

## **SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Panel held on Friday, 6 March 2015 at 2.30 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

### **Present**

Councillor Simon Boshier (in the Chair)

Councillors Michael Andrewes  
John Ferrett  
Hannah Hockaday  
Matthew Winnington

### **Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Alicia Denny, Darren Sanders and Phil Smith

#### **5. Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alicia Denny, Darren Sanders and Phil Smith.

#### **6. Declarations of Members' interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of members' interests.

#### **7. Minutes of the Meetings of 25 July 2014, 29 August 2014, 5 December 2014 and 6 February 2015 (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes from the meetings of 25 July 2014, 29 August 2014, 5 December 2014 and 6 February 2015 be confirmed and signed by the chair as correct records.**

Before the next item Councillor Andrewes queried progress made in connection with the resolution passed at the Friday 29 August 2014 meeting which was to set up an ad hoc scrutiny panel to undertake a review into parking. The chair of the Scrutiny Management Panel said that an officer-led review had been decided upon outside the meeting which took precedence over the Scrutiny Management Panel's resolution.

The City Solicitor said that the outcome of the officer review would be reported back to the Scrutiny Management Panel. He said that the scrutiny panel review had not been proceeded with as the work would amount to a duplication. During further discussion the following points were made:

- Councillor Boshier has asked the Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation and officers to advise him when terms of reference had been drafted for the review.

- The City Solicitor advised that he would follow up and report back to members of Scrutiny Management Panel concerning progress made.
- The chair felt there was no point in progressing with a scrutiny review if an officer review was already in progress.
- The chair confirmed he was still waiting to receive documents concerning the parking review and would make these known to the Scrutiny Management Panel as soon as he could.
- Councillor Ferrett said that matters appear to have been overtaken by events. The facts had changed and it was not now feasible to progress a Scrutiny Management Panel review in this municipal year.
- Councillor Andrewes said that there should be a clear understanding between what the administration was undertaking in relation to a parking review and the role of the Scrutiny Management Panel. He said he was keen that the separation is maintained, promoted and pursued.
- Councillor Winnington said that the management panel had been waiting for the terms of reference documents and these had not been forthcoming. If the administration was carrying out a review into parking, the Scrutiny Management Panel could feed into that.
- Councillor Andrewes suggested that the Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation and the officers concerned be asked to provide the terms of reference for the review with a view to these being brought back to the next scheduled meeting of Scrutiny Management Panel. This was agreed.
- **Volunteer Snow Wardens (AI 4)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jane Tume, Highways PFI Manager, introduced the report. She advised that the notice of motion that had gone to the City Council on 20 January 2015 resolved "to ask the Scrutiny Management Panel to undertake a short task and finish review of the idea and make a recommendation on whether and how to implement it and report to Cabinet as quickly as possible given that there might be bad weather soon".

This was in relation to a suggestion that the City Council looks to introduce a snow volunteer warden scheme to provide basic equipment and training to enable people to clear their pavements and help in times of snow and bad weather. Ms Tume said that the City Council already had plans in place to deal with snow and these were outlined in part 3 of the report. She said that these had worked very well on the last occasion that Portsmouth had had snow. She explained that the City Council response team prioritised the gold zones which include for example shopping centres. It also prioritised the north of the city as this had received most requests for help during previous snow events.

During discussion the following matters were raised:

- To avoid salt bins being emptied or being filled with rubbish, these were monitored every fortnight and were topped up and cleared as part of the contract with Colas.
- Councillor Winnington said that it would be useful in his view to designate from the volunteers a person to be the lead snow person and to arrange for that person to be given some training. He said that Lambeth and Edinburgh both had web pages that provided good links to "dos" and "don'ts" and that the pages were very informative. He said that he did not know what PCC did but Councillor Hockaday said that currently PCC's snow page was marked as not available.
- Jane Tume said that no equipment would be given to volunteers. The equipment help by PCC was signed out and in again on the same day and this applied to staff volunteers. Training was also given to staff volunteers who received maps on which areas to clear and where to pile the snow.
- Councillor Boshier said that volunteers from among residents would be likely to want to clear snow in their own area and would be unable to collect equipment from council offices.
- Jane Tume said that the City Council had vehicles that could be used in the snow so it was possible to transport people round the city.
- Councillor Boshier said he thought that the notice of motion envisaged residents being able to self-help and to do this they would need to have their own equipment in their local area.
- Although main roads would be cleared, many side streets would not be cleared whereas if there were volunteers in these side streets, they could organise themselves and clear their own street. To do this though, there would be a need to get equipment to those who needed it.
- Councillor Boshier thought that the notice of motion suggestion was as a supplement to the existing response co-ordinated by PCC and Colas.
- Jane Tume confirmed that the report provided was only in relation to staff volunteers and nothing to do with co-ordinating residents other than through providing web-based advice. She said they would need to keep the equipment in Portsmouth City Council as it is staff equipment. Snow wardens were currently members of staff and did not extend to residents.
- Councillor Andrewes explained that the reason for the notice of motion was that members wish to look at supporting residents who wished to be snow wardens particularly in areas where serious problems had been experienced in the past. This was in addition to the work carried out by Colas and volunteer staff.

- Councillor Ferrett asked whether there would be issues concerning insurance and liability if residents became involved in clearing snow. Jane Tume said that she would look into this and report back.
- Councillor Andrewes said that in Devon, the council take out public liability insurance but nothing else. Councillor Boshier said that liability insurance for an extra 500 volunteers would make it an expensive exercise.
- Councillor Ferrett said that he had concerns if hundreds of people were to volunteer as this would be a big training commitment for the Council. He also said that making the role official may be counter-productive. Realistically there had been very few occasions locally when snow fell in sufficient quantities to cause problems. Although when this did happen it was difficult, people did pull together and there was good community spirit. As an example he said that when the school local to him asked for volunteers to clear the snow, people turned out and worked together. He thought that any response should be proportionate and wondered - given the few snow events that had happened over the last few years - whether it was necessary to formalise the volunteer process.

Ms Tume said that she worked regularly with neighbourhood forums and residents' associations and suggested that they could put a package together around October time and could distribute leaflets and provide advice at that time. Councillor Hockaday suggested that salt bin information could be provided online and perhaps a short video could be available about what to do in a snow event.

Jane Tume said that a winter maintenance plan was in existence.

Councillor Hockaday said that perhaps central points could be identified in various areas where people could go for advice.

Councillor Andrewes suggested that a possible way forward would be to take evidence from other councils in the country where snow volunteers were already being used, for example Lambeth. It would be useful to have specific and committed people to volunteer to clear streets and act as co-ordinators.

Members felt that evidence about how snow volunteer warden schemes were working elsewhere was useful and that the points raised could be addressed in more detail.

Councillor Winnington said that rather than formalising the role, it should be up to people to volunteer to be snow wardens and that if they did so, that support would be available. They could let local people know who was the co-ordinator for their area.

Members agreed to report to Cabinet that they had held a meeting and report their conclusions and suggested way forward for their information.

**RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Management Panel reports to Cabinet for noting**

- (1) That it has held a meeting on the notice of motion referral to fulfil the resolution from the Council meeting held on 20 January 2015 concerning volunteer snow wardens;**
- (2) It has requested more information about best practice in other local authorities to be included in a further report to be brought to a future meeting of Scrutiny Management Panel;**
- (3) That recommendations on whether and how to implement a scheme will be made to a future cabinet meeting, if appropriate.**

The meeting concluded at 3.40 pm.

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Councillor Simon Boshier