

## **Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting Date: Thursday, 25 August 2011, starting at 6.30pm  
Present: Councillor M Thomas (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Bibby	S Knox
S Carefoot	I Sayers
P Dowson	N C Walsh
J B Hill	J White

In attendance: Principal Policy and Performance Officer.

### 288 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Berryman, K Horikin and A Knox.

### 289 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 290 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

### 291 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

### 292 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

### 293 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Chairman commented that in previous meetings there had always been a report from Councillor Hilton in relation to health service matters which were now being referred to Health and Housing Committee.

### 294 SCRUTINY TRAINING

The Chairman reported on the scrutiny training which had been held at County Hall, Preston in July and had been hosted by Lancashire County Council Scrutiny Section.

Both Councillor Thomas and Councillor White had attended along with Councillor A Knox. Both Councillors Thomas and White felt that the training did not have much relevance to Ribble Valley as most of those attending were not fourth

option Councils and were from authorities which operated a cabinet system. The training was therefore concentrated on cabinet style authorities.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

## 295 PROGRESS REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

### (a) Representatives on Outside Bodies

Councillor White referred to his Scoping document which outlined some of the problems with the way the Council made appointments to Outside Bodies. He commented that there seemed to be a lack of consistency on which bodies had Council representation, the types of bodies served, regularity of meetings, relevance to the work of the Council and feedback from the representative concerned to a parent committee.

The list included in the Year Book was by no means exhaustive as Councillor White stated that he was on two bodies which did not appear in the Year Book.

The report also highlighted the need for a survey of all Councillors on which bodies they served, length of time spent attending meetings, how many meetings were held each year, reporting back etc.

Members then discussed the matter in some detail.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) action be taken on the Scoping document and agree to send the survey out to all Councillors; and
- (2) the Working Group present a further report on the results of the Member Survey to be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee.

### (b) Member Training

Councillor Hill circulated a document that included draft Terms of Reference and a Member learning and Development Strategy.

Councillor Bibby reported that a Scoping document needed to be prepared taking into account Members' availability, budgets and making better use of existing Members as possible mentors. She commented that she was prepared to speak to all Councillors about their training needs and experience.

Councillor Hill stressed the need to educate Members on new legislation to enable them to keep up to date.

It was recognised that a new Scoping document would have to reflect the realities of the Council's current situation.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Working Group prepare a Scoping document and this be submitted to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for their approval; and
- (2) a progress report be presented to the next meeting of this Committee.
- (c) Safeguarding

Councillor S Knox reported that she had spoken to the Head of Cultural and Leisure Services who was currently the Council's lead officer on safeguarding. She referred to the recent history of safeguarding which was now a district Council responsibility. She proposed to send a questionnaire to all staff who were affected by safeguarding and she was also currently working on a safeguarding policy.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a further progress report be submitted to the next meeting.

- (d) Ribble Valley Borough Council Website

Councillor S Knox reported on behalf of this Working Group that whilst the problems encountered last year with the planning element of the website had now been rectified, there were still other problems, particularly with the Licensing Section.

Members felt that the main problems was one of interrogation. There was not a dedicated officer responsible for the website which meant that individual officers were responsible for their own area of work. This, in turn, leads to inconsistency of approach.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Corporate Management Team that they reconsider the appointment of a dedicated webmaster to take overall responsibility for the Ribble Valley Borough Council website as part of their ongoing discussions on the Council restructure.

- (e) Energy Efficiency

The Chairman reported, for information, that the Working Group's report had been forwarded to Community Committee who had now agreed to form a new working group comprising the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Community Committee and Councillors Berryman and Sayers to continue further investigations into this matter.

RESOLVED: That the matter be noted.

- (f) Functioning of this Committee

Councillor Hill raised the issue about the powers of this Committee to instruct public bodies to attend our meetings to be held to account over particular issues. The Chairman commented that there was no mention of such a power within the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Reference was made to a recent request for the Lancashire County Council Highways Officers to attend a future planning and development Committee.

The Chairman reported that the Working Group were well on the way to producing revised Terms of Reference and Functions for this Committee.

RESOLVED: That

1. the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be asked whether this Committee has a specific power to require attendance at Committee by officers from public bodies; and
2. a further report on Terms of Reference and Functions be presented to the next meeting of this Committee.

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#### QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Principal Policy and Performance Officer presented her first report of 2011/12 which detailed the Council's performance against our local performance indicators. The report comprised quarterly figures for all our local indicators reported by exception.

Members then looked in detail at the following red performance indicators:

- EH1 – Food premises inspections.
- EH2 – Health and safety Initial Inspections.
- ES1 – Number of reported missed collection (refuse collection).
- RH1 – Private sector dwellings returned into occupation or demolished.
- RH5 – Length of stay in temporary accommodation (hostels).
- RH7 – Number of affordable homes delivered.

(i) EH1 and EH2

Members were concerned that these figures showed no immediate signs of improvement and questioned what action the Health and Housing Committee were considering. There was also concern about the length of the temporary staff cover which had been agreed to help these two areas of work.

RESOLVED: That this Committee pass on to Health and Housing Committee their concern at these figures and ask what action was being taken to improve the situation.

(ii) ES1

Committee did not accept the explanation given by officers in relation to missed collections.

RESOLVED: That this Committee urge Community Committee to ensure that the figures for missed collections is reduced from red to a green indicator as soon as possible.

(iii) RH1, RH5 and RH7

A lengthy discussion took place in relation to the number of empty private dwellings and the length of stay in hostel accommodation and affordable housing provision accommodation. Committee felt that if drastic action was not taken some of these figures would only get worse.

Councillor Hill gave his comments on a legal and reliable remedy to the empty dwellings question.

RESOLVED: That a performance clinic looking at these performance indicators be convened for Tuesday, 18 October 2011, starting at 5pm. Those to be invited to include Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Health and Housing Committee, all Members of this Committee and relevant Officers including the Head of Regeneration and Housing and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

297 FOURTH OPTION COUNCILS

The Chairman referred to three publications:

- Guidance for fourth option Councils issued by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.
- The Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny from Richmondshire District Council.
- Scrutiny and Local Accountability – details of course held recently in Newcastle.

Whilst the Chairman accepted that the guidance document from CFPS was 7 years old, it still had some useful information.

He commented that he was impressed with the document from Richmondshire, particularly the way in which they, as a fourth option Council, dealt with their overview and scrutiny function.

Finally the Principal Policy and Performance Officer recommended that if Members wished to attend a further round of seminars on scrutiny and local accountability, she could book places which were free.

RESOLVED: That the above information be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.49pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact John Heap (414461).