was noted that Runnymede Borough Council had been appointed to oversee the installation of the Shepperton skate park.

It was noted that investigations were continuing to obtain external funding for the lighting £8,000, fencing £4,500 and CCTV £10,000 for Sunbury Skate Park. It was suggested that perhaps SITA who had a requirement to invest in community based projects could assist.

Councillor Webb expressed her view of the need to ensure that the sites were safe and provide a good quality recreation for the young people of the borough.

The committee went on to discuss the importance of ensuring that the site was safe and the excellent work the police had been doing.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The Parks, Open Spaces and Skate Parks Task Group be reconstituted with the terms of reference previously agreed but to include looking at safety aspects, finance and insurance issues;
- (b) The membership of the Task Group to be Councillors Philippa Broom, Mrs M. Bushnell, A.E. Friday, R. Dunn, Mrs Napper, Miss J. Sexton and Ms S. Webb;
- (c) Invitations to participate in the work of the Task Group be extended to Councillor Mrs Grant, Cabinet Member responsible for Parks and Assets, Councillor Penny Forbes-Forsyth, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Young People, Councillor Vivienne Leighton (Ward Member) Police and Youth representatives; and
- (d) A report be prepared by the officers of what is happening to progress the skate park projects including the investigations for obtaining funding for CCTV, fencing and lighting for the Sunbury skate park.

The Vice Chairman, Councillor Joanne Sexton, outlined the benefits of introducing the use of project planning and project management for task groups. Project management techniques were a useful tool to organise activities and resources to deliver a successful result. It was felt that this method would be especially helpful in the initial planning stage of a review.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) A Task Group be established to meet in the very near future to set out guidelines /processes for how task groups should progress their projects and to ensure these groups have a clear remit, objectives and timescales; and
- (b) The membership of the Task Group to be Councillor Miss J. Sexton (Lead Member) Councillors A. Ayub, A. Friday and A.C. Patterson.

The fourth area the committee covered was looking at core themes /areas the committee wish to look at during the year. The Chairman invited members to split into small groups and identify areas that cover:

- Partnerships within a formal /contractual arrangement
- Partnerships that the council has an enabling role.
- Internal Council Services – critical support services
- External Council Services – delivery of direct residents' services

RESOLVED that the Chairman in conjunction with the Vice Chairman and support officers meet to draft a work programme based on the information and directions obtained at the meeting.

212/12 Provisional Capital Outturn 2011/12

The committee discussed with Adrian Flynn, Senior Accountant, the report covering the provisional outturn position and the reasons for variations from the budget. The committee noted that the provisional Capital spend in

2011/12 was £1,444m against a revised budget including carry forwards of £1,992m with a variance of £548k.

General discussion took place on some of the key projects being undertaken and asked the Assistant Chief Executive, to provide additional information on the DEFRA grant for work associated with local air quality management duties.

The Chairman invited members to submit any comments on the layout and presentation of the financial information to her.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The report of the Assistant Chief Executive on the provisional Capital outturn spend for 2011/12 be noted;
- (b) The Assistant Chief Executive, Lee O'Neil, to obtain further information concerning the question raised on the DEFRA grant and circulate the information to the Chairman and committee members; and
- (c) Members of the committee to forward comments on the layout and presentation of the financial information to the Chairman.

For easy of reference the response received from the Assistant Chief Executive to the question about the likelihood that the council would have to give the air quality grant money back to DEFRA if it is not spent, is set out below:

“Please be assured this is not likely; the air quality work for which the grant was given will go ahead and the money will be spent, although this work and the associated spend has been delayed as explained below.

The application for the grant was made to DEFRA a couple of years ago by the Council's Pollution Control Team when they first started working with the London Boroughs of Hounslow, Hillingdon, and Slough Borough Councils to update the model detailing the air quality in the four boroughs surrounding Heathrow Airport.

Soon after DEFRA awarded Spelthorne the grant, the Mayor of London announced he was having the London air emissions inventory updated. As the London air emissions inventory is an important component part of the air quality model, our work had to be interrupted otherwise the model would have been out of date before it was completed. Then, just before the London emissions inventory was completed Slough announced they too would be preparing a new emissions inventory, causing a further delay in the development of the air quality model. As a result of these interruptions the modelling work was delay for in excess of 18 months.

Much of local authority's air quality management duties require a phased approach. Therefore, when the model was completed, the subsequent work

outlined in this response could then be picked up. We are currently looking at the air quality hotspot areas in Spelthorne by contrast to the existing boundary of Spelthorne's Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and the legal duties that we need to address in respect of this. It is only once this work is completed can we work on renewing the Borough's Air Quality Action Plan; the purpose for which the grant was given to Spelthorne by DEFRA. DEFRA is aware of the delay to our programme and their causes, they are also content that we still have the money and have not spent it on non-authorized 'other' works"

213/12 Provisional Revenue Outturn Report 2011/12

The committee discussed with Adrian Flynn, Senior Accountant, the report covering the provisional outturn position on the Revenue budget in 2011/12. It was noted that the actual spend at year end against the revised budget of £12.387m was £12.450m. In addition it was noted that the interest earned on investments was £341k and with the VAT income received of £600k there was a net underspend of £443k.

General discussion took place on appendix C to the report which provided a breakdown by service of spend against the original budget.

RESOLVED that the report of the Assistant Chief Executive on the provisional Revenue outturn position for 2011/12 be received.

214/12 Youth

The Cabinet Member responsible for Community Safety and Young People, Councillor Penny Forbes-Forsyth, gave an overview of the work being undertaken to meet the needs of young people. This included the work being undertaken with youth groups and other organisations for young people.

The Cabinet Member invited members of the committee to work with her to help identify any gaps in the support /facilities provided to the youth of the borough.

RESOLVED that Councillors A. C. Harman, Mrs I. Napper, Mrs C. Nichols and Miss J. Sexton to meet with the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Young People to help identify any gaps in the support provided to the youth of the borough.

215/12 Cabinet Forward Plan

The committee received the Cabinet Forward Plan.

216/12 Meeting Arrangements

The committee discussed and noted the need to change the meeting arrangements for the Municipal Year.

It was noted that some committee members may not be able to attend the meeting suggested to be held on 11 September 2012. The Chairman asked that all committee members be emailed with the new meeting dates. If there was a problem with attendance for 11 September 2012 or the other meeting dates then the date(s) would be changed.

RESOLVED:

(a) That meetings of the committee be held on:

11 September 2012 (subject to availability)
18 September 2012 – Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee
27 November 2012
5 February 2013

(b) Authority be given to the Chairman in consultation with the support officers to amend the start time, venues and dates for meetings during the course of the Municipal Year; and

(c) The support officer to email all members of the committee to ascertain whether all members of the committee would be able to attend the meetings on the revised dates.

217/12 Work Programme

The Chairman reported that she would be meeting with the Vice Chairman and Lead Officers to scrutiny to produce a draft work programme from the suggestions put forward by the committee. Once a draft work programme had been produced this would be circulated to all members of the committee for comments.

The Chairman also asked that if any member had any additional matters that they wish to be included within the work programme to email details to her for consideration.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the action being taken by the Chairman in conjunction with the Officers to produce a work programme for the Municipal Year be agreed; and
- (b) The Chairman be authorised to update the work programme on a regular basis.

218/12 Any Other Business

No other business discussed