

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date of Committee 12th January 2011

Report Title Review of Communication with the Public and Financial Accountability

Summary Stage one of this review is complete and the task and finish group has now embarked on stage two. This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on progress with the review and seeks agreement to extend the length of time the review takes to complete.

For further information please contact:

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s)
- Other Elected Members Councillor Chris Saint, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board - For information
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive
- Legal Jane Pollard
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors Strategic Director, Customers, Workforce and Governance, Strategic Director, Resources – For information

District Councils

Health Authority

Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION Yes

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Agenda No 7

Overview and Scrutiny Board - 12th January 2011

Review of Communication with the Public and Financial Accountability

Report of Councillor Tim Naylor - Chair of Task and Finish Group.

Recommendation

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the current progress with the review of Communication with the Public and Financial Accountability and agrees to extend the timescale for the review to April 2011.

1. Members will recall that at its meeting of 21st July 2010 the Overview and Scrutiny Board commissioned a "Review of Communication with the Public and Financial Accountability".
2. The review which is being undertaken by a group of five elected members was commenced in August and early on it was agreed that the most pressing aspect to it was that concerning communication with the public. The urgency came from the fact that in common with most public bodies the County Council is facing a period of uncertainty regarding the resources it has and the services it can provide. Stage one of the review, that pertaining to communication with the public, is now essentially complete. The panel's conclusions and recommendations were reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 10th November and to Cabinet on 16th December 2010. However, unlike most in-depth scrutiny reviews when all recommendations are approved before implementation the urgent need to communicate key messages to the public and staff meant that implementation of the recommendations commenced ahead of the committee process being completed. As a result of this decision the councils leaders have engaged in face to face briefings, regular updates are now being produced, the "You Choose" software has been featured on the council's web site and the concept of "tough choices" has been promoted.
3. With stage one of the review essentially complete the panel has turned its attention to stage two. This is looking at financial information and accountability. Compared to stage one this is a more complex matter to address. Early discussions amongst the members of the task and finish group suggest that it is likely that a range of different approaches may need to be considered if a) decision makers are to be held to account for their actions

and b) the financial information members have to work with meets their needs and those of the authority.

4. The task and finish group is set to meet again on Thursday 13th January 2011. In that meeting the group will debate the concept of accountability before exploring the new Agresso financial management system and considering ways in which the information held can be interrogated and understood by members. Finally on the 13th January the group work to identify gaps in the information that is now or will be available to members in the future.
5. Because stage one of this review took priority over anything else it was not possible to progress stage two until now. This means that the original timescale that anticipated the completion at the end of October 2010 has not been met. It now seems likely that the review will be completed in April 2011 and the Overview and Scrutiny Board is asked to agree to this extension. At the time of writing this report (6.12.10) the review had occupied 132.5 hours of the 250 hours originally allocated.

COUNCILLOR TIM NAYLOR

Shire Hall
Warwick

02 December 2010