

Status of Scrutiny Reviews.

Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel.

1. Expenditure on Properties under the Culture Portfolio.

The panel met formally on 11 November 2009 and agreed its project brief for this topic. The panel subsequently met on 8 December 2009, 13 January 2010, 11 February 2010 and 22 March 2010. These meetings clarified which properties are under the Culture and Leisure Portfolio and allowed the panel to narrow the general remit of the review down to heritage sites (incorporating museums) and buildings that deliver a service to the community. In addition, a large amount of evidence has been gathered at these meetings, which has allowed the panel to meet the majority of its objectives.

All 41 properties which fall under these headings will be looked at in general terms, with 10 representative properties picked from these 41 to be scrutinised in-depth. By doing this the panel aim to make specific recommendations for the 10 properties being looked at in-depth and identify broader trends to make more generalised recommendations for the remaining 31 properties forming the review.

On the 19 March 2010 the panel undertook site visits to five of the properties being scrutinised in-depth and visited the remaining five properties on 22 April 2010.

Following their meeting in April, the panel agreed to carry the review over into the new municipal year to ensure the review is thoroughly conducted. The panel will meet again as soon as practicable after full council have met to conclude their review and produce their findings for submission to cabinet.

The Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel.

2. Attainment and Achievement in Portsmouth Schools

The Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel signed off the final version of the report "Inquiry into Raising Attainment and Achievement in Portsmouth Schools" at their meeting on 20 October 2009. The report was submitted to Cabinet on 11 January 2010. The Panel were thanked for their work and the recommendations were endorsed except for recommendation no.4 (recruiting another specialist Maths adviser) which would incur additional expenditure. ***Review now complete***

3. Schools' Policies on Sending Information to Separated/Divorced Parents

This topic is outstanding and remains on the Panel's work programme.

4. Protection of Vulnerable Children

The Panel held four formal evidence gathering meetings during their review into "Protection of vulnerable children". Meetings were held on 20 October 2009, 12 November 2009, 1 December 2009 and 28 January 2010 where the Panel considered reports and heard evidence from evidence from a wide

range of organisations who have direct contact with children and young people who may be at risk of neglect: Local Safeguarding Children Board, PCT, police, Targeted Services, Education Welfare Service, Young Carers Support Service, social work team (assessment and intervention), head of Children & Families Social Care. Legal Services were represented at all the Panel's meetings.

The Panel carried out a site visit to the Social Work Team at Merefield House on 12 November 2009 to hear about the challenges faced by social workers in their work. The Panel met informally to discuss the draft report, conclusions and recommendations on 25 February 2010, 16 March 2010 and 25 March 2010. The Panel is currently waiting for clarification of some of the evidence heard at meetings before they meet to sign off the report.

The panel is due to meet informally on 17 June 2010 to agree their conclusions and recommendations before submitting their findings to cabinet for consideration.

5. How Schools Handle Freedom of Information Requests

The Panel considered this issue at an informal meeting held on 24 November 2008 with officers. It resolved that a review was not necessary.

6. Discipline and Control of Unruly Children

The Panel agreed to review this topic as part of their work programme for the municipal year 2009-10. For next year the Panel would like to consider "Discipline and control of unruly children" before "Teacher and Education Worker Protection and Safety". An email requesting that the topics are examined in this order was sent to the Senior Local Democracy Officer on 26 March 2010. *Perhaps these two topics could be merged as they are related eg unruly behaviour could include attacks on staff?*

7. Teacher and Education Worker Protection and Safety

The Panel agreed to review this topic as part of their work programme for the municipal year 2009-10. Whilst this matter was not dealt with during 2009/10, it has been proposed that it be carried over till 2010/11.

8. Persistent absence in Portsmouth schools

The Panel suggested persistent absence in schools as a topic for scrutiny. The review could cover aspects such as which policies and procedures have been successful and which have not, the impact of their effectiveness, and what other local authorities do. Panel members agreed that this was a suitable topic as it relates to "Protection of Vulnerable Children" and "Discipline and Control of Unruly Children". An email requesting that this topic is added to their work programme for the next municipal year was sent to the Senior Local Democracy Officer on 26 March 2010.

The Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel.

9. Council Tax Discount for Pensioner Households.

On 22nd 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.

The Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel met on 9 December and received a report on matters to be considered before a decision can be made regarding the possibility of introducing council tax discount for pensioner households.

A further report was requested to be brought to the next meeting (21 January) to include decisions made at 9 December meeting. Contact would be made with Southampton City Council in order to obtain information about their Council Tax discount for pensioner scheme – in particular in relation to legal advice.

A further report was brought to the 21 Jan meeting. Councillors discussed the report and were also apprised of the legal issues by Michael Lawther in light of the legal advice obtained by Southampton City Council. As the meeting was not attended by any Conservative Members and as it was a Notice of Motion from the Conservatives, the Chair decided to delay sending any report to Council until after the budget meeting on 10 Feb.

A meeting of the Panel took place on 6 February 2009 to scrutinise the Budget report. The Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer advised the Panel that the purpose of this meeting was to give an opportunity to receive the slide presentation and make any comments or recommendations, which could be passed on to Cabinet and Council. The Head of Financial Services gave a slide presentation. The Panel recommended to Cabinet that the Head of Financial Services be invited to give her slide presentation to the meeting of full Council on Tuesday 10 February 2009.

The composition of the Panel changed following full Council on 10 February and the new Chair is Councillor Luke Stubbs. A meeting was held by the Chair with the S151 officer, the Head of Financial Services and the Head of Revenues and Benefits. The Panel met on 12 March to consider a further report from the Head of Revenues and Benefits.

The Panel signed off the report on 8 May 2009, with the recommendation that the council does not progress with the proposed council tax discount for pensioner households. The response to the Notice of Motion went before Full Council on 16 June 2009 stating that the NoM lodged on 22 July 2008 was not supported as the Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel did not agree with introducing a discount for pensioner households during the 2009/10 municipal year. The response also recommended that further consideration be given to

the proposal to introduce a discount for pensioner households as part of the 2010/11 budget process. Agreed by Full Council 16 June.

At the request of Full Council in June 2009, this matter was referred back to scrutiny to be considered as part of the budget proposals for 2010/11 financial year. The panel discussed this issue at their meeting on 2 October 2009 and agreed that a report from the Head of Revenue & Benefits would be brought to Full Council in November. The report will set out details of the Southampton scheme and estimates for set-up and administration costs for a similar scheme in Portsmouth. This will be forwarded to cabinet for review in November and for all political parties to consider whether to include a Council Tax Discount for Pensioner Households in their Budget proposals for 2010/11.

A Council Tax Discount for Pensioner Households was agreed in the February 2010 budget proposals and agreed by Full Council. ***Matter now resolved***

10. The City Council's Use of Consultants (lead with EDCL feeding into this review).

As the Panel composition had changed, on 29 May the Panel received a summary report from Val Lane and decided that it wished to look at the following departments in detail:

- Legal Services.
- Engineering.
- Community Engagement.
- Project Management and Local Strategic Partnership Work Procurement.

The Panel met again on 19 June and 24 July 2009 to receive reports from the Heads of Legal Services, Audit & Performance, Democratic & Community Engagement, Transport & Street Management and Asset Management.

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

The next meeting will be on 21 August. This meeting was put back to enable officers to provide more detailed information as requested by the Panel.

The Panel met on 2 October 2009 and received reports from the Heads of Transport & Street Management, Financial Services and Asset Management. This concluded phase 2 of the review and the review is now moving in to phase 3, (which is the final phase) with the next meeting scheduled for 30 October 2009. At this meeting the Cabinet member for resources will attend together with the Head of Procurement.

The Panel has received all oral and written evidence for this review and a draft report is being compiled with a view to an informal meeting taking place on 4th December (TBC). Following completion of the report, it will be forwarded to cabinet for a formal response.

The panel has requested another formal meeting to hear evidence from officers regarding the procurement process for consultants engaged in Somerstown regeneration and the effectiveness of the in-house Graphic Design team. Following this meeting, the panel will meet informally to agree the conclusions and recommendations for this review.

The panel held a further meeting to hear from the Housing Development Manager and Corporate Communications Manager in respect of Somerstown Regeneration and the in-house graphic design team respectively.

The panel met on 4 February 2010 to formally sign off the review and requested that the chair of the scrutiny panel write to the group leaders to remind members of their commitment to attending scrutiny meetings.

Following a presentation from the Head of Financial Services on the proposed budget, the panel requested that the chair write to the group leaders to request that there be a cross party approach to budget setting in future years.

Due to the timeframe permitted under the scrutiny procedure rules and the Purdah period for the recent combined elections, this report has not yet been submitted to cabinet and is due to go before the cabinet in July for consideration and comment.

The Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel has requested that they do not commence their next topic until the new municipal year.

11. Corporate Website & Access Strategy.

Originally this topic was issued to the Panel to be reviewed later in the work programme. However, the Chair of the Finance & Resources Scrutiny Panel has requested that it be considered after its consideration of Council Tax Discount for Pensioner Households.

The Panel agreed that it would be more appropriate to conduct this review after the website manager had been in post (started in June) for at least 3 months to enable him to put in place some of the systems that will enhance the access to and availability of information through the website.

The website manager is leaving Portsmouth City Council, therefore it may be prudent to consider this topic once alternative arrangements have been put in place.

This matter was dealt with at SMP in March 2010 when the head of customer, communications and democratic services appeared before the panel to explain why the website manager left and to support the need for a scrutiny review into the corporate website and access strategy.

12. Public/ Employee Suggestion Scheme.

Remains on the work programme for 2009/10, carried forward to 2010/11.

13. The Cost of Democracy.

Remains on the work programme for 2009/10, carried forward to 2010/11.

14. Accommodation in the Civic Offices Asset Management

Remains on the work programme for 2009/10, carried forward to 2010/11.

15. Property Portfolio

Remains on the work programme for 2009/10, carried forward to 2010/11.

16. Business Continuity

Remains on the work programme for 2009/10, carried forward to 2010/11.

Transport, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

17. Trading Standards

The panel agreed its project brief at a formal meeting held on 18 December 2009 and at the same meeting received an overview of Trading Standards from the Trading Standards Manager and Head of Environment and Public Protection Service.

At meetings held on 21 January 2010, 12 February 2010 and 5 March 2010 the panel received further evidence from the Deputy Director of the Office of Fair Trading, Head of Adult and Family Learning, team Manager of the Illegal Money Lending Team, Hampshire Constabulary, the Head of West Berkshire Council Trading Standards and the Operations Director of Trading Standards South East Ltd. In addition, the panel received evidence from a number of Trading Standards Officers, a local licensed trade retailer, 'edge' project volunteers and a resident who had received a negative experience with Trading Standards.

The review has now been completed and the finished report signed off at the meeting held on 26 March 2010.

This report is due to be considered by Cabinet on 7 June 2010. ***Review is now complete***

18. Response to Council on the hazards posed by icy pavements in the city.

This topic was allocated to the panel, via a notice of motion heard at the 9 February 2010 Council meeting.

The panel met formally to receive evidence from the Highways Manager, Risk Manager and Legal Services Team Leader at its 5 March 2010 meeting and agreed conclusions and recommendations at its 26 March 2010 meeting.

The panel has written a short report, to be heard at the next available Council meeting.

At its meeting held on 26 March 2010, the panel agreed that the Scrutiny Management Panel be asked to consider that the following items be added to the TECS work plan:

- The introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the city;
- Fluoridation of water in the city; and
- How to tackle Cold Calling.

Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel.

19. Whether to Re-commence Building Council Homes

The Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel held three formal evidence gathering meetings during their review into "Whether to re-commence building council homes". Meetings were held on 6 October 2009, 27 October 2009 and 17 November 2009 where the Panel considered reports and heard evidence from housing services staff about the history of council and affordable housing, finance and resources for building homes, and the types of homes needed in Portsmouth. The Panel carried out a site visit on 17 November 2009 where they saw different examples of how the housing service is working to provide affordable homes in Portsmouth. The Panel signed off the review at their meeting on 2 February 2010. As the review spans two directorates, Kathy Wadsworth and Roger Ching have both been asked to respond by 17 May so that report can be submitted to the Cabinet on 7 June 2010.

Report submitted to cabinet on 7 June 7, 2010. ***Review now complete***

20. Mental Health Housing Provision.

This topic will be incorporated in the topic "Allocation of Housing Provision" (see paragraph 22).

21. Fraud in the Housing Service.

SMP agreed at their meeting on 27 November 2009 that this topic should be removed from the Panel's work programme following information submitted by the Head of Revenues & Benefits. ***Topic removed from work programme***

22. The Allocation of Housing including Local Authority Housing's under-occupation policy and mental health housing provision.

The topic "Allocation of Housing" is on the Panel's work programme for the 2009-10 municipal year and will incorporate the work programme items of the local authority's housing under-occupation policy and mental health housing provision. After the formal meeting on 2 February 2010 the Panel met informally to scope the review into "Allocation of housing to include Local Authority Housing's under-occupation policy and mental health housing provision". The Panel held three formal evidence-gathering meetings on 23 February 2010, 9 March 2010 and 25 March 2010. Members heard about how the housing register operates, how transfers and exchanges operate, how priority for housing is assessed, conditions of tenancy agreements, succession to tenancies, policies on under-occupation and over-crowding, different types of supported housing for adults with mental health conditions.

The Panel plans to meet informally during April 2010 to discuss the draft report with a view to signing it off immediately after the local elections in May 2010.

The panel will meet some time after week commencing 21st June 2010 to agree the report prior to submission to cabinet for consideration and comment.

23. Local Housing Allowance.

As a result of a Notice of Motion at Full Council, the issue of the way in which Local Housing Allowance (LHA) was administered was sent to scrutiny to investigate. During the meeting of 16 July 2009 the matter was discussed and the panel unanimously agreed that they were satisfied with the way that Portsmouth City Council administered LHA, however, they were unhappy with the government legislation that Revenues & Benefits had to adhere to as they felt this removed tenant and landlord choice and led to increased rent arrears. The panel agreed that they did not wish to scrutinize this matter, however, they have requested that Portsmouth City Council write to the government to express their concerns regarding this legislation and seek to have the way LHA is administered, reviewed.

A letter is being drafted to be sent to central government expressing concerns about the way LHA is administered and seek a review. The Department for Work & Pensions Select Committee have completed a review into the way that LHA is being administered as they have received numerous complaints from tenants and landlords. They are due to report their findings in early January 2010. ***Review is now complete***

24. Future topics for scrutiny.

The Panel currently have no outstanding items on their work programme. At their meeting on 25 March 2010 the Panel suggested that as recent reviews have focused on housing related topics, future reviews could focus on social care related topics.

Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

25. Hyperbaric Chamber, Royal Hospital Haslar.

At its meeting on 1 December 2009, the HOSP considered the project brief for this review. It met on Thursday 5th February in order to carry out the stage 1 review of this topic. Witnesses include Portsmouth Hospitals Trust, QinetiQ, Sussex Police, South Central Ambulance Service and HM Coastguard. The HOSP decided to move to a stage 2 review, whereby the witnesses and objectives of the enquiry were expanded to reflect the information members felt they needed to complete the review. The Panel then met on April 15 in order to complete the review and examine final pieces of evidence. They agreed that they had received sufficient evidence in order to complete their report and make recommendations. The report was agreed at the HOSP 10 June meeting, and was sent to external stakeholders (Care Quality Commission, QinetiQ, Portsmouth PCT, Portsmouth Hospitals Trust) for comment. ***Review now complete***

26. St Mary's Community Campus.

The HOSP, together with members of Development Control and local Ward Councillors, attended a seminar being run by Portsmouth Primary Care Trust around this issue on the 25th March. The information heard at this meeting then formed the project brief, which was agreed at the April 15th meeting. Members then met on June 23rd for a consultation with key stakeholders around the new Health Campus, asking questions centred around transport, infrastructure, landscaping and support facilities. Feedback was good, and comment was summarised in a draft report. At the meeting of 9 September 2009, this report was signed off and sent to the Primary Care Trust for formal response. ***Review now complete***

27. Fluoridation of Drinking Water Supplies.

The South Central Strategic Health Authority decided that areas within Southampton PCT's remit would be fluoridated. Portsmouth PCT is currently awaiting the decision of the SHA in relation to the rest of the South Central Region. Due to an ongoing Judicial Review, the SHA have decided not to continue with this matter until the outcome of the Judicial Review.

28. Respite Care.

Members considered this item from Rob Watt, Head of Adult Social Care and Angela Dryer, Assistant Head of Adult Social Care, at the HOSP's meeting on 1st December and decided no further information was required. ***Matter now resolved***

29. Care in the Community.

HOSP members heard about this item from Rob Watt, Head of Adult Social Care and Angela Dryer, Assistant Head of Adult Social Care, at the HOSP's meeting on 1st December. They decided no further information was required. ***Review now complete***

30. Alcohol Related Hospital Admissions.

At its meeting on 20 January 2010, the Panel agreed the project brief for this review. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) has part funded this review as one of nine national scrutiny development areas.

On 4 March Dr Paul Edmondson-Jones, Director of Public Health & Wellbeing gave an overview of alcohol related admissions at QA hospital showing how it compares nationally. The Panel also learnt about the causes and the impact of alcohol abuse on different sections of society. A Consultant and the Operational Manager for the Emergency Department, Portsmouth Hospitals Trust also explained the methods used to record alcohol related admissions at QA Hospital and the referral system to treatment services.

In March, three Panel members accompanied the Portsmouth Street Pastors over three nights. All attendees reported that they were very impressed with the voluntary work that the pastors do, the great working relationship they have with all the services and venues involved and response from members of the public. They witnessed many incidents where vulnerable people had

been offered assistance. This included listening, informing them of services available in the city, offering 'space jackets' and flip-flops and ensuring that they got home safely. The pastors also collected discarded bottles and glasses.

Anthony Quinn, Senior Local Democracy Officer gave a presentation and answered questions on this review at a Health Conference in March. This raised a lot of interest in the panel's review among health professionals from around the country.

Publicity for this review is underway and includes posters, web pages, online and paper surveys, press releases, articles in PHT and Council publications and radio interviews with the chair.

The next Panel meetings are scheduled for 10 June and 22 July.

Many visits and work shadowing evenings have been provisionally arranged in June and July with the police, ambulance, CCTV control room, drug and alcohol stakeholder meeting, Portsmouth Users Service Help (PUSH) group, detoxification centres and the medical assessment unit and emergency department at Queen Alexandra Hospital. The emphasis for the work shadowing with the emergency services will centre around the Guildhall Walk area, although the review is looking at alcohol related hospital admissions across the entire city and across all age ranges.