

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 16th July 2009

Present:

Members of the Group:

Councillors: John Appleton
Les Caborn
Richard Chattaway
Michael Doody
John Ross
Dave Shilton

Officers: David Carter, Strategic Director Customers, Workforce and Governance
Michelle McHugh, Overview and Scrutiny Officer
John Wright, Committee Manager

1. General

(1) Election of Chair

Resolved that Councillor John Appleton be elected Chair of the Board.

(2) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jerry Roodhouse.

(3) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

(4) Election of Vice Chair

Resolved that Councillor Les Caborn be elected Vice Chair of the Board

2. Overview and Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference

The Board considered a report on the terms of reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The report also detailed the process for establishing the partnership element of the Board, the proposed methods for the Board to fulfil its strategic role effectively and a draft work programme for the Board for 2009/10.

The Board were informed that amongst its main roles would be to have an oversight of the work programmes of each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to avoid duplication of work and to provide advice. It would be for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to decide their own work programme. Each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees had been asked to identify issues they would want to scrutinise. These would be prioritised against

corporate plan priorities by the Chair and Partyspokes of each committee and would be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

Members considered the issue of joint scrutiny and felt that issues to be examined should be identified through the LAA and commissioned through partner organisations. The District and Borough Councils could be asked to host some joint scrutiny work though there were concerns about their ability to handle the increased workload due to a lack of dedicated scrutiny officers. The publication of regulations in relation to establishing joint scrutiny committees to scrutinise LAA had been postponed. The Board were informed that the Public Service Board would be considering proposals for how it would monitor progress made against LAA targets. It was intended that reporting would be on an exception basis.

Members enquired how newly elected members would be informed of the role and function of overview and scrutiny and were informed that an external provider would be running scrutiny workshops as part of the member induction process and further workshops would be run internally throughout the year. Details would be circulated once the workshops had been finalised.

The Board felt that because it would have an oversight of the work programmes of each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to avoid duplication of work it would be important for each of the Committee chairs to feed back to each committee meeting on the work of the Board. The Board requested that standing item be put on the agenda of all overview and scrutiny committees entitled "Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Board"

Members were informed that proposals for scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships would be reported to the September meeting.

The Board was of the opinion that there was a need to involve the public in local area scrutiny. Consequently there would also be a need for the Chairs of Community Forums to receive training about the role and function of scrutiny.

Resolved that

- (1) The Terms of Reference of the Board be noted;
- (2) The process of seeking partner representation on the Board as detailed in paragraph 2 of the report submitted be approved,
- (3) The methods for fulfilling the Board's strategic role as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report submitted be approved;
- (4) The draft Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme as detailed in Appendix A of the report submitted be approved; and
- (5) A standing item be put on the agenda of all overview and scrutiny committees entitled "Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Board"

3. Overview and Scrutiny Strategy Action Plan – 2009/10

The Board considered a report on the Overview and Scrutiny Strategy Action Plan. The Overview and Scrutiny Strategy 2008-13 had been agreed by the former Overview and Scrutiny Co-Ordinating Group in January 2008. An action plan to take forward the Strategy had also been approved. The Board considered a summary of progress made during 2008/09 and issues that would have to be addressed during the forthcoming year. The Board also considered the action plan for 2009/10.

Members requested details of the key partnerships that the Council was involved with and were informed that this would be circulated to members in the near future. Work was being undertaken to review the effectiveness of each partnership and whether each added value. It was noted that Stratford council had recently undertaken a scrutiny review of partnerships.

The Board requested that the link to the revised scrutiny toolkit be sent to all members of the Council once it had been finalised.

The Board recognised the importance of tracking the outcomes of review recommendations and ensuring improvements to processes had been implemented. There was also recognition that there was a need to monitor improvements against the CPA and JAR improvement plan.

Members considered how scrutiny could receive more publicity and requested that officers from the communications team be invited to attend the next meeting of the Board.

Members also expressed concern that newly elected members would not be able to understand the sometimes large number of acronyms used in some committee reports and requested that officers ensure that where initials or acronyms were used in reports the full title should be given the first time the initial or acronym is used.

The Board requested that the strategy action plan be amended to :

- Include reference to the role and functions of the Community Forums.
- Be more generic with no specific time limits
- Include reference to joint scrutiny
- Replace use of the word “champion” with the word “advocate”
- Refer to community engagement
- Make reference to the prioritisation of adding value
- Cross reference with the Councillors Call for Action

Resolved that

- (1) The report be noted
- (2) The Overview and Scrutiny Strategy continue to provide appropriate strategic direction for the Overview and Scrutiny function
- (3) The amendments to the Overview and Scrutiny Strategy 2008/13, as detailed above, be approved
- (4) Officers be requested to ensure that where initials or acronyms were used in reports the full title should be given the first time the initial or acronym is used.

(5) Officers from the communications team be invited to attend the next meeting of the Board

4. Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-Ordinating Group held on 8th April 2009

Resolved that Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-Ordinating Group held on 8th April 2009 be noted.

5. Any Other Business

None

6. Date of Next Meeting

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on 2nd September 2009 at 2.00 p.m.

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Chair

The Group rose at 11.15 a.m.