

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2004 at 2:00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Jefferson (Chairman), Councillors Boaden, Dodd, Guest, Prest (as substitute for Councillor Mallinson), Rutherford C, Stockdale (as substitute for Councillor Bradley) and Styth.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Geddes (Corporate Resources Portfolio holder) attended the meeting for consideration of the last item of business on Colour Photocopying,

### **OSM.49/04 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mallinson and Bradley.

### **OSM.50/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Prest declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct for Members in respect of any mention of Carlisle Housing Association. The interest was related to the fact that she was a City Council appointed member of Carlisle Housing Association Board.

### **OSM.51/04 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004 were noted.

### **OSM.52/04 MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The following minutes were submitted:

(a) **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 7 October and 26 October 2004.**

Councillor Boaden gave an update on progress on some of the matters contained in the minutes.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of 7 and 26 October 2004 be noted.

(b) **Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 21 October 2004.**

A Member referred to the minute on Repairs to Adopted to Unadopted Back Lanes, commenting that the Committee felt that action should be taken straight away and some funding put in place, even if it was a small amount, rather than waiting for the County Council to do

something. She added that the Executive on 8 November 2004 had not acted on the Committee's suggestion that funding should be put in place.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of 21 October 2004 be noted.

(c) **Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 5 October and 14 October 2004.**

The Chairman of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee referred to CROS.150/04 – Broadband for Members and commented that the Executive on 8 November 2004 had not taken up the Committee's suggestion that the pilot programme involve Members other than Executive, Political Group Leaders and Overview & Scrutiny Chairmen. He added that with this combination of Members there was some duplication e.g. he and the Leader would both be assigned two places under this pilot programme and that it would be better if other Members could use these pilot places.

Members commented that with the availability of Broadband, most Members would be able to have access to it and if they were expected to use personal computers to access information, then they should be provided with up-to-date technology. There was often frustration about the length of time it took for Members to download documents using the current dial-up facility.

The Chairman of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee then referred to the Customer Contact Centre development (CROS.151/04) and encouraged all Members to take up the opportunity of touring the new facility. The Executive Director (J Gooding) advised Members that he would be happy to arrange tours for any Members interested at dates and times which would be suitable for them. He asked individual Members to contact him and he would arrange such tours.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of 5 and 14 October 2004 be noted.

**OSM.53/04 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview & Scrutiny Manager submitted the Work Programme for the Overview & Scrutiny Committees for 2004/05 and he highlighted the following matters:

- (a) The Evening and Night Time Economy Task Group was continuing to meet and the next session would be held on 26 November 2004.
- (b) The Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee had agreed to undertake a Subject Review/Inquiry on Anti-Social Behaviour and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. The terms of reference would be considered at the next meeting of that Committee.

- (c) The dates of special meetings to consider budgetary reports had been rescheduled.
- (d) The Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee has an audit responsibility to look at the SAS610 Statement. There is a need to discuss the future methodology for dealing with this statement as it is becoming increasingly difficult to get a definite date when the Statement will be available and therefore to arrange a meeting of the Committee to consider the matter. The Overview & Scrutiny Manager will continue to discuss this matter with the Head of Finance and it may be that the solution for the future years would be to delegate the matter.
- (e) The Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee had considered a report on Hadrian's Wall and had made a linkage to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee and asked that Committee to take some points on board during their consideration of the Museum and Arts Service Development Plan.
- (f) The report on grass cutting would go to the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December 2004 and not October 2004 as originally scheduled.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Work Programme for Overview & Scrutiny Committees for 2004/05 be approved.

(2) That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Manager discuss with the Head of Finance the most appropriate future method of considering the SAS610 Statement.

#### **OSM.54/04 MONITORING OF AND CHANGES TO THE FORWARD PLAN**

The Overview & Scrutiny Manager presented Report LDS.50/04 informing Members of changes to the Executive's Forward Plan for 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

#### **OSM.55/04 GRASS CUTTING AND ENVIRONMENTAL MAINTENANCE**

With reference to minute OSM.45/04, the Head of Commercial and Technical Services attended the meeting and gave a verbal update on grass cutting and environmental maintenance.

Mr Battersby advised that the grass cutting issue had been taken very seriously by officers and a wide-ranging review, conducted on Best Value principles, had been undertaken and considered by the Executive on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2004. This review will go to the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny

Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2004. Every Member had been given an opportunity to contribute to the debate as part of the review process.

A Member referred to some of the specific concerns which had been identified by this Committee at the last meeting and requested an update on the following:

- (a) Verges on one side of the road being cut and the others on the opposite side being left uncut.

Mr Battersby advised that the review did look at working practices and the way operations are undertaken and the type of machines used with the aim of resolving this problem. He added that there could still be some problems in that some verges are maintained by Carlisle Housing Association (CHA), but efforts were being made to ensure that CHA adopted the same standards. He added that all Council verges should ideally be cut at the same time, but there were also elements which are outwith officer's control e.g. the weather.

In response to a Member's question, he explained that the relevant portfolio holder was arranging a meeting with Carlisle Housing Association to discuss and try and resolve the matter.

- (b) The collection of grass cuttings has been a source of complaint over a number of years and there was a query as to whether this had been included as part of the review.

Mr Battersby advised that this issue had been considered and a number of recommendations made about boxing and collecting the grass. He added that the wide-scale collection of grass in all areas cut would have a prohibitive cost, but that there could be some targeted areas where grass is collected. Members discussed the potential clash of policies where environmental policies encourage composting of grass and yet there are substantial costs attached to the collection of grass. Members commented that if the costs of grass collection were prohibitive, then the public needed to be informed about this, as it was a common source of complaints and facts were not being explained to the public.

- (c) The number and frequency of grass cuts.

Mr Battersby stated that the review had recommended that in an ideal world 18 cuts of general amenity areas would be appropriate. The Executive on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2004 had considered this proposal and had resolved that there should be 15 cuts.

In response to a Member's question, he advised that currently grass areas categorised as ornamental areas such as Bitts Park and Hardwick Circus, receive 26 or 28 cuts a year and general amenity areas are cut 12 times a year. The Executive had agreed that this be

increased to 15 and a programme would be developed to incorporate these 15 cuts within the growing season.

- (d) A Member commented that CHA were wanting to meet with the Authority to look at some areas which had been transferred to them, but that they felt were now inappropriate. This included the maintenance of areas outside rows of houses which were now predominantly owner occupied.

The Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive responded that a meeting would be arranged with the new Carlisle Housing Association Chief Executive to look at this and other issues and Members would be kept updated with progress.

RESOLVED – That the Committee notes the progress with the review of grass cutting which would be scrutinised by the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2004.

#### **OSM.56/04 CENTRAL REFERRAL SYSTEM – SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS: PROGRESS REPORT**

With reference to OSM.45/04, the Communications Manager reported on progress with the development of a central referral system to consolidate referrals and complaints made to individual Council Members.

The Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive reminded Members that this had been raised at two different Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee meetings and there had been a suggestion that a central referral system would help to highlight common problem areas/complaints across the City.

The Communications Manager outlined the current situation where Members use their own customised referral notices to constituents and completed forms are passed to the relevant Section or officer of the City Council for action and feedback. Approximately 2,000 of these referral forms are received and actioned in a year, covering a wide range of front line services. The Members Referral system, if refined and used in conjunction with others, could provide a useful source of information for Members and officers with feedback being used in a constructive way to solve issues and improve services provided directly and by other agencies.

As part of the development of the Customer Contact Centre, the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System will allow all referrals, requests for services and complaints to be logged centrally, whether they come from people visiting the Civic Centre, via e-mails, letters or telephone calls. It was anticipated that this central logging system would be up and running from 13 December 2004. Ms Taylor then outlined a possible solution whereby the Members' referral forms could be logged onto this CRM System. The established process of the delivery and return of the referral notes by and to elected Members would not be altered, but the paper referral notes could be

logged on to the system via the Customer Contact Centre and returned to the appropriate Member Support Officer.

The type of information logged from Members' referral forms would have to be agreed by Members and clearly there were issues of confidential information being logged onto a central system. Further discussions would need to take place with Members before the details of how the system could work were settled.

The Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that, after initial discussions with some Members, there had been concerns about the confidentiality aspects and that there would be further development in consultation with Members.

Members were then invited to comment on the proposals in relation to the central referral system. In considering the matter, Members made the following comments and observations:

- (a) There was concern that the logging of complaints onto a system would introduce a level of bureaucracy and delay action in addressing or resolving the matter which was the subject of the complaint.

The Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that the way the complaint was actioned and dealt with would not be any different, but this process would simply capture the information and provide a facility for identifying common problem areas or areas of complaint.

Ms Taylor added that the logging and tracking of complaints and referrals would mean that Members would be able to see exactly what had happened to a complaint and then track its progress.

- (b) There were fears that this process could lead to a depersonalisation. Individual Members currently use the referral system extensively and are pro-active in keeping in touch with complainants about the action which has been taken to address their complaint. Members were worried that the system may be depersonalised.

The Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive commented that the system would continue to be developed to assess the best way of pulling the information together, but that the personal relationship between the individual Member and the person making the referral or complaint would not need to change.

- (c) There was a concern that even if common areas of complaint are identified at a corporate level, action to address these common areas was essentially a political decision and having this knowledge about the number of complaints on a specific area may not in itself change anything.

- (d) The benefits to the Authority of having this information may be apparent, but would there be any benefits for the people who were raising the concerns in the first place?

The Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that the Member referral system would not really change, but the logging of all complaints would provide information which would help to inform the decision-making process when it came to providing better services.

- (e) In response to a Member's question about the logging of telephone calls or complaints made directly to officers, Ms Taylor advised that the Customer Relationship Management System would pull together all these points of contact and complaint. If the Member's referral information was added to this, then it would give an accurate picture of the kind of concerns that were being raised across the City. It would also mean that complaints about outside agencies or bodies could be used in discussions with these organisations with statistics used to back up any concerns.
- (f) In response to a Member's question about what type of information would be logged from 13 December 2004 onwards, the Executive Director (J Gooding) advised that all contacts with customers, whether by telephone or people actually visiting the building, would be logged and, where appropriate, further information collected.

At some point in the future after that, a central referral system for Member's referrals could feed into this system. The information which this CRM System could provide on areas of concern or complaint across the City would mean that there is solid evidence to back up any political debate or discussion on the shape of future services to meet customer's needs.

- (g) How would progress with the complaints be reported back to individual Members?

Mr Gooding advised that the system could be developed in any way and it was up to Members and officers to decide. It could be developed so that Members are kept informed with responses to complaints. Members stressed that they would not want to be taken out of the loop and they did need to be kept informed of progress with referrals which had been made to them and logged onto the system.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Communications Manager be asked to take on board the comments of the Committee, as outlined above, in developing the central referral system.

- (2) That this Committee continue to be involved in the development of a central referral system and a report back with more detail be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

## **OSM.57/04 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING – APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2004**

The Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted Report CE.32/04 which was the first Corporate Performance Monitoring Report of the City Council for April to September 2004. At a previous meeting of the Committee (OSM.41/04) the Committee had requested that this report be brought to this meeting so that comments could be made on the format and process.

The Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive commented on the development of the current system, stating that the main concerns had revolved around the role of the Executive in performance monitoring and performance monitoring being ingrained in the culture of the City Council. Previously the 12 Business Units produced separate performance monitoring reports, but with this new system these could be gathered together along with key performance indicators and an overall corporate report. It was anticipated that this type of report would be useful to Overview & Scrutiny Committees in their performance monitoring role and also the Executive.

In response to a request for Members' comments on the format of the report, the following comments and observations were made:

- (a) The length of the report may put Members off reading the whole document;
- (b) There should be a standard format of report to be used by all Business Units. Ms Mooney advised that this could be arranged with Business Unit Heads.
- (c) The use of acronyms with no explanations make the report difficult to understand, particularly for Members who do not have a detailed knowledge of the work of individual Business Units.
- (d) The amount of information in the report means that the onus is on Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen to ensure that Members confine their comments to the areas under the remit of each individual Committee.
- (e) There were concerns that the format of the report and the amount of information would make it difficult for back bench and Overview and Scrutiny Members to understand and use the document effectively.
- (f) It was recognised that the report is in its infancy and needs to be developed further.
- (g) An Executive Summary at the front of each Business Unit report was suggested, although it was recognised that performance information becomes outdated very quickly.
- (h) The costs of producing a report of this size on a quarterly basis were discussed.



- (i) Performance monitoring and improvement of performance need to become ingrained in the culture of the authority and each Business Unit Head could report on progress with this cultural shift within their Unit.
- (j) Reports should be reviewed and edited by an officer to check that the format is appropriate before they are put in front of Members
- (k) In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that Business Unit Heads would attend the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees to answer questions on specific aspects of performance.

Ms Mooney also advised that the Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive or the Executive Directors would attend each of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees to answer questions and address any concerns of Members.

RESOLVED – (1) That the comments of the Committee on the report, as outlined above, be taken on board by the Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive and the Head of Strategic and Performance Services in the development of future reports.

(2) That each of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen report verbally at the next meeting of this Committee on how the report was received and dealt with at their respective meetings.

#### **OSM.58/04 COLOUR PHOTOCOPYING**

The Committee Services Manager submitted correspondence on colour photocopying for Committee Members. The issues had been raised by the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CROS.151/04) which had requested that in future reports to Committee, any coloured documentation should be reproduced in colour and not in black and white.

The Committee Services Manager advised that after this request, he had written to the Corporate Resources Portfolio holder outlining concerns about the capability of the current photocopying machines to produce colour copies as part of long print runs and the significantly higher cost of producing colour copies, which has an impact on the already over committed printing budget. The Head of Customer and Information Services was due to replace the current copying machines early in 2005.

The Corporate Resources Portfolio holder had responded that due to the operational problems and the costs to be incurred for colour photocopying facilities on long print runs of large documents, another means of communicating colour should be sought. She had suggested that the matter be discussed at this Committee.

The Committee Services Manager then proposed that in order to give Members the best service, whilst being mindful of the costs, the following protocol should be adopted:

- (a) That reports continue to be produced in black and white, with any coloured pages being available in the Overview and Scrutiny Officers room, copies displayed at the meeting and the coloured reports available on Members' computers.

If there are reports where the coloured elements are basic to the understanding of the report, these will be copied in colour.

- (b) That the Committee asks that the Head of Customer and Information Services be made aware of the situation and asked to bear this in mind when considering the options for the purchase of new photocopiers.
- (c) That the Committee asks the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to review the matter once new photocopiers are purchased next year and the costs and capability of the new machines to produce colour copies as part of a long print run are known.

The Corporate Resources Portfolio holder added that there have been additional pressures on the printing budget due to the number and frequency of special meetings over and above those scheduled for the year.

The Chairman of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented that the issues had been raised over three pages which should have been produced in colour and he felt that colour was important to visualise the impact of the posters concerned. Other Members commented that Members should be kept well informed and that if the printing budget was not sufficient to cover the costs of colour copying where it was required in the report, then the budget should be reviewed.

Another Member suggested that efforts should be taken to ensure that Members are not sent multiple copies of the same report, as they serve on a number of Committees. Members could be asked to keep hold of the report for use at different meetings. In addition, better use could be made of the facilities in the Council Chamber where colour photographs and charts can be displayed on the screens.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Corporate Resources Portfolio holder be asked to take the points raised by this Committee on board when the Executive is considering budgetary matters.

(2) That, in the interim and until the new photocopiers are purchased, the following protocol as proposed by the Committee Services Manager be adopted in relation to colour photocopying:

- (a) That reports continue to be produced in black and white, with any coloured pages being available in the Overview and Scrutiny Officers room, copies displayed at the meeting and the coloured reports available on Members' computers.

If there are reports where the coloured elements are basic to the understanding of the report, these will be copied in colour.

- (b) That the Head of Customer and Information Services be made aware of the situation and asked to bear this in mind when considering the options for the purchase of new photocopiers.
- (c) That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services review the matter once new photocopiers are purchased next year and the costs and capability of the new machines to produce colour copies as part of a long print run are known.

The meeting ended at 3.45pm