

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Scrutiny Management Panel held on Thursday 3 September 2009 at 4 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, Floor 3, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB: These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting).

Present

Councillors Les Stevens (Chair)
Cheryl Buggy
David Fuller
Terry Henderson
Malcolm Hey
Paula Riches
Luke Stubbs (Deputising for
Councillor James Williams until)

Officers

Stewart Agland, Local Democracy Manager
Paddy May, Corporate Strategy Manager

19 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jim Patey, Caroline Scott and James Williams.

20 Declarations of interest (AI 2)

Councillor Hey declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as he had received hospitality from Southern Water.

21 Minutes from the Meeting of 14 August 2009

The Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Management Panel meeting held on 14 August 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Henderson requested that it be noted that he had not requested a deputy at the previous meeting.

22 Scrutiny Work Programme – March 2008 to September 2009: Report to Full Council (AI 4)

The Senior Local Democracy Officer introduced the Scrutiny Work Programme by showing those present a copy of Kensington & Chelsea's scrutiny report. As its clear and easy to read format would help raise the profile of scrutiny it had been suggested, subject to approval by members, that the City Council's report be produced in a similar format. The following points were noted:

- (i) Pre-decision scrutiny
Pre-decision scrutiny has not taken place yet in the current municipal year.
- (ii) Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel
With regard to the seafront strategy Councillor Buggy said that "considered" in paragraph a) on page 2 should read as "accepted".
- (iii) Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel
The Panel had produced a comprehensive report on attainment in schools which was due to be considered at its meeting on 18 September.
- (iv) Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel
The Panel were informed that the review on the City Council's use of consultants was proving more complex than originally envisaged. In response to comments from members over the extent of the review, The Panel were advised that scrutiny reviews examined a situation at a certain moment in time ("a snapshot in time") and that it was impossible to investigate every aspect of an issue. It was also noted that some legislative requirements necessitated buying-in consultants.
- (v) Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel
The Panel had completed its review on "Neighbour Relationships with Private and Social Lets/Ownership".
- (vi) Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel
The Panel had considered and reviewed several issues including the closure of the Hyperbaric Medical Chambers at Royal Hospital Haslar and Queen Alexandra Hospital, fluoridation of the water supply, respite care and adult social care. It was noted that fluoridation was the subject of judicial review in Southampton and no further action would be taken in Portsmouth until the outcome of the review.

It was AGREED that the Scrutiny Work Programme would be presented to the Full Council on 16 October 2009.

23 Scrutiny Work Programme and Corporate Strategy (AI 5)

The Corporate Strategy Manager introduced the report “The Scrutiny Work Programme and Corporate Strategy” by suggesting that the two main purposes of scrutiny were to influence new policies or review performance. The Panel heard that:

- Paragraph 3.2 outlined the City Council's eight corporate priorities.
- Appendix 1 summarised how scrutiny topics related to the eight priorities.
- Paragraph 4 gave more detailed information on performance on suggested scrutiny topics such as households in temporary accommodation, child protection reviews, corporate risk (how the City Council would deal with a major event), the use of illicit substances in schools, teenage conception (where there had been a slight increase), for work experience, it was noted that employment opportunities for young people were decreasing.
- Paragraphs 5 and 6 identified further topics that might be worth considering. It was noted that:
 - staff sickness absence was being dealt with by the Employment Committee
 - a review of the implementation of control measures and processes for risk management might be beneficial as this area was less robust than risk identification and monitoring
 - many of the City Council's buildings had a G rating due to age or lack of data on their energy efficiency level.

Councillor Stubbs, deputising for Councillor Williams, requested a review of how social workers were supported in difficult cases. He emphasised that the review would be from a positive perspective in order not to demotivate social workers. It was noted that the executive summary of the case of Baby AB would form part of the scrutiny review but that this would be restricted to the executive summary only and within the remit of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel.

24 Scrutiny Work Programme for the 2009-10 Municipal Year (AI 5)

Suggestions for topics to be reviewed as part of the work programme during the 2009-10 municipal year were submitted via the Chairs of all the Scrutiny Panels.

(i) Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel

It was noted that the Seafront Strategy and Twinning were already being dealt with. EDCL scrutiny suggested the issue of suitable space for touring exhibitions which could be linked in with economic regeneration. Councillor Hey mentioned a visit from Haifa and SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) who had requested space for religious activities and only the Roman Catholic Cathedral had been able to provide it. The Panel was asked to consider and prioritise how much work could be completed in the remaining municipal year.

Expenditure on properties under culture portfolio (incorporating identification of space for visiting exhibitions)

Economic Regeneration & Development

Allotments

It was AGREED that the Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel would review:

- **expenditure on properties under the Culture Portfolio (incorporating identifying locations for visiting exhibitions)**
- **economic regeneration and development**
- **allocation of allotments**

(ii) Education, Children & Young People

It was suggested that several of the proposed scrutiny topics could be merged as they were similar. The Panel were concerned about the potential adverse effects of scrutinising the issues of child protection and social workers and were keen to express the purpose of any review would be to help current staff to manage their workload. The Panel felt that certain elements could be merged to form one review topic.

It was AGREED that the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel would review:

- **discipline and control of unruly children**
- **teacher and education worker protection and safety**
- **protection of vulnerable children**

(iii) Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel

It was noted that as the Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel already had a heavy workload it would keep its current work programme.

It was AGREED that the Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel would continue with its current programme which comprised:

- **corporate website and access strategy**
- **public/employee suggestion scheme**
- **the cost of democracy**
- **City Council's use of consultants (in progress)**
- **accommodation in the Civic Offices**
- **property portfolio**
- **business continuity**

(iv) Traffic, Environment & Community Safety

Cycle lanes and performance on recycling had already been proposed. The Panel received a suggestion in relation to councillor safety. It was felt by the Panel that freedom of expression was part of our democratic process and that should anyone go beyond this, then the matter should be referred to the police for action.

It was AGREED that the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel would review:

- **cycle lanes**
- **performance on recycling**
- **further research would be undertaken on the issue of councillors' safety**

(v) Housing & Social Care

Members discussed the issue of housing allocation with regard to people with mental health conditions. It was noted that cases were considered individually when housing was allocated. In addition, allocation of housing to people with mental health conditions and support for them could be considered as two separate issues. It was suggested that the review could specify "with special reference to mental health". A review of housing allocation would also include the under-occupation of housing. It was also agreed that the topic of fraud in the housing service would remain as part of the work programme unless the Housing & Social Care Panel could demonstrate why they felt it appropriate to remove this topic.

It was AGREED that the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel would review:

- **whether to re-commence building council housing**
- **the allocation of housing including under-occupation and with special reference to mental health**
- **fraud in the housing service**

(vi) Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel

It was noted that Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel would consider topics for their work programme at their meeting on 9 September.

25 Monitoring Recommendations from Completed Reviews (AI 6)

(i) Road Safety in Portsmouth

The Panel considered a report outlining the progress made with the implementation of the recommendations from the Completed Review into Road Safety. It was noted that recommendations could not always be delivered as scrutiny was always changing. The Senior Local Democracy Officer reported that some of the campaigns were run in partnership with the emergency services in Hampshire. It was noted that there were still a large amount of vacancies for school crossing patrol staff which is being addressed. It was noted that many of the topics involved educating the public and that breaking the law should not be tolerated; this could include highlighting 20 mph zones. It was queried whether the issue of motorcyclists using bus lanes could be an area for future scrutiny but it was decided not to proceed with the suggestion.

(ii) The Adequacy of Sewerage and Water Supply in the City

The Panel considered a report and a tabled supplementary report outlining the progress made with the implementation of the recommendations from the Completed Review into the Adequacy of Sewerage and Water Supply in the City. The Chairman of the original Review questioned how much progress had been made, for example, with the extent of the reduction in the risk of flooding in parts of Portsmouth and the single city-wide telephone number for residents to call. The Panel noted that there had been considerable capital expenditure in Southsea which would have to be paid for. The Panel were reminded that they have no power over Southern Water and could only make recommendations. The report would be updated to reflect these changes with the relevant officers being invited to address a future meeting regarding these issues.

It was AGREED that:

- **the relevant officers would be invited to report on progress**
- **the Senior Local Democracy Officer would amend any discrepancies in the report.**

(iii) Youth Services Provision

The Panel considered a report outlining the progress made with the implementation of the recommendations from the Completed Review into Youth Services Provision. Progress being made on the recommendations was commended by the Panel. In relation to the distribution of facilities and services for young people, it was noted that projects such the Youth Parliament, the Duke of Edinburgh awards and RANT magazine were available to all young people via all schools.

26 Scrutiny Review of the Management of the City Council's Allotments (AI 7)

Councillor Park declared a personal non-prejudicial personal interest as he rented an allotment at the Longmeadow site. The Panel were asked to consider reviewing the policy on allocation of allotments due to concerns about derelict plots and long waiting lists before being allocated a plot. It was felt that improving the management and allocation of allotments would fit several of the City Council's corporate priorities.

It was AGREED that:

- **a review of the management of the City Council's allotments would be included in the EDCL Scrutiny Panel's work programme for the 2009-10 municipal year**
- **Councillor Park and Councillor Stevens would either be co-opted as members or attend as witnesses.**

27 Date of Next Meeting (AI 5)

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 26 November 2009 at 3.30 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, third floor of the Guildhall.

The meeting closed at 5.35 pm.