

REPORT TO: The Scrutiny Management Panel
3 September 2009

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SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME – March 2008 to September 2009

1. Purpose of the Report.

To advise the Scrutiny Management Panel, as required by Article 6.2 of the Constitution, on the work of the Scrutiny Management Panel and the ad hoc policy and review panels since July 2007. The report also provides a brief update on the work of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

2. Recommendation.

That the report be received, and consideration given as to how the outcomes from scrutiny can best be publicised and reported to the City Council in October 2009.

3. Work Undertaken.

Scrutiny Management Panel

Monitoring of Completed Reviews.

The Scrutiny Management Panel carries out a rolling programme of monitoring the recommendations arising from completed reviews. This acts as an opportunity to hold the Cabinet to account and should also enable members to measure the effectiveness of the policy and review process.

a) Review of Mobile Phone Base Stations.

At its meeting on 5 March 2009, the Scrutiny Management Panel considered a report on the progress made implementing the recommendations that were agreed by Cabinet. Queries were raised (a) in respect of indemnifying the council's position and (b) in respect of the legal standpoint within existing operators. It was agreed that advice and guidance on the above queries be sought from the City Solicitor

Whilst it would appear at present that evidence suggests the masts are safe, the Panel felt that it would be prudent to err on the side of caution.

b) Review of Audio Recording of Meetings.

At its meeting on 5 March 2009, the Scrutiny Management Panel considered a report on the progress made implementing the recommendations that were agreed by Cabinet. It expressed its displeasure with the lack of progress given that the recommendations were agreed in November 2006. The bid for audio equipment was unsuccessful and the Panel felt it was unsatisfactory that there were still auditory problems in the council chamber. It was agreed

that this needed to be referred to Cabinet. The Panel would like to consider the use of a sign language interpreter for the hard of hearing.

The Panel requested that the procedure for reconsidering this matter be brought to the next meeting to provide an update.

c) Review of Public Conveniences.

At its meeting on 5 March 2009, the Scrutiny Management Panel considered a report on the progress made implementing the recommendations that were agreed by Cabinet. It acknowledged that lack of funding prevents further progress with the recommendations of this review and that only 3 out of the 29 public conveniences in the city comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Panel was concerned that the review did not appear to have a prioritisation plan. It was agreed that the appropriate Cabinet Member be contacted to determine what influence could be placed upon developers to build new facilities. The Panel expressed surprise that no new facilities are being considered and queried whether section 106 arrangements could be put in place to force developers to build new facilities.

d) The Effectiveness of the Enforcement and Education Elements of the Clean & Tidy City Programme.

At its meeting on 5 March, the Scrutiny Management Panel considered a report on the progress made implementing the recommendations that were agreed by Cabinet. Concerns were raised about the potential use of Community Wardens to issue enforcement notices as this was felt had the potential to impair relations built up within the local communities.

Predecision Scrutiny.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Management Panel meets with the Leader on a regular basis to discuss how scrutiny could contribute more effectively to the Council's decision-making process.

This has resulted in a process being adopted by which Cabinet Members and Strategic Directors are regularly asked through the forward plan, whether there are any decisions coming up which could benefit from predecision scrutiny. It would then be at the Panel's discretion to decide whether requests should be taken forward. No requests have been raised during this period by Cabinet Members or Strategic Directors.

Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel.

a) The Council's Seafront Strategy.

The Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel commenced this review in December 2008 and signed it off on 15 April 2009. The aim was to understand the interlinked issues surrounding the seafront strategy and to identify the vision for the seafront. The Cabinet considered the recommendations at its meeting on 8 June.

b) The Council's Twinning Arrangements.

The Panel commenced this review in April and has met with key officers, members and twinning committee chairs to gain an understanding of the current arrangements. It also learnt about the potential economic benefits of twinning from representatives from the Chamber of Commerce. The Panel will shortly be examining the international relations budget. The review is due to be completed in October.

Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel.

a) How Schools Handle Freedom of Information Requests.

The Panel considered this issue at an informal meeting held on 24 November 2009 with officers and resolved that a review was not necessary.

b) Attainment in Schools.

The Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel commenced its review of attainment in schools in February 2009 and received an overview of how Portsmouth pupils' performance compare nationally with regard to key stage 2 and 4 indicators. After a change of Chair in March, the focus of the review was narrowed to concentrate on the four schools currently involved in the National Challenge Initiative to raise standards so that 30% of pupils in all school achieve five good GCSE's by 2011. The review is due to be completed in October.

Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel.

a) Council Tax Discount for Pensioner Households.

On 22 July 2008 the City Council supported a Notice of Motion from Councillor Steve Wemyss proposing that the City Council consider the introduction of a 10% council tax discount for all pensioner households in Portsmouth from April 2009. Officers were instructed to bring forward a report to identify the broader implications of providing Council Tax discounts and to describe the procedural steps, timescale and likely costs of introducing a scheme. The Council resolved that the Notice of Motion and subsequent officer reports be referred to the Finance & Resources Scrutiny panel for further consideration. Subsequently the review commenced in December 2008 and was completed in May 2009.

At its meeting on 16 June, the Full Council agreed the scrutiny panel's recommendations that the notice of motion is not supported as it does not agree with introducing a discount for pensioner households for 2009/10 and that further consideration be given to the proposal to introduce a discount for pensioner households as part of the budget process for 2010/11.

b) The City Council's Use of Consultants

The Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel commenced this review in May 2009 and is currently examining the following departments' expenditure on consultants: legal services; engineering; community engagement and project management and Local Strategic Partnership Work Procurement.

The Panel has requested more detailed information be brought to its next meeting and anticipates concluding the review by late October and being able to produce a final report with recommendations by late November.

Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel.

a) Neighbour Relationships with Private and Social Lets/ Ownership.

The Panel commenced this review in February 2009. The main aims were to understand the mixture of tenancies that exists in Portsmouth and the types of reported neighbour problems; to understand the partnership work that the City Council carries out with local agencies; to understand the legislation that enables the police; local authorities and housing associations to deal with complaints and to evaluate the City Council's performance when dealing with neighbour problems when compared nationally.

The Panel completed the review in July and will be considered by the Cabinet Member for Housing shortly.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

a) Hyperbaric Chamber, Royal Hospital Haslar.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel commenced this review in December 2008 and completed it in June 2009. Witnesses included Portsmouth Hospitals Trust, QinetiQ, Sussex Police, South Central Ambulance Service and HM Coastguard. The report was sent to external stakeholders (Care Quality Commission, QinetiQ, Portsmouth PCT, Portsmouth Hospitals Trust) for comment.

b) St Mary's Community Campus.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel, members of the Planning Committee and local Ward Councillors attended a Seminar being run by Portsmouth Primary Care Trust regarding this issue in March. The information heard at this meeting formed the project brief, which was agreed at the April meeting. Members then met on June 23rd for a consultation with key stakeholders around the new Health Campus, asking questions centred on transport, infrastructure, landscaping and support facilities. Feedback was good and comment has been summarised in a draft report. This is due to go to Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel's meeting on 9 September.

c) Fluoridation of Drinking Water Supplies.

The South Central Strategic Health Authority decided that areas within Southampton Primary Care Trust's remit would be fluoridated. Portsmouth Primary Care Trust is currently awaiting the decision of the Strategic Health Authority in relation to the rest of the South Central Region. This is currently on hold as the decision to fluoridate the water in Southampton is subject to a Judicial Review.

c) Respite Care.

Members considered this item from the Head of Adult Social Care and the Assistant Head of Adult Social Care, at the Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel's meeting on 1 December. They decided no further information was required.

d) Care in the Community.

The Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel received a presentation by the Head of Adult Social Care and the Assistant Head of Adult Social Care on 1 December. They decided no further information was required.

e) Sexual Health.

The Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel will be hearing about this item at its meeting on 9 September. It will then decide whether to complete a scrutiny review on this topic in the 2009/10 municipal year.

Joint Working Arrangements.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel attend regular meetings of the South Central and South East Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Networks. The Chair and Vice Chair have also attended a number of neighbouring authority meetings, which have been useful in gathering additional evidence for Panel reviews, and gaining a wider understanding and perspective of issues.

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Due to the way health services are organised in the region, there are frequently occasions where an issue due to be considered will affect residents from different local authorities. When this happens a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is established. Portsmouth City Council is due to take part in a Joint Health Review in relation to Emergency Cardiac Services.

As well as the ongoing work done as part of the Joint Committees, the Panel will continue to participate in the Healthcare Commission's Annual Healthcheck process, which provides a grade for every NHS Trust. The Healthcare Commission has been disbanded, the organization that now regulates the Health Service is now known as the Care Quality Commission and the future of the Health Check Process is unclear as a result. It is expected that the Panel will also begin to examine the way new Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) have been established in the City, and how joint commissioning arrangements between the Council and the NHS are agreed. Moreover, the Panel will also be continuing to monitor the progress made with adult mental health services, maternity provision and ambulance response times, as well as responding to matters of urgency and call-in as required.

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Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information.
Background List of Reports: None.

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