

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 JULY 2010

Present:

Councillor Ms P.A. Broom (Chairman)

Councillor S.J Rough (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Miss M.M. Bain

H.R. Jaffer

Mrs M.W. Rough

Mrs E.M. Bell

Mrs C.E. Nichols

Jack D. Pinkerton

K. Chouhan

L.E. Nichols

Apologies: Councillors S.E.W. Budd, A.P. Hirst and Mrs I. Napper

In Attendance:

Mr Murray Litvak – Chairman of the Standards Committee

Councillor R.A Smith-Ainsley – Cabinet Member responsible for Planning and Housing

203/10 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor Miss P.A. Broom be elected Chairman of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2010/2011.

The Chairman reported on the series of questions previously submitted by Councillor L.E. Nichols and explained that these matters would be dealt with during the course of the meeting.

204/10 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor S. Rough be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2010/2011

205/10 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REMIT

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which was split in to two main areas.

(a) Briefing Paper on Legislation Introduced involving Overview and Scrutiny committees.

The Committee considered a briefing paper from the Assistant Chief Executive which covered the recent legislation that had been introduced and involved new areas of responsibilities for overview and scrutiny committees. The key areas covered, (1) Councillors Call for Action (2) Collaborative scrutiny working between local authorities in Surrey (3) Petitions and e petitions and (4) Crime and Disorder.

Discussion took place on whether any of the legislation would be revised and whether the forms appended to the report relating to the process to be followed for Councillors Call for Action was statutory or not. It was confirmed that the forms had previously been agreed at a full council meeting and therefore there was a requirement for members to follow the process approved.

RESOLVED that:

1. The information set out in the briefing paper be noted;
2. The draft guide for Councillors Call for Action as submitted be adopted; and
3. The draft Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Procedure Rules be referred to the Spelthorne's Safer, Stronger Partnership for comments in accordance with the decision made by Council.

(b) Overview and Scrutiny Committee Remit

The second area discussed with the Assistant Chief Executive was the remit for the Committee.

Mr Murray Litvak the Chairman of the Standards Committee had been invited to attend the meeting and take part in the discussion of the item.

The committee were reminded that at the Council meeting held on 29 April 2010 it was agreed that one Overview and Scrutiny Committee be instituted with the initial remit of:

- a. To act as the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee under the Local Government Act 2000; and
- b. To take on the responsibilities for Crime and Disorder scrutiny under the Police and Justice Act 2006

In addition it was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in consultation with the Standards Committee be asked to advise the Council on the future remit of the committee.

The Committee **recommends to Council** that the attached remit for the Committee be approved.

206/10 MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee discussed arrangements for future meetings including whether there was a need to increase the number of committee meetings to 8 due to the fact that the Council had reduced the number of overview and scrutiny committees.

It was moved by Councillor L.E. Nichols and seconded by Councillor Mrs C.E. Nichols that the number of meetings of the committee be increased to 8 per year. In accordance with the Council's Standing Order 21.4, a recorded vote was requested. The voting on the motion was as follows: The motion was lost

For (3)	Councillors Mrs E.M. Bell, Mrs C.E. Nichols and L.E. Nichols
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Against (7)	Councillors Miss M.M. Bain, Miss Philippa Broom, K. Chouhan, H.R. Jaffer, Mrs M.W. Rough, S. Rough and Jack D. Pinkerton
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It was moved by Councillor Mrs Rough and seconded by Councillor Jaffer that the meetings of the committee are held on 9 September, 2 November 2010 and 1 February and 5 April 2011 with authority being given to the Chairman in consultation with the Lead Officer to arrange additional meetings as and when the need arises.

In accordance with the Council's Standing Order 21.4, a recorded vote was requested. The voting on the motion was as follows

For (7)	Councillors Miss M.M. Bain, Miss Philippa Broom, K. Chouhan, H.R. Jaffer, Mrs M.W. Rough, S. Rough and Jack D. Pinkerton
Against (3)	Councillors Mrs E.M. Bell, Mrs C.E. Nichols and L.E. Nichols

RESOLVED that the meetings of the committee be held on 9 September, 2 November 2010 and 1 February and 5 April 2011, with authority being given to the Chairman in consultation with the Lead Officer to arrange additional meetings as and when the need arises.

207/10 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

No disclosures of interested were made

208/10 MINUTES

Performance Management and Review Committee – 2 March 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2010 were approved as a correct record.

Improvement and Development Committee - 24 March 2010

The committee asked that the minutes be amended to include reference to the request from Councillor Mrs C.E. Nichols that a task group to look into the Eco Park be added to the work programme. The committee noted that the minutes would be revised and circulated for ratification.

209/10 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No matters were raised.

210/10 CALL IN OF CABINET DECISIONS

No Cabinet decisions were called in.

211/10 OUTCOME OF ANY REPORTS / RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CABINET

The Committee noted that the Cabinet at its meeting on 24 March 2010 had agreed the recommendation from the Improvement and Development Committee to have an option appraisal on the provision of Asset Management Services at Spelthorne.

212/10 HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

The Committee received a presentation covering Housing Options, Housing Benefits and Independent Living Services as well as the performance in the first seven months of the new Choice Based Letting scheme. In support of the presentation members had regard to a report from the Officers.

A Copy of the powerpoint presentation is **attached**.

The Cabinet member responsible for Planning and Housing Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley was in attendance and took part in the discussion.

The committee noted the potential changes in housing benefit legislations being introduced in October 2011 and the possible need for a briefing paper to be prepared at the appropriate time for the committee to consider.

The Chairman, Councillor Philippa Broom placed on record her thanks and appreciation to the Housing and Independent Living Services Team for their commitment to the work they undertake.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The report of the officers be received and the action being taken noted;
- (2) The report together with the powerpoint presentation be emailed to all members of the Council for information; and
- (3) An item be included in the work programme covering youth services provisions including housing issues with representatives from Social Services being invited to attend the meeting.

213/10 ICT SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS BRIEFING PAPER

The Committee considered a briefing paper on improvements to the Council's ICT services since the last meeting of the ICT Task Group. The committee also discussed whether there was a need to re-establish the ICT Task Group.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The briefing paper be received and the Task Group be re established to continue to monitor service improvement, and look at progress after the summer and review post 2012 options; and
- (2) Councillors Miss M.M. Bain, Mrs E.M. Bell, K. Flurry, Miss N Hyams, L.E. Nichols, Jack D. Pinkerton, Mrs M.W. Rough, H.A. Thomson and the Cabinet member responsible for Communications be appointed to serve on the Task Group for the Municipal Year 2010/2011.

214/10 REVENUE OUTTURN REPORT 2009 – 2010

The Committee discussed with the Chief Finance Officer the report covering the provisional outturn position for revenue expenditure for 2009/2010. It was noted that, £14,503m had been spent at net service expenditure level (before investment income, which was £100k better than budget, and use of reserves) against the original budget of £14,568m.

During the course of the discussion the Chief Finance Officer agreed to provide a written response to numerous questions raised by members.

RESOLVED that the report of the Chief Finance Officer be noted and written response be obtained for the questions raised.

215/10 CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2009- 2010

The Committee discussed with the Chief Finance Officer the report covering the provisional outturn position for capital expenditure for 2009/2010. The committee noted that £1441k had been spent against the original budget of £1,889k.

During the discussion the Chief Finance Officer agreed to provide written responses to the questions raised by committee members.

Discussion also took place on the general format of officers reports submitted and the previous requests for reports being submitted to committee to incorporate the meeting date. The officers agreed to look into this matter.

RESOLVED that the current provisional outturn position be noted.

216/10 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Cabinet Forward Plan covering the period over 15 February 2011.

217/10 WORK PROGRAMME 2010/2011

The Committee discussed their work programme and noted that the Chairman in consultation with the Lead Officer would continue to review the work programme and identify issues for future meetings.

During the course of the meeting various topics were identified for inclusion in the work programme including a discussion paper on the financial risks due to government changes in legislation such as Housing Benefits, recycling and the Eco Park proposals

In addition the Chairman reminded the committee that if they have any topics they wish to be considered for inclusion in the work programme details should be sent to the Chairman and Brian Harris, Assistant Chief Executive.

In relation to the Eco Park review the Assistant Chief Executive agreed to obtain information about the consultation process and when the matter would be considered by the Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the work programme be approved and the action being taken by the Chairman and Lead Officer be noted.

218/10 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee discussed with the Assistant Chief Executive the performance information for the second year of the new national indicators.

RESOLVED to receive the information on performance.

219/10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Questions previously raised by Councillor L.E. Nichols.

It was agreed that the responses to the questions raised by Councillor L.E. Nichols be included within the minutes and are set out below.

Question 1 – A members working group is established to review the proposed “Eco Park at Charlton Lane. Many residents are concerned about the unanswered questions and are expecting their local representatives to take the lead. The former Improvement and Development Committee Chairman had indicated that this would be factored into the future work plan.

Response - This matter is covered under the work programme. However I would remind members that attached to the work programme is a list of items that had previously been identified and which includes the Eco Park.

Question 2 – On the 14 March I wrote to both scrutiny committee chairmen asking for items to be included in the forward plan. Set out below is a copy of the email:

During the Budget debate at the Council meeting on 25 February I highlighted 4 areas where I believe additional scrutiny would be beneficial.

I would like to draw your attention to these areas and ask that they are included in the programmes for scrutiny during the coming year.

The saving on procurement outlined in the Green Book are not in line with the presentation given to the Improvement and Development Committee where it was recognised that they cannot be achieved immediately. A clear list of expected savings should be compiled, including dates, and then this should be regularly monitored with variances explained to members.

Response – I would suggest that this be considered in September by which time we will have a clearer understanding of how the Surrey First procurement work stream is going to drive our procurement efforts and how that may be deliver cashable savings.

Question 3 – The proposals of the Members Task Group did not put any potential value on items identified as a savings. Some attempt should be made to value these and then they should be monitored with regular reports on progress provided to members.

Response – This aspect is for the Leader’s Monitoring Group to consider

Question 4 – Cashable benefits and non cashable benefits. The capital budget records savings against some projects for example a saving of £100,000 over 3 years from the introduction of document management. Where significant non cashable benefits are claimed they should be challenged to translate them into cashable benefits. In general we should monitor the progress of projects to ensure that they are delivering the expected benefits.

Response – Cashable and non cashable benefits are being addressed by the Business Improvement Board which is chaired by Roberto Tambini. The Board already have a prioritised order for implementation of projects and are putting in place proper governance arrangements which include setting out

robust project plans, identifying resources, identified and firming up benefits realisable, against which delivery will then be monitored. I would suggest that as the officers are currently in the process of doing this, July is too early to consider, but if the Committee feels it is appropriate this could be considered later in the year.

Question 5 – In 2008/09 £1m impairments were included in the accounts - £25 per resident. We should scrutinise the allocation of capital to activities to make sure that the distinction between capital and revenue expenditure is clear from the outset. This would require some detailed consideration of the capital programme before money is spent.

Response – Firstly this question may be trying to pre-empt the role of the independent external auditor who is the final arbiter of whether we are correctly capitalising expenditure. To date they have been happy with our approach. Secondly due to the changed scale and nature of the capital programme combined with the fact that we are having a full revaluation of all assets in 2010/2011 capital expenditure and therefore this is currently not an issue.