

# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COORDINATING GROUP HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2007

Present:

Members of the Group:

Councillors: David Booth  
Ken Browne  
Mick Jones  
Frank McCarney  
Jerry Roodhouse  
Bob Stevens

Officers: David Carter, Strategic Director Performance and Development  
Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator  
Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer  
Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

## 1. Election of Chair

Councillor David Booth, seconded by Councillor Ken Browne, proposed that Councillor Richard Grant be appointed Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor Richard Grant be appointed Chair of the Group.

As Councillor Richard Grant was not at the meeting, it was agreed that Councillor Ken Browne would continue as Chair for this meeting.

## 2. General

### (1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Alan Cockburn, Richard Chattaway and Richard Grant.

### (2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse declared a personal interest as a member of the Rugby Borough Council.

Councillor Bob Stevens declared a personal interest as a member of the Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

### (3) Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2007

The minutes of the 25 April 2007 meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **Matters Arising**

### **Page 2 – 3. Reporting Performance to Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Members agreed that the new format for performance reports were clear and concise. It was noted that performance was now indicated using shapes, which was clear to read even with black and white printing.

### **Page 3 – 4. Overview and Scrutiny – Draft Performance Management Framework**

Jane Pollard noted the following:

- i. As agreed by Members, the indicators for the Number of referrals to O&S committee from Cabinet and or Council, the Number of visits to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Web pages and the Number of news stories covered by the local media relating to overview and scrutiny had been removed from the Performance Management Framework.
- ii. There had been 1305 visits to the Overview and Scrutiny WebPages from April to November and 2620 visits over the past 12 months. This showed that people outside the Council were using the pages, and the numbers provided a benchmark to work against.
- iii. Complaints that were sent to the WebPages were forwarded to the Scrutiny mailbox and dealt with by the Scrutiny team or through the relevant process.

## **3. Overview and Scrutiny Strategy**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development putting forward a draft Overview and Scrutiny Strategy for members' comments.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were agreed:

1. Members agreed that the section entitled "Overview and Scrutiny is not" should be removed and the Strategy reworded to enhance the positive points.
2. The element of the "critical friend" enhancing the role of Overview and Scrutiny creating a healthy tension by challenging the Cabinet should be incorporated.
3. A short paragraph outlining the purpose of the Strategy needed to be added.
4. "Ensuring the voice and concerns of backbench Councillors" needed to be included.
5. The call-in function of Overview and Scrutiny Committees needed to be included in the Strategy.
6. A report would be brought to the Co-ordinating Group on how Annual Reports to Council were working, and setting out guidelines for Members to be agreed by all parties on the reporting of Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Portfolio Reports to Council. Members

- agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports would be considered before the Portfolio Reports on agendas for full Council.
7. Agenda items were controlled by the Chairs and Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the “Reasons to Reject Items” outlined in Appendix 2 were set out to assist Chairs in making decisions.
  8. Members agreed that one of the key drivers to come out of the “Strong and Prosperous Communities” White Paper was the Councillor call for action and in light of this and other protocols, the Strategy would need refreshing and put into context.

**Resolved:**

That the Director of Performance and Development produces a final draft Strategy, taking into account the comments as set out above.

#### **4. Scrutiny of Partnerships**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development introducing the partnership framework which has been developed to aid partnership self-evaluation and the scrutiny of partnerships by the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Jane Pollard pointed out that paragraph 9 of the report set out three options for implementing the framework. The framework was an aide memoire for Members or partnerships to self-evaluate how strong they were.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were agreed:

1. The framework applied to overview and scrutiny for the County Council, and was not restricted to partnership scrutiny. There was a need to ensure the processes around the audit role were clear and partners were aware of the areas within the LAA where they had responsibility.
2. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be receiving performance reports in the January 2008 cycle of meetings on LAA targets, which would give an indication of progress.
3. Members suggested it would be useful to do a mapping exercise to include O&S, direct partners involved with the LAA and other partners that fed into the process in order to develop a calendar model mapping out key milestones such as annual reports to indicate when it would be most effective to carry out effective scrutiny.
4. It was agreed that there was still a lack of understanding by some at District/Borough level about who had responsibility for different areas.
5. Members agreed that the options given in the report for scrutinising the LAA were not mutually exclusive and the chosen option would be a hybrid of Option 1 and 2, carrying out joint scrutiny exercises with partners where appropriate.

**Resolved:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group agrees that a hybrid of Option 1 and 2 (as outlined in the report) be the chosen option to carry out joint scrutiny exercises with partners.

## **5. Implementing the Outcomes of the Scrutiny Review – Update on Action Plan**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development updating Members on progress with the action plan.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. Jane Pollard reported that changes to the navigation bar would be in place this week, improving links to other webpages such as committee papers and the library of scrutiny review reports.
2. Members agreed that consultations should not be limited to online consultations on the web.
2. A Video Conference had been set up with Durham County Council on Budget Scrutiny. This would take place on 17 December 2007 from 11.00 am to 12.30 pm in the ICT Meeting Room and Members were asked to confirm their attendance.
3. Michelle McHugh reported that officers had visited Staffordshire County Council to look at their Partnership Scrutiny and Oxfordshire County Council to look at Scrutiny support. She added that it would be useful for Members to visit at least one other authority to see what was happening in terms of overview and scrutiny elsewhere.

### **Resolved:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group note the progress, which has been made in relation to the current Action Plan.

## **6. Date of Next Meeting**

The Group noted that their next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 30 January 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

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Chair

The Group rose at 3.00 p.m.