

ENVIRONMENT & RURAL AREA SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Rural Area Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 15th September, 2010 at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford, Shropshire

PRESENT: Councillors T.J. Hope (Chairman), R. Aveley, R.E. Groom, R.T. Kiernan, C.F. Smith, and E.M. Swift

ERASC-1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mrs L Baker-Oliver (Co-optee)

ERASC-2 APPOINTMENT OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2010/11

The Chairman stated that it was her intention to attend every meeting of the Committee during the year and in the unlikely occasion that she was unable to attend, a Chairman for that particular meeting could then be elected at the meeting.

It was, consequently, agreed to continue the year without an appointed Vice Chairman.

ERASC-3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

ERASC-4 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE REPORT

The Chairman reported that the Chairman's' Forum had met on the 16th August (the meeting was open to any Member of the Scrutiny Assembly to attend to observe) and It was agreed that the 3 in-depth reviews for the current year would be:

- Budget formulation - suggestions about how to save money (the scoping meeting for this review will be held next week)
- Working with community groups to help improve the local environment
- Affordable, available and flexible childcare

Scrutiny Meetings would be supported by the Scrutiny Team during the year, and each Committee would hold one meeting during the budget consultation process to consider the budget proposals for that priority area. The Environment & Rural Area Scrutiny Committee would have 3 meetings to carry out the work programme during the year (excluding the budget scrutiny meeting).

Each Scrutiny Committee would receive a report on the service reviews that are underway across the Council, and it was important that Scrutiny Members were aware of the financial constraints and the service reviews when planning the work programme.

The Chairmen also met to review and rationalise the Recommendations data base to filter out the completed jobs and archive out of date recommendations. Officers

would be asked to update the remaining recommendations and inform the relevant Scrutiny Committee Members and upload on the Scrutiny Extranet.

ERASC-5 SERVICE REVIEWS

A report was presented that informed Members of the Service Reviews that were taking place within the Council, in line with the One Council Vision.

The programme of service reviews was currently being undertaken across all service delivery units within the Council. The reviews would look at how services were managed and operated to identify ways in which services can be delivered to the community more efficiently and effectively, within the resources available. The reviews needed to produce operational (non-staff) savings of 20% and were likely to lead to restructuring.

A Service Review Steering Group had been set up to oversee the programme and to monitor the progress of each service delivery unit, including information on changes in activity and savings.

A Table, within the report, provided information on the timetable for service reviews taking place across the Council.

The Steering Group would ensure a consistent approach across the Council.

Reviews should produce cashable efficiency savings aligned to the budget position and corporate priorities. Regardless of whether re-structuring was planned, all service areas would be expected to identify savings in line with corporate targets. All reviews would be expected to demonstrate how they had taken into account issues/suggestions arising from the engagement session carried out in their area.

It was explained to Members that the Reviews had been categorised and Category 1 reviews aimed to achieve savings of over £1m, Category 2 between £500k to £1m savings ; and category 3 of under £500k savings. Members commented upon the categorisation of the reviews and asked for information as to which services were categorised 1 2 or 3.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted, together with an acknowledgement of the role of the service reviews when planning the Committee's work programme.

ERASC-6 UPDATE ON THE SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

A report had been circulated with the agenda that outlined the current position regarding Flood Risk Management. Chris Butler, Engineering Service Manager & Steve Hollins, Engineering Services Officer explained the report and outlined the implications for the Council of the recent Floods & Water Management Act that had gained Royal Assent in April 2010.

Telford & Wrekin Council was now a Lead Local Flood Authority that must take responsibility for local flooding and lead action to combat incidents in the Borough.

Members enquired as to the legal responsibilities pertaining to drainage systems and the officers explained the detailed arrangements that may exist in different circumstances

The Council was to establish a Strategic Local Flood Risk Management Board, by April 2011, to focus on identifying areas of the region at risk of flooding and to secure funding from DEFRA and the Environment Agency for maintenance and alleviation works. There would also be an operational Local Flood Risk Management Board to provide professional and expert advice to the Strategic Board.

Members commented upon the maintenance issues relating to the numerous old Victorian drainage systems in the more established towns in the Borough.

New developments now had to demonstrate a level of sustainable drainage system and in fact the envisaged new Civic offices development in Southwater Square would have a rain water harvesting system to retain and reuse rainwater at the site.

ERASC-7 WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager presented a report that aimed to assist Members to plan the work programme for the Environment & Rural Area Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny arrangements had been established in June 2010 to enable each Scrutiny Committee to determine its own work programme within the resources available. To ensure that the Scrutiny work programme was a Member led process and the work was balanced between Scrutiny Reviews and the Scrutiny Committees, the work programme was planned through 3 stages, the detail of which was explained within the report.

The Scrutiny Handbook set out that there would be a total of approximately 80 Scrutiny meetings during the year and the Constitution stated that each Scrutiny Committee would have a minimum of 2 formal meetings per year. In recognition of the fact that some committees (Active Lifestyles: Leisure and Culture, Children and Young People and Community Focussed and Efficient Council) had statutory roles and additional work the Scrutiny Chairmen allocated those committees 3 additional meetings.

Each Committee would also hold a meeting to scrutinise the budget proposals. The remaining meetings were allocated between the committees, 2 meetings were allocated to committees that did not have Scrutiny Review and 1 meeting was allocated to the Committees with a Scrutiny Review. The number of meetings per Committee was shown in the Table 1 of the report.

Within the table, the column 'Free Meetings' indicated the number of meetings the Scrutiny Team could support for each committee (that did not include the September Committee Meetings). The Environment & Rural Areas Scrutiny Committee had 3 meetings to scrutinise issues during 2010/11.

The Scrutiny Handbook set out a range of methods that Members may wish to use to undertake the work of the Committee:

- Formal Committee Meeting

The Members of the Committee receive reports on several issues as agenda items at a Committee meeting.

- Special Interest Meeting

One meeting to consider one issue in more depth. It is important that the focus of this meeting is scoped carefully to ensure it can be covered in a single meeting.

- Spot Light Review

This process for a spot light review is the same as an in-depth review but the evidence gathering takes place in one meetings. The review should require 3 meetings in total.

Members considered the suggestions made at the recent Scrutiny Assembly workshop and agreed to examine the Traffic Calming Measures

Some Members also indicated a desire to also examine the suggestion of Planning Enforcement but were reminded of the limited resources available and agreed to potentially look at it as part of next years work programme.

RESOLVED –

(a) that the following topic be examined by the Committee during 2010/11 :

- **Traffic Calming Measures**

(b) that an In-depth review be undertaken on “Working with Community Groups to improve the Environment”

(c) that the Committee examine the proposed Council Budget relating to the Environment & Rural Areas as part of the Budget Review exercise undertaken by all Scrutiny Committees

The meeting ended at 11.57 a.m.

Chairman:

Date: