

## **SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Scrutiny Management Panel held on 15 September 2010 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](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk))

### **Present**

Councillors Cheryl Buggy (Chair)  
Lynne Stagg  
Rob Wood  
Mike Park  
Jim Patey (till 11:30 hrs)  
Peter Eddis  
Terry Henderson (till 11:03 hrs, deputising for James Williams)

### **Officers**

Louise Wilders, Head of Customer, Community and Democratic Services  
Andy Hough, Head of Children & Young People  
Simon Moon, Head of Transport & Street Management  
Martin Lavers, Project Manager  
Cindy Jones, Civil Contingencies Manager  
Stewart Agland, Local Democracy Manager  
Anthony Quinn, Senior Local Democracy Officer

#### **36 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caroline Scott, James Williams and Lee Mason

#### **37 Declarations of interest (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of interest

#### **38 Minutes from the Meeting of 29 July 2010 (AI3)**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Scrutiny Management Panel meeting held on 29 July 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### **39 Use of Consultants Review (AI 4)**

The panel would like to record their thanks to the Heads of Service for the quick responses to the set of questions sent to them following the last SMP meeting.

[TAKE IN RESPONSES]

The full responses received from the heads of service will be available to the panel following this meeting, however, due to the volume of information that has been received; the panel would like to take the time to properly digest the information received to enable them to complete their review and consequently agreed that the October meeting would be informal and that the finalised report would be considered at the formal meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

The panel thanked the Head of Children & Young People for his attendance and requested that he attend the next Education, Children & Young People scrutiny panel meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September to give the panel an opportunity to pose questions direct in respect of the response submitted.

The panel also heard from the Head of Transport & Street Management who had been requested to attend the meeting, to explain some of the anomalies contained within the submission to Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel the previous week. The panel were advised that due to the time constraints in producing this level of information, some of the items had been erroneously submitted and that this information would be corrected and re-submitted to the panel in the interests of clarity.

In response to questions, the panel heard;:

- The objective is to reduce the use of consultants, although it is recognised that there will be occasions when consultants must be used due to the lack of in-house expertise in very specialist fields or capacity restraints
- The framework contract in place for using consultants helps to provide value for money by reducing the cost of consultants
- Adopting a shared services approach could have the potential for income generation by selling services externally
- In recent years the Service has been looking across its teams to identify opportunities in respect of cross-skilling, it is now giving consideration to the wider opportunities afforded by looking across the authority
- With the exception of the Unitary authorities of Southampton & IoW and the County Council, our neighbouring authorities (district council's) are not highways authorities and therefore do not have the same responsibilities / functions. For example, in the areas of Transport Policy Southampton have 5 officers as opposed to 1 in Portsmouth which makes adopting a shared services approach more challenging

**RESOLVED that the panel;**

- 1. Write to heads of service to clarify the response to questions 8, 9 and 14 as some do not appear to have fully answered the question.**
- 2. Having digested the information submitted, the panel would submit questions to Senior Local Democracy Officer, together with formulating any additional questions, no later than 7<sup>th</sup> October to ensure they are responded to and incorporated in the draft report at the informal meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> October.**

3. **Require the Head of Children & Young People to attend the next Education, Children & Young People scrutiny meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September to present the response from his service.**
4. **Receive the finalised report at its formal meeting in November at which the recommendations of the review will be considered.**

#### **40 Electrical Power Failure – update (AI 5)**

The panel received written responses from Scottish & Southern Energy and Gun Wharf Management in respect of the Electrical Power Failure on 26 June 2010.

[TAKE IN RESPONSES]

The Civil Contingencies Manager had attended a previous meeting to present the response to this incident from the Local Authorities perspective. The panel felt the response from Scottish & Southern Energy was fairly comprehensive and outlined the events of the incident clearly. Conversely, the panel felt that the response from Gun Wharf Management was inadequate.

The panel had a healthy discussion in respect of roles and responsibilities in the event of similar incidents.

**RESOLVED that the panel:**

1. **Write to Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service, providing them with a copy of our report and requesting a copy of their report into the incident**
2. **Civil Contingencies Manager to make available, a training session for all members to raise awareness of roles and responsibilities and response to civil emergencies**
3. **Write to the telecoms companies in respect of their resilience in these instances to provide an operational phone network**
4. **Respond to the Leader of the Council with the panel's findings in order that the resident who raised the matter can be advised**

#### **41 Notice of Motion – televising council meetings (AI 6)**

The panel requested additional information be brought to this meeting to inform them of the set up and running costs, together with demand for televising council meetings.

[TAKE IN REPORT]

The Head of customer, community and democratic services presented the findings to the panel and informed them that the demand for the service conducted through an on-line survey was low. The panel were advised that the estimated costs (provided by a mainstream supplier) were in the region of £29k over 3 years plus annual staff costs of £3k if purchasing the equipment, and £25k over 3 years plus annual staff costs of £3k per year if leasing the

equipment. Due to contractual reasons, the big screen cannot be used to televise these meetings till after the 2012 Olympics. The authorities that are currently televising meetings have received government funding to do so, which is unlikely to be available in the foreseeable future.

Currently all formal council meetings (subject to dealing with exempt information) are open to the public to attend and the agendas and minutes of them appear on the council website.

**RESOLVED that the panels response to the notice of motion at the Full Council Meeting on 12 October 2010 be to recommend as follows:**

- 1. Mindful of the inherent costs of providing this televised service in the current economic climate, consideration of the proposal of televising of council meetings be postponed until after the 2012 Olympics, at which time the potential to utilise the big screen will be available. Consequently, the motion cannot be considered for support at this time.**

#### **42 Forward Plan (AI 7)**

The panel are keen to ensure their timely involvement in the decision making of council functions and see the Forward Plan as a means of identifying forthcoming issues that could benefit from pre-decision scrutiny, as part of the policy development and holding the executive to account functions of scrutiny.

Whilst the panel acknowledged that the current Forward Plan is legally compliant with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, they felt that the level of limited detail inhibits them from intervening in an informed and timely manner to scrutinise decisions that are coming up.

The panel recognised that certain annually recurring documents go through the Forward Plan and feel that items such as the Corporate Plan should be looked at prior to being finalised.

**RESOLVED that the Local Democracy Manager brings a report to the next formal meeting, highlighting suggested areas for improvement within the current system**

#### **43 Date of next meeting (AI 8)**

The next meeting will be an informal meeting held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2010 at 10 a.m. in the executive Meeting Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, The Guildhall

Next formal meeting will be held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2010 at 10 a.m.

Meeting concluded at 11.40 a.m.

Chairman.....