

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Scrutiny Management Panel held on 29 July at 9.00 am in the Executive Meeting Room, Floor 3, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB: These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting, which can be viewed at www.portsmouth.gov.uk)

Present

Councillors Cheryl Buggy (Chair)
Lynne Stagg
Rob Wood
Mike Park (till 10:55)
James Williams (from 09:05 till 09:30)
Peter Eddis

Officers

Louise Wilders, Head of Customer, Community and Democratic Services
James Sandy, Community Engagement Manager
Rachel Dalby, Head of Community Safety
Cindy Jones, Civil Contingencies Manager
Stewart Agland, Local Democracy Manager
Anthony Quinn, Senior Local Democracy Officer

25 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caroline Scott, Jim Patey, Lee Mason and Donna Jones

26 Declarations of interest (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest

27 Minutes from the Meeting of 1 July 2010 (AI3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Management Panel meeting held on 1 July 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

28 Review of Scrutiny (AI 4)

The panel discussed the report and the potential implications for scrutiny and agreed that there was a need to;

[TAKE IN REPORT]

- Increase scrutiny of partner agencies to explain their actions
- Be clear about scope of reviews and terms of reference for panels.
- Get scrutiny involved more at the outset of policy formulation across the authority.
- Be more effective at holding the executive to account including pre-

decision scrutiny

- Promote the benefits of using scrutiny as a mechanism for change
- Ensure Communities Engagement Manager in conjunction with Senior Local Democracy Officer facilitate better public engagement with scrutiny process including managing expectations of public and helping to educate the public about how they can influence scrutiny to make a real difference.
- Develop effective questioning style by panel members to ensure incisive questions are asked to draw out the salient points from reviews.
- Get Heads of Service involved in scrutiny and raise awareness of broader issues across the authority – although they would not be involved in scrutinising their own area.
- Highlight big strategies and arrange for scrutiny involvement in developing these strategies, i.e. Regeneration and Anti-poverty as policy development evolves over time and scrutiny needs to get involved much earlier in the process
- Ensure that post review implementation is carried out by themed panels and escalated to SMP if unable to get satisfactory answers from executive

The panel acknowledged that community plans and corporate plans do not always match. The panel also discussed the potential impact of moving from cabinet to committee structure and requested the views of the Leader of the council and the group leaders in relation to scrutiny.

RESOLVED that the Leader of the Council and group leaders be invited to the SMP meeting of 15 September 2010 to give their view on scrutiny.

29 Notice of Motion – televising council meetings (AI 5)

The panel received a report from the head of Customer, Community & Democratic Services in response to a notice of motion raised through full council on 23 March 2010.

[TAKE IN REPORT]

The panel agreed that;

- They felt that any webcasting of council meetings should not to be operated by a third party provider
- Live streaming would probably not be required, edited highlights of council meetings would be the most likely solution.
- They require details in respect of the cost and resourcing implications of implementing this service
- There is a need to determine the desire from the public for this type of service, by using the main website to conduct a demand survey and consider using Flagship

The panel would also like to know what funding other organisations receive to provide this service as well as, what is the average audience size and what are the media outputs for this.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Head of Information Services draw up costs of webcasting of council meetings to include set-up costs for introducing an edited version of webcasting, what are the revenue costs, installation costs and on-going staff costs once in place.**
- 2. The Head of Customer, Community and Democratic Services will determine how other authorities fund webcasting and undertake a web-based survey to determine demand. This information to be reported back to SMP at the 15 September 2010 meeting.**

30 Finance & Resources (AI 6)

Having assumed responsibility for Finance & Resources, the panel received a report in respect of the gap analysis of the Finance & Resources Scrutiny Review.

[TAKE IN REPORT]

The panel identified further questions to be asked across the authority to help inform the final report. The panel considered a summary of potential questions to formulate their updated project brief. The project brief will be refined and circulated to the chairs of the themed scrutiny panels to undertake this work within their own areas and report back to SMP at the 15 September meeting.

RESOLVED that the chair of SMP will write to the Heads of Service with the list of outstanding questions and invite them to formally respond to the themed scrutiny panel for their work area and provide answers to the outstanding questions ahead of the 15 September Scrutiny Management Panel meeting.

31 Portsmouth City Council response to power failure (AI 7)

The head of Customer Safety and the Civil Contingencies Manager presented the report on Portsmouth City Council's response to the power failure on 26 June 2010. The panel were advised that Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE) had not been invited to attend the meeting; however, they could be invited to attend a future meeting to inform the panel of their response to this incident.

[TAKE IN REPORT]

The panel heard about the response from Portsmouth City Council to this incident, the lessons learnt and improvements that have been put in place as a result of this. The panel were also advised that without the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) they would be reviewing very different outcomes and that the authority are much better placed to respond to these incidents

now, than they were before the inception of the CCU.

Whilst the incident was the responsibility of SSE it highlighted the vulnerabilities of modern living and the reliance on electricity to maintain many of the things we take for granted.

The panel heard that;

- Portsmouth City Council staff responded well to the requests for assistance, including volunteers either coming in or re-arranging their social plans to be on stand-by to come in if required
- There could have been a serious issue with the waste water supply had the incident carried over until the Sunday
- The lack of information available on the day was due to some organisations only having this available in electronic format
- Gun Wharf Management Company contingency plans appeared inadequate
- CCU have updated their emergency response procedures in relation to bottled water distribution
- CCU have updated their emergency response procedures in relation to toilet provision and how to deal with the lack of waste water across multiple sites in the city and how this could be addressed in a short time-frame
- Other private sector organisations need to practice being resilient within their own areas of work and not rely on LA for all the answers
- Some of the back-up lighting within LA housing didn't work
- Ward councillors were not advised of the issues, although this information was cascaded from senior officers on duty on the day
- City Help-desk set up an emergency help-line which was very effective
- LA Housing out of hours service dealt with 199 calls about the power outage

The panel would like to know what responsibility is being taken by partner agencies to respond to these types of incident and have asked that they be written to and invited to attend a future SMP meeting to explain what learning has come from this and how this learning will be implemented.

RESOLVED that the Chair of SMP would write to Scottish & Southern Electric and Gun Wharf Management Company to invite them to Scrutiny Management Panel on 15 September 2010 and to answer questions regarding their response to this incident, learning from it and plans to implement this learning.

32 Forward Plan (AI 8)

Deferred until meeting of 15 September 2010

33 Councillor Call for Action (AI 9)

The panel agreed that a cross-party 3 member group consisting of Cllr's Buggy, Patey and Park be approved to deal with the allocation of any scrutiny referrals received under the Councillor Call for Action legislation, to assist with the timely allocation of any referrals.

RESOLVED that Councillors Buggy, Patey and Park act as the 3 member cross party group to determine the allocation of referrals under Councillor Call for Action legislation

Work Programme (AI10)

34

That all themed panels complete any outstanding work and concentrate on responding to the updated project brief from Finance & Resources in time for the 15 September meeting.

That SMP agree a meeting date between 15 September and 4 November meeting to agree and sign off the completed Finance & Resources report.

That the 3 member cross party group are used to review project briefs that have been compiled by themed panels and receive draft completed scrutiny reviews for comment prior to submission to cabinet. This is designed to provide a light touch approach to quality control as the over-arching scrutiny panel and is not designed to slow down the scrutiny process.

RESOLVED

- 1. All outstanding work is completed by themed panels and that they concentrate on completing their evidence gathering for the Finance & Resources review ahead of SMP on 15 September**
- 2. An additional meeting date between September and November is agreed**
- 3. The 3 member cross party group are provided with project briefs for all themed panels and are supplied with a draft copy of all scrutiny reviews for comment prior to submission to cabinet. All SMP members can deputise for the 3 member cross party group subject to political proportionality rules and the review not being one they have been involved in.**

Date of next meeting (AI11)

35

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 15th September 2010 at 9 a.m. in the executive Meeting Room, 3rd Floor, The Guildhall

Meeting concluded at 11.13 a.m.

Chairman.....