
**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 14 AUGUST 2003**

OSM.46/03 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(c) Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 23 June and 24 July 2003

With reference to Minute CROS.82/03, Members' had expressed concerns regarding current arrangements to enable Overview and Scrutiny Committees to effectively scrutinise business within the Forward Plan, and the Committee had requested that the manner by which Forward Plan reports are presented to Committees be reviewed.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager commented that the Forward Plan should inform the public and make the nature of forthcoming Executive decisions transparent and accountable. It should also assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in planning work and selecting items for scrutiny. Members were concerned that the Forward Plan was not being used as a planning tool but was seen as a bureaucratic activity.

Members' concerns related to:

(a) *The appearance of "standing items" in the Forward Plan* – Although a standing item on Asset Management had been removed from the Plan, there was still a standing item on budgetary matters. In order to be transparent and open to the public, Members felt that there should be separate items for each budgetary matter clearly identifying what the Executive would be considering under these headings.

The Executive Director commented that financial issues were reported to the Executive at every meeting but accepted that officers should be specific about the descriptions of the budgetary matters being included in the Forward Plan.

(b) *Quality of Descriptions* – Members referred to examples within the Forward Plan where the description of a subject and the decision the Executive were being asked to take was very unclear. There needed to be clearer descriptions of items contained within the Forward Plan which Members and the public could understand.

The Executive Director commented that it should be possible to improve the quality of the descriptions of matters contained in the Forward Plan.

(c) *Lack of reference to Overview and Scrutiny Committees* – There was often no reference to matters going to Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Overview and Scrutiny Manager suggested that a box could be included within the Forward Plan identifying which was the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, where there

were cross-cutting issues which had been considered in the past, which Committee had taken the lead on these items.

This box would also allow Officers to state the date they planned relevant matters to go to Overview and Scrutiny Committees or explain why they did not need to be reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager emphasised that Committees should not be looking at every matter contained within the Forward Plan, but that there were a number of matters of importance which Officers should programme for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Executive Director commented that she could report these concerns and proposed improvements to the Corporate Management Team and ask them to implement these improvements to the Forward Plan.

Members suggested that the Head of Member Support and Employee Services, as the Business Unit Head with the remit for Overview and Scrutiny, should attend each Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to listen to the concerns and views of the Committee and champion them at Corporate Management Team.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Manager invite the Head of Member Support and Employee Services to attend each meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to listen to the Committee's views and concerns and represent them at Corporate Management Team.

(2) That the Executive Director raise at Corporate Management Team the following concerns and potential improvements in relation to the Forward Plan:-

(a) Financial and budgetary items should be included as individual items rather than being incorporated within one "standing item".

(b) The quality of descriptions of Forward Plan items should be improved with clearer descriptions being used.

(d) An Overview and Scrutiny box should be included within each Forward Plan item setting out which Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be responsible or was taking a lead in a cross cutting matter and the dates when the matter was programmed to be reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, or a statement that the matter was not to be reported to Overview and Scrutiny and why.

**Carlisle City Council
Forward Plan of Executive Decisions**

Reference:

Active:

Subject:

Portfolio Area:

Key Decisions

Decision to be taken at Executive meeting on

Responsible or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Date when the matter will be considered by that Overview and Scrutiny Committee OR reason why the matter does not need to go to Overview and Scrutiny:

Consultees:

Date for Consultees' comments:

Relevant reports/background papers which are available:

Further Information from:

