

Governance Directorate

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TO: THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS
OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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MD

25 April 2014

Dear Member

RE: MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL – 29 APRIL 2014

I refer further to the Summons and papers recently circulated in respect of the meeting of the City Council arranged for **Tuesday 29 April 2014 at 6.45 pm** in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Carlisle.

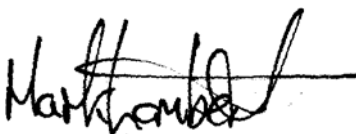
Please find attached the undernoted documentation which was marked “to follow” on the Summons:

Item A.12 Minute Extract EEOSP.25/14 concerning the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Also attached are amended pages 2, 5 and 8 of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14 which now reflect the comments of the Lead Member, Scrutiny Chairs Group; the Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder; and the Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

Item 17 Minute Extract AUC.27/14 concerning the Audit Committee’s Annual Report

Yours faithfully



Director of Governance

**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON 10 APRIL 2014**

EEOSP.25/14 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.10/14 which provided an overview of matters related to the work of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Details of the latest version of the work programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Panel were also included.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that.

- The Notice of Executive Key Decisions had been published on 7 February 2014. There were no issues that fell within the remit of this Panel:
- Minute excerpt EX.23/14 Environmental Health – Business Support had been submitted from the Executive's meeting held on 10 March 2014:
- The draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2013/14 was appended to the report and Panel members were invited to comment on the draft which was being considered by all three Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The report would then be formally approved by the Scrutiny Chairs Group before submission to Council on 29 April 2014.

The Panel discussed the draft Scrutiny Report and agreed that the following training issues be included in the report:

- Information briefing session for Panels on large topics prior to their scrutiny
 - Questioning skills
 - Reading and understanding reports
 - Speed reading
 - What Scrutiny is and how to achieve the best outcomes
- The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded the Panel that the meeting scheduled for 15 May 2014 had been moved to 2 May 2014 to accommodate the attendance of representatives of Local Enterprise Partnership. The Chairman urged Members to attend the meeting.

RESOLVED – 1) That, subject to the issues raised above, the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Notice of Key Decision items relevant to this Panel be noted.

2) That the decision of the Executive (EX.23/14) be received.

INTRODUCTION



It is my pleasure to introduce the 2013/14 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for Carlisle City Council.

I believe that this has been a good year for scrutiny because of the financial difficulties local government has had to face. It is more important than ever for us all to work together to assist our Executive in their deliberations. We cannot afford the luxury of simply politically point scoring. The situation we find ourselves in is that we all must take the responsibility of dealing with the present day difficulties. Our actions should rise above our political allegiance.

We must not be tempted to simply criticise the Executive and must never make personal abusive attacks on their person. That is simply destructive of what we are trying to achieve.

We are trying to create the very best for our communities with limited resources and that will take all of us pulling together and not pulling one and another to bits.

After saying all of that, it is pleasing to see that there is a new culture developing that is listening, respecting one another and looking to a better future for the City of Carlisle.

We have a great responsibility as many have noticed the local media have often failed in reporting the work we are trying to achieve for the electorate. The media keep telling us that they are there to scrutinize us. How can they do this when they do not even send a journalist to some of our meetings?

As an optimist I truly believe that we as a Council together can achieve great things for our City. As an old trade unionist I have always believed “together we stand, divided we fall”.

Cllr Willie Whalen

Councillor Colin Glover, Leader of the Council



Overview and Scrutiny panels play an important role in the life of Carlisle City Council. Panels are able to inform policy development, providing valuable perspectives and contributions to assist the Executive when planning for the future and making decisions. Monitoring the work of the Council and questioning Executive members and officers helps us to reflect on the way we work, what changes should be made and how we meet challenges in the future. One of the key strengths of scrutiny is the task and finish work that scrutiny panels carry out. These provide valuable in-depth studies of specific subjects and I have always found the reports and recommendations to be extremely helpful as we try to improve the way we work together. I would like to thank members and officers who have worked throughout the year to support the Overview and Scrutiny work programme, helping to shape and develop policy and practice as we do our best to serve the people of Carlisle.

The Panel receives two reports each year on the Council's partnership with Riverside Cumbria which is an opportunity to gain a true picture of housing provision and requirements within the Social Housing sector and how these are addressed. The Panel has examined Welfare Reform and how both organisations have addressed the challenges and how each were mitigating the consequences for local people.

The Panel has had concerns the effect the changes have on the Revenue and Benefits Services and we were pleased

that the service has coped well and remained in the second quartile each month, with the exception of the one for their performance in the time taken to process new Benefit Claims. This is a real achievement by the service and those who provide it.

Under the Council's Housing Assistance Policy the Council's Housing Section were successful in their bid for HCA funding of £273,700. This funding will provide for an estimated number of 45 empty homes that should be made ready for occupation by March 2015.

I hope this report sets out clearly that the Members of the Panel and the Officers who attend the Panel and participate in Task and Finish Groups devote considerable effort to providing satisfactory services for the people who live and work in our district. I would like to thank them all for their contribution with particular mention of the Scrutiny Officer.



***Cllr Anne Quilter,
Portfolio Holder for
Culture, Health,
Leisure and Young
People***

The members on Overview and Scrutiny make a very valuable contribution to policy decisions. They ask very valid, probing questions about the various reports they scrutinise and their input is taken into account when decisions are being made. I would like to thank all those concerned for all their hard work.

Resources Overview & Scrutiny Panel



PERSONAL VIEW FROM CLLR REG WATSON, CHAIR

Scrutiny is an important part of our local government system that aids the democratic structure of the Council and for the past year the Resources Panel has taken a close look at a number of areas. Routine monitoring and overview of the Council's Budget, Risk Register, Partnerships and Performance gives Members of the Panel an opportunity to identify areas of concern which require further scrutiny. O&S Panel will continue to look for assurance that our staff are being supported through difficult times through continuing scrutiny of sickness absence, organisational development and employee surveys.

The Panel have looked at the refresh of the Asset Management Plan and will continue to monitor the disposal programme over the next year.

A big thank you to the Chief Officers, members of the Executive and all who added to our deliberations. Thank you to our Scrutiny Support Officer for the clear advice and support and thank you to members of the Panel who never failed to get to the heart of the matter before us.

We hope we have added value to the Councils deliberations.

Cllr Dr Les Tickner, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance & Resources



Overview & Scrutiny is a key stage in the democratic process. The members play a vital role in challenge and support of policy proposals. The task and finish workshops are a particularly useful and cost effective means of analysing the many variables associated with policy development.

**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
AUDIT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 14 APRIL 2014**

AUC.27/14 AUDIT COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The Chairman presented report RD.03/14 summarising the work undertaken by the Audit Committee during the period from 15 April 2013 to 24 January 2014.

The existence of the Audit Committee and its work programme enabled the Council to demonstrate that it was following the recommended best practice of the CIPFA Practical Guidance for Audit Committees in Local Authorities. The Committee had strengthened the Council's internal control process through its ability to ensure that systems and controls were robust; that challenges were raised as appropriate; and that adequate follow-up procedures were in operation in relation to audit recommendations. That had been noted and commented on by the external Auditors Audit Manager.

In conclusion, the Chairman recommended that the Audit Committee note and accept the report.

Referring to the Audit Committee's Rules of Governance (Section 6.1 – Attendance), a Member pointed out that attendees would usually include the Leader or Deputy Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Finance. He noted that was not necessarily the case in practice and, following discussion, it was suggested that the word "usually" be amended to "could", "may" or "is likely to".

It was also agreed that the Committee would ask the Executive to give consideration to that point.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Annual Report of the Audit Committee, which would be submitted to the City Council on 29 April 2014, be noted and accepted.

(2) That the Executive be requested to consider the wording of Section 6.1 – Attendance of the Audit Committee's Rules of Governance as identified above.