

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COORDINATING GROUP HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2006

Present:

Members of the Group:

Councillors:

Ken Browne (Chair)

David Booth

Richard Chattaway

Alan Cockburn

Richard Grant

Bob Stevens

Officers:

Jim Graham, Chief Executive

David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development

Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer

Pete Keeley, Member Services

Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer

1. General

An apology

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Jerry Roodhouse.

Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2006.

The minutes of the 19 July meeting were agreed as a correct record.

2. Review of Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which summarised the outcome of the review, including the outcome from the seminar held on 13 September.

The Group was advised that the Leaders Liaison Group felt that the report could be more explicit in its references to scrutiny being member led.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

Recommendation 1

The Group considered that they should monitor/ keep an overall view on the Council's overall progress on the LAA and that this should be reflected in the recommendation.

Recommendation 2

Agreed as printed.

Recommendation 3

The detailed arrangements for joint scrutiny with partners would be drawn up by the officers and would include the reporting process to the Cabinet and Council. Partners included District and Borough Councils.

Recommendation 4

During the discussion the Group felt that there were benefits in each of the several briefing arrangements currently being operated between the various portfolio holders, OSC Chairs and Strategic Directors. In particular, reference was made to:

- The use of performance clinics and the appraisal process for Strategic Directors, Portfolio Holders and OSC Chairs.
- The separate functions of the executive and scrutiny.
- The role of Heads of Service and Strategic Directors.
- The member development programme should include OSC Chairs as well Portfolio Holders.
- The provision of performance development information including performance against other councils, enabled members to scrutinise performance at various levels.
- New performance information was to be provided.

On balance it was agreed that the current arrangements should continue for the present.

Recommendations 5, 6 & 7

Work was being undertaken on defining localities below are levels and this had regard to the expected White Paper.

Area Committees were currently empowered to scrutinise performance.

The Recommendation was agreed as printed.

Recommendations 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

Agreed as printed

Resolved:

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) That wherever possible joint scrutiny arrangements with partner agencies should be undertaken and each Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) should consider these opportunities on a regular basis as part of the development of its work programme.
- (2) That each Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) should include within its work programme monitoring progress on the outcomes of the relevant Local Area Agreement block(s) and the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group (OSCG) should maintain an overview of this work.
- (3) That there should be a joint scrutiny arrangement with partners to review the overall progress of the LAA and partnership working generally.
- (4) That the chair of each Overview & Scrutiny Committee should meet the relevant portfolio holder(s) at least quarterly to discuss:-
 - areas where the Committee could help the Council achieve its overall objectives.
 - areas about which the Committee has concerns or suggestions for improvement.
- (5) That some form of community meeting be held in each locality every year to identify amongst other things issues, where the community has concerns which should be pursued by OSCs.
- (6) That the basis for the localities to be used for community meetings should be explored further but at the very least one local scrutiny exercise will be undertaken in each of the five Area Committee areas by 30 June 2007.
- (7) That the contribution that Area Committees themselves can make to the scrutiny process be the subject of further exploration by members.
- (8) That each Committee should increase its use of the following:-
 - select committee style
 - small working groups of members on a task and finish basis.
 - site visits
 - visits to other authorities

This should be done by members proactively managing the work programme and identifying areas of work to be pursued in these ways.

- (9) That partners, service users and members of the community play a larger role in overview and scrutiny by ensuring that their potential contribution receives specific consideration as part of each scrutiny exercise and that they are also encouraged to contribute in ways which help them to do so.

- (10) That the role of Overview & Scrutiny Committees in performance management should focus on in depth reviews using the data from the Council's performance management system and identifying issues arising from exception reports.
- (11) That a suite of initiatives be developed to promote and publicise the work of Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
- (12) That within the overall member development framework, there should be opportunities for members to develop their collective and individual skills in a practical way, with a recognition that listening and constructive questioning skills are essential to fulfil the potential of scrutiny.
- (13) That the Terms of Reference of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees be revised to reflect a more outward looking approach including the making of reports and recommendations about public services generally.
- (14) That each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should produce an annual report to the Council.
- (15) That each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should monitor the progress on actions arising from its recommendations.
- (16) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be authorised to make any amendments to the Constitution to reflect these changes.

3. Date of Next Meeting

The Group noted that their next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 15 November 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

The Group rose at 12.25 p.m.