

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 23rd January, 2007.

Present: Cllr K Lupton (Chairman), Cllr J A Fletcher, Cllr M Frankland, Cllr L Narroway, Cllr W Noble, Cllr Mrs M Rigg, Cllr J M Roberts (vice Councillor Mrs Trainer), Cllr Mrs M B Womphrey, Cllr B Woodhead

Officers: Mrs M Waggott, Miss F Shayler (LD).

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Beaumont, Cains, Jones, Dalgarno, Lynch, Mrs Nelson, Mrs Nesbitt, Rix and Mrs Trainer. Mr A Maxwell (Diocesan Representative); Mr Bartle and Mrs Mustafa (Parent Governor Representatives).

912 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Narroway declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 - Select Committee Work Programme due to being an Employee of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

Councillor Mrs Rigg declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 - Select Committee Work Programme due to a family member living in flats benefiting from the Concierge Team, Tristar Homes Ltd.

Councillor Woodhead declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 - Select Committee Work Programme due to being a Tristar Board Member.

Councillor Fletcher declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 - Report of Select Committee Chairs on Progress of Scrutiny Reviews further to being a friend of Billingham International Folklore festival.

913 Minutes of the Meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on 21st November and 19 December, 2006 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

914 Select Committee Work Programme 2007/08

Members were presented with a report detailing suggestions received from Members and officers for the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2007/08 and advised the Committee of the outcome of discussions at Scrutiny Liaison Committee on 12 January, 2007.

Members had expressed a desire to complete the process for setting a work programme before the end of the municipal year in order to avoid delays in scrutiny work commencing following the elections. If necessary, the draft programme could be reviewed and amended following the Annual Meeting.

All of the suggested topics for Select Committee reviews received were summarised in the schedule set out within the appendices of the report. The Scrutiny Liaison Forum reviewed the list of suggested topics and was

recommending that the following topics for the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2007/08 (in priority order) be confirmed:-

Adults Leisure and Culture

- River Based Leisure Facilities
- Services for Young People in between Childhood and Adulthood

Corporate Policy

- Stockton Voluntary and Community Sector
- Theatre Subsidy

Children and Young People

- School Organisation Plan
- Corporate Parenting

Environment and Regeneration

- Cemeteries and Memorials: Phase II
- Waste Collection Service – Comprehensive Review of Recycling
- Task and Finish Group to undertake a piece of work on Vermin Control, this could be opened up to other Members, if the Select Committee felt this approach was appropriate.

Health

- Alcoholism
- Hearing Aids Waiting Lists/ Delays on Referrals to Audiology

Members also requested that information be provided to the Committee on:

- Lack of employment for newly qualified health professionals
- Ritalin

Housing and Community Safety

- Neighbourhood Enforcement Service
- Homelessness for Young People (incorporating accommodation for care leavers)

Members held discussion on Theatre Subsidy which had been identified as a topic for review for the Corporate Policy Select Committee. This matter would also lie within the terms of reference for the Adults, Leisure and Cultural Committee but following discussions it had been determined due to workloads that the Corporate Policy Select Committee would review this matter.

With regard to the review of Alcoholism by the Health Select Committee, the Chairman suggested that in advance of this review a Member attend the Regional Alcoholism Conference Action Plan and Statement of Priorities Launch to be held on 8th February, 2007 at St James Park, Newcastle.

Issues were also raised in connection with the reviews of Corporate Parenting,

Vermin Control and Neighbourhood Enforcement.

Members requested that Scrutiny Officers consider inviting lead Officers for each of the reviews to the first meeting of each Select Committees following the Annual Meeting on 23rd May, 2007, to enable the review to get underway.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Executive Scrutiny Committee endorse the priorities for review.
2. A Member attend the Regional Alcoholism Conference Action Plan and Statement of Priorities Launch to be held on 8th February 2007 at St James Park, Newcastle.

915 Review of Scrutiny Co-ordination Arrangements

Members were presented with the Member and officer feedback following the review of the Council's new scrutiny co-ordination arrangements and identified the key issues emerging.

Views on the implementation of the new arrangements were sought from Members and Officers through the Centre for Public Scrutiny's self evaluation framework. The framework was based on the principles set out in the "Good Scrutiny Guide".

In addition, in view of the low attendance levels at some Select Committee meetings, the opportunity was taken to include a section to seek views from Members on the problems associated with attending Meetings and what would help to improve attendance.

A summary of the quantitative feedback to the questionnaire and feedback from the Focus Group sessions was attached to the report for Members information. The key themes that had emerged from the consultation were also summarised.

Following from this exercise there would be further officer consideration of the feedback and an improvement plan would be drafted also taking into account the implications of legislative changes. The improvement plan would be subject to approval by Members' Advisory Panel and Executive Scrutiny Committee.

Members held discussion on a brief questionnaire to be completed by members of the public being included within an issue of the Stockton News to identify whether the public has any issues that they would like raising for future reviews.

Members felt that, if appropriate, at the end of each Select Committee meeting, Members should prepare questions to be asked of witnesses at the following meeting.

Members discussed the Forward Plan and requested that a standard item be put on Select Committee agendas to raise issues from the plan. Members were informed that the Forward Plan would be available to view in the near future on the Egenda system to keep Members up to date.

Discussion was also held on costs relating to scrutiny reviews and ensuring that these were monitored.

It was stated that an improvement plan would be drafted taking into account the implication of legislative changes such as the White Paper, Review of Crime and Disorder Partnerships etc. A report would be presented to a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the comments on the key issues which would form the basis of an improvement plan be noted.

916 Report of Select Committee Chairs on Progress of Scrutiny Reviews

Adults Leisure and Culture

The review of Festivals was on course to agree a final report in March and present this to Cabinet on 12th April, 2007. The Committee would also consider the Preston Park Action Plan developed following the recent review at the next committee meeting.

Children and Young People

The Committee met on the 17th January, 2007 to finalise the Teenage Pregnancy report but an additional recommendation was made by Members which would result in the report being delayed in going to Cabinet.

A tripartite meeting to discuss the scope and project plan for the Review of Bullying had been arranged for the 16th February, 2007 after which a number of meetings would be held to conclude a brief review within this municipal year.

Corporate Policy Review

The Committee's final report and recommendations in respect of Corporate Consultation were approved by Cabinet on 4 January, 2007.

The Committee had approved a scope and project plan for its second review of Meetings Venues it was anticipated that the review would be reported to Cabinet in April 2007.

A progress report on implementation of the recommendations contained in the Sickness Absence review would also be submitted to the next meeting.

Environment and Regeneration

The Committee's final report and recommendations in respect of the Street Lighting Review were approved by Cabinet on 4 January, 2007.

The Committee had approved a scope and project plan for its second review of Cemeteries and Memorials. The Committee had agreed to conduct the review in two stages 1. The future development of cemeteries; 2. The management of memorials. The first phase of the review would be reported to Cabinet in April

2007 and the second part of the review would take place following the Election.

The Committee had also undertaken a monitoring exercise in respect of the implementation of its Wastes Review and would be receiving a progress report in respect of the planning review before the end of the municipal year.

Health

Members of the Select Committee undertook a visit to University Hospital North Tees (UHNT) which provided an opportunity to visit the orthopaedic and critical care units as well as having discussions with the trust's chief executive and a number of senior officers. It was suggested that a similar arrangement be made to allow members to visit University Hospital Hartlepool as this was the site of the majority of elective surgery.

The Select Committee would be meeting representatives from UHNT on 12th February as part of the hospital trust's consultation process as it was applying for foundation trust status.

A decision was yet to be published as to the final outcome for women and children's services.

Housing and Community Safety

It has been agreed that Caroline Wood (Housing Options) would produce a skeleton CBL policy setting out the statutory requirements together with the options where the Committee could exercise discretion; alongside this, Tristar were to produce options for the delivery of a future policy. The Committee would use both pieces of work when formulating recommendations.

The review was on schedule with a view to the final report being presented to Cabinet in March, 2007.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.