

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2003 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Jefferson (Chairman), Councillors Boaden, Bradley, Dodd, Guest, E Mallinson, Prest and C Rutherford.

ALSO PRESENT:- Councillor Firth attended the meeting as an observer.

OSM.59/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs E Mallinson declared a prejudicial interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in Minute OSM.63/03 (Scoping the Revenues and Benefits Best Value Review) as she owned a house for which the tenant was in receipt of Housing Benefit.

OSM.60/03 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 25 September 2003 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

Referring to Minute OSM.58/03 on Performance Management, a question had been raised at the last meeting that some of the data used for Performance Management and Performance Indicators was based on Wards which had not been in existence for a number of years.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported that he had sought clarification on this issue. He reported that most figures needing population data were still produced using 1991 Ward boundaries, eg, unemployment figures. This was because the population figures were based on the Census which was only produced every 10 years. The Office for National Statistics had advised that most Ward level data would be updated with 2001 Census information within the next month or so and this would certainly be the case for unemployment data. However other data such as travel to work areas may not catch up so quickly.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

OSM.61/03 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The following Minutes were submitted:-

- a. Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 2 October 2003.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be noted.

Matters Arising

Minute COS.100/03 – Evening Economy in Carlisle

The Committee was asked to consider whether to undertake a review of the Evening Economy in Carlisle.

The Chairman of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported that a House of Commons Select Committee had been investigating the growing "night life" and associated problems in City Centres which had implications for Local Authorities. She understood that Local Authorities may be required to prepare strategies to manage "night life" in their inner city areas.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported that the Government had now responded to the points raised by the House of Commons Select Committee and had highlighted a number of issues for Local Authorities to investigate.

Members considered that the impending changes to the Licensing legislation may well impact on this issue.

Members also considered that a short subject matter review would be appropriate to identify the issues which the City Council may need to address in the future. The Community and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committees should have an input into this review.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Manager be requested to schedule a subject matter review on the Evening Economy in Carlisle in the Work Programme of the Community and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the new year.

2. That the Review be conducted by nominated Members of the Community and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committees and their findings be presented to these Committees and the Executive.
3. That the Review concentrate on prioritising the issues needing to be addressed by the City Council as a result of the Government's response to the House of Commons Select Committee report in order that the Executive may be made aware of the implications and forward plan accordingly.

Minute COS.108/03 – Meeting Arrangements

Members attention was drawn to Minute COS.108/03 of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 2 October 2003 requesting this Committee to consider agreeing to arrangements being made for Overview and Scrutiny meetings to break for lunch and reconvene in the afternoon where Agendas were particularly lengthy to allow full consideration and scrutiny of all matters by Committees.

The Chairman of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported that this had arisen because of a particularly lengthy Agenda at the last meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Similarly, she advised that the forthcoming meeting also had a number of lengthy items on the Agenda.

Members made the following comments:-

- a. Members would prefer half day meetings;

- b. Overview and Scrutiny Committees should have less items on their Agendas so that there is time to properly scrutinise important issues;
- c. It was difficult for some Members to get time off from work for all day meetings;
- d. The way items were included in the Forward Plan often gave insufficient time for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to properly scrutinise and comment on key decisions;
- e. Lengthy meetings had an impact on staff servicing the meetings.

RESOLVED – That arrangements for meetings be included as an item for discussion at the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Workshop.

- a. Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 23 October 2003.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be noted.

- (c) Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 16 October 2003.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be noted.

OSM.62/03 WORK PROGRAMME FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

COMMITTEES

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager submitted the Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2003/04 and highlighted some specific items in the programme:

a. Budget Issues

Mr Mallinson reported that special meetings of the Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committees had been arranged for the week commencing 10 November 2003 to discuss Executive budget reports. In addition, these budget reports would also be discussed at the ordinary meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2003.

Mr Mallinson considered that, in future years, special meetings of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees could be scheduled into the Council Diary to deal solely with budget reports.

RESOLVED – That it be agreed that special meetings of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees be scheduled into the Council Diary from 2004 onwards to deal solely with budget reports.

b. The Post Foot and Mouth Disease Environmental and Health Matters

Mr Mallinson reported that the first session of this subject review had taken place "Select Committee style" at a special meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 October 2003. This had been a useful session. The second session for this review would be held on 26 November 2003.

He indicated that a review on Transport Modal Balance would be undertaken by the

Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a similar way.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

c. Annual Overview and Scrutiny Workshop

Mr Mallinson asked the Committee to consider a suitable date for the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Workshop for Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Group Leaders, the outcomes of which would be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to be produced in April 2004.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Manager be requested to make arrangements for the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Workshop to take place on Monday 26 January 2004 at 10am in Tullie House.

d. Regional Government Timetable

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted a timetable to progress the City Council's response to the Boundary Committee options on the future structure of Local Government in Cumbria as part of the Regional Government debate. The Boundary Committee would announce options on 2 December 2003 upon which responses were to be invited by 23 February 2004.

A timetable allowing an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to receive details of the Boundary Committee's options at their January 2004 meetings and to comment on the Executive's proposed response at special Overview and Scrutiny meetings in early February 2004 was submitted.

The Committee's views on the timetable were requested.

The timetable would also be submitted to the Executive.

RESOLVED – That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive's attention be drawn to the following:-

- a. The proposed date for the special Council meeting (19 February 2004) to agree the City Council's response to the Boundary Committee clashed with a meeting of Cumbria County Council.
- b. In order to give Members time to consider the Executive's final proposed response to the Boundary Committee and for Political Group meetings to be arranged, the Executive's final response should be available for despatch with the Council Summons for the special Council meeting. The date for the Executive meeting to decide upon its final response would need to be scheduled earlier.
- c. If special meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are arranged to consider the Executive's draft response, they should be in the form of three separate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

**OSM.63/03 MONITORING OF AND CHANGES TO THE
FORWARD PLAN**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager presented Report LDS.68/03 informing Members of changes to the Executive's Forward Plan for 1 October 2003 to 31 January 2004.

RESOLVED – That the Report be noted.

OSM.64/03 SCOPING THE REVENUES AND BENEFITS BEST VALUE REVIEW

Councillor Mrs E Mallinson, having declared a prejudicial interest, withdrew from the meeting room.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits gave a presentation on the key issues for the Revenues and Benefits Best Value Review prior to the formal scoping exercise, to be undertaken by this Committee in December 2003/January 2004.

He drew Members' attention to the fact that the Revenues and Benefits Service had been rated as "good" by the CPA Inspectors, but that there were also a number of areas where improvements could be made. The implementation of the full Customer Contact proposals and the outcome of the Regional Government Debate would have a significant impact on how the service was delivered to the customer in the future.

RESOLVED – (1) That this Committee accepts that, whilst the service had been rated "good" by the CPA Inspectors, a Best Value Review of Revenues and Benefits is justified for the following reasons :

- (a) The arrangements for the Customer Contact Centre will impact on service delivery.
- (b) The outcome of the Regional Government Debate and formation of new Unitary Authorities will also impact on the service.
- (c) There were a number of areas where the CPA Inspectors considered the service could be improved and it was important for these to be addressed.
- (d) The dependency of the service on IT and problems with losing trained staff needed addressing. These were issues which applied throughout the Authority.

(2) That as part of the formal scoping exercise, the Head of Revenues and Benefits Services be requested to identify whether the Service could perform work for other Local Authorities or private sector companies.

(The meeting ended at 3.45 pm)

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