



Subject: Annual Report of Scrutiny

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Report to: Scrutiny Management Panel, 11th March 2011
Full Council, 22nd March, 2011

1. Purpose of report

To provide information to the Scrutiny Management Panel (SMP) and subsequently Full Council, in accordance with the City Council Constitution, of the work that the scrutiny panels have been involved in, together with examples of the productive outcomes.

2 . Recommendation

That the report is received and examples of some of the productive outcomes detailed within the report be acknowledged.

3. Recent Scrutiny Activity of the Scrutiny Management and themed Panels is summarised as follows

Scrutiny Management Panel

Use of Consultants Review

The Scrutiny Management Panel expanded the remit of the Use of Consultants Review and for the first time and with good effect utilised the other scrutiny panels in order to understand the complete picture across the entire authority as opposed to a small representation.

This enabled all elected members involved in scrutiny to raise their awareness of the rationale for engaging consultants, temporary and agency staff.

The review was also significant in its engagement of every Head of Service in the Authority. Each one had to produce a response paper and present it for questioning at the Scrutiny Management Panel, or one of the themed panels. A powerful demonstration of the importance given to the scrutiny process and key to enabling the review to being so well informed.

The review, amongst other findings, identified that the authority has a rich diverse workforce with skills that are often unknown outside their individual service. Consequently, there followed a recommendation for the compilation of a skills audit (supported by the Cabinet) to identify the range and diversity of available skills within the organisation to help reduce the need to source experienced staff from external agencies. This will also help to facilitate cross service working and move away from silo working that can be restrictive. The review also identified areas where income generation is covering the costs of the service being delivered as well as providing income generation opportunities.

A “market place” style system is being devised to allow staff to advertise their skills and abilities that could be used across the organisation, thereby saving the cost of engaging external consultants, temporary or agency staff.

This was a very comprehensive review, with all but one of the recommendation actions being adopted by the Cabinet.

Power Failure

The Management Panel investigated the serious power failure sustained across Portsmouth on Saturday 26th June 2010 following an electrical fire at a sub-station in Southsea. The panel looked at the Emergency Response from Portsmouth City Council, together with the response from Hampshire Fire & Rescue, Scottish & Southern Electric and the Residential Management Company at Gun Wharf Quays.

The panel concluded that whilst the fire was accidental, there was some joined learning that came out of the incident, which will be helpful in similar circumstances in the future. This also highlighted the need to be more explicit about and harness the important roles and responsibilities relevant ward members have during such incidents. Consequently members have been given the opportunity to receive a training input from the Civil Contingencies Team and a new communications route has been implemented to ensure that members are kept informed about incidents affecting their ward.

Health, Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Reducing Alcohol Related Hospital

The Health, Overview & Scrutiny Panel (HOSP), a statutory panel, with an ever increasing workload following the huge ongoing changes in the health field, has conducted a far reaching and compelling review into; “reducing alcohol related hospital admissions”.

This Council was only one of ten Local Authorities in England to be granted Scrutiny Development Area status by the Centre for Public Scrutiny as part of

their Health Inequalities Programme. The purpose of the SDA programme was to develop a scrutiny tool-kit for use by health scrutineers across the country. The case study compiled by CfPS and included within the resource kit, stated, “It pays to be ambitious from the start” in relation to the process of engagement that the panel undertook.

The review undertaken by the HOSP was presented to the Healthy Living Conference at Bournemouth in March 2010 and the work that elected members have been engaged in, has been recognised and is being closely monitored by Directors of Public Health nationally as well as others working in the field of scrutiny and the Government Office South East. The role that elected members have played in this review, (which has included numerous late night work shadowing visits with the police, street pastors, ambulance service, casualty at QA Hospital, CCTV control centre) has received extensive recognition and has been highlighted in the case study, compiled by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, which is being showcased at the launch of the scrutiny tool-kit at the, “Marmot, One Year on” event in London on 17th February. (**See appendix A attached**)

At the time of writing the Cabinet is scheduled to consider the recommendations arising from the review at its meeting on 7 March, some of which are detailed below by way of example.

1. A Councillor be appointed Alcohol Awareness Champion
2. Appropriate alcohol-awareness education in primary schools be introduced and the Head of Children’s Services encourage head teachers of all schools to include alcohol awareness in their curriculum. All secondary schools (both state and private) to be encouraged to appoint an Alcohol Champion through the Health Improvement and Development Service (HIDS) scheme, which is already in place, and that the scheme be extended to include further and higher education.
3. Monitor the progress made by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) which is currently drafting a by-law on minimum pricing. If it is successful, then the council consider introducing it in Portsmouth.
4. Support to be given to this scheme [Off Watch].
5. That the licensed premises owners in the Guildhall Walk and environs contribute to install additional CCTV with the council picking up the maintenance costs thereafter.
6. Support the introduction of a late-night levy on licensed premises takings as being considered in the Government’s consultation document rebalancing the Licensing Act.
7. Everyone involved [in the Safer Portsmouth Partnership] meet regularly to agree a data-sharing protocol and introduce regular service manager contact.

The Health, Overview & Scrutiny Panel are the statutory panel for responding to issues affecting the health economy. However, as mentioned earlier, due to the volume of change taking place in the health service, the HOSP asked SMP if they could receive some assistance, from the other scrutiny panels to look into; “personal health budgets” “paediatric cardiac services” and

“discharge of patients from QA and St James’s hospitals” and report their findings back through HOSP.

Closure of the G5 Ward at QA Hospital

The panel has played a key role in this issue, questioning senior managers at the QA hospital about its actions and consequently submitting a referral to the Secretary of State for Health in September, in respect of, lack of consultation on a substantial variation at QA Hospital regarding “end of life care”.

This matter is currently the subject of a full investigation by the Independent Reconfiguration Panel, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and it has visited Portsmouth and interviewed relevant persons as part of its investigation. The report and findings must be with him by 31st March 2011. The IRP will publish the report about a month after the formal submission to the Secretary of State.

General Contact with the QA Hospital

There have been separate presentations on the role of health scrutiny given to the Service Managers and Council of Governors of QA Hospital in order to develop more effective inter-agency working with partner agencies.

In addition to all this activity, the Panel has been monitoring -

1. Dental Outreach Centre, University of Portsmouth
2. NHS Portsmouth Sustainability Report.
3. GPs out of hours’ service
4. Clinical Thresholds
5. Unscheduled Care.
6. Pharmacy Needs Assessment
7. Transforming Community Services.
8. Portsmouth Hospitals Trust Complaints Procedure – involved representatives presenting to the Panel and members visiting the hospital.
9. The NHS White Paper, Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS.
10. Fluoridation of Water Supplies.
11. Rembrandt Unit.
12. Battenburg Avenue.
13. Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit
14. Arrangements for Assessing Substantial Change in NHS provision
15. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
16. South Central Ambulance Service presented a map of ambulance standby point

Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel

Properties under the Culture Portfolio

The panel conducted an in-depth review into, “Properties under the Culture Portfolio”, which looked at the way in which a selection of properties across

the portfolio, where being maintained and utilised. Due to the vast amount of properties contained within this portfolio, the panel sought to concentrate on a broad selection that would enable them to identify some of the consistent issues with long-term repairs and maintenance of buildings.

The panel identified that accessibility to some venues was problematic. One of the outcomes from the review was the identification of Disabled Access requirements for Cumberland House Museum, which are now being addressed to increase accessibility for visitors.

The panel also recommended a review of the tendering process for repairs & maintenance to ensure quality and best value for money. Work is now in progress through the Transformation Programme to improve the evaluation of tenders through the centralisation of maintenance commissioning.

Economic Regeneration

The panel are now looking at regeneration from a pre-decision scrutiny perspective. The panel are receiving representations from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Bournemouth Borough Council in relation to their experience of utilising a Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV) as a means of securing a capital investment partner for joint capital works. The panel will also receive information from Edinburgh City Council regarding their utilisation of a Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) agreement with HM Treasury. The TIF model requires primary legislation (expected later this year) to become available to English Local Authorities, although it is currently accessible in Scotland.

Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel

Allocation of Housing

The panel undertook an in-depth review of, “allocation of housing, to include the City Council’s under-occupation policy and mental health provision”. This review highlighted the pro-active work already underway within Local Authority Housing and the impact that changes to housing legislation can have on the housing allocations process.

The panel has just commenced a stage 1 review of “personal health budgets” on behalf of HOSP. The scope of the review is to determine the challenges that face people using personal health budgets. Portsmouth is one of the pilot areas for this national pilot, which will be rolled-out as part of the personalisation agenda over the next few years.

Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel

Vulnerable Children

The panel undertook an in-depth review of “protection of vulnerable children” which supports the council’s priorities of protecting our most vulnerable residents. The review concentrated on how the causes of neglect are identified and the multi-agency approach to dealing with reported cases. The panel learnt of the ongoing publicity in relation to the Common Assessment Framework being carried out in conjunction with the Children’s Trust. The panel learnt what the role of the Serious Case Review is, following the death or serious injury of a child. Since the publication of this review and in the interests of transparency, the coalition government have changed the access to information to make the full report of all Serious Case Reviews publicly available.

Paediatric Cardiac Services

The panel are currently engaged in a stage 1 review of “paediatric cardiac services” on behalf of HOSP. This is looking at the need and service provision locally against the backdrop of a national consultation in relation to future paediatric cardiac provision at specialist centres. The only specialist site currently available in the South East is based in Southampton, which the panel have visited. The proposals being put forward, puts the Southampton facility at risk, which could mean patients and their families having to travel to either Bristol or London for surgery.

Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel

Icy Pavements

The Panel investigated the notice of motion in respect of Icy Pavements and the lessons learnt from that experience, which were highlighted in the Panel’s paper considered by Full Council, has helped to develop better lines of communication across the authority and our partner agencies, as well as closer working with Colas on clearing the primary and tertiary road network. The improved communications and information available on the PCC website was issued ahead of the severe weather. Subsequent improvements, including increased storage of salt were beneficial during the severe weather spell during December 2010.

Discharge of Patients

The panel are engaged in a stage 1 review of “discharge of patients from QA and St James’s Hospitals” on behalf of HOSP. Having been identified as an area of concern for patients, the HOSP sought to identify ways in which the NHS, Social Care and partner agencies could work more closely together to improve service delivery and reduce the delays in discharging patients who no longer have a clinical need for remaining in hospital.

4. Call-in

The Scrutiny Management Panel is responsible for dealing with any decisions subject to the Call-in procedures. The call-in procedures have been updated, making it easier to call a decision in. During the 2010/11 Municipal Year, there have not been any decisions that have been called-in.

5. Petitions

The Petitions Scheme came into force on 15 June 2010, with e-petitions coming online on 15 December 2010. The provisions of the scheme allow for an officer to be, “held to account” at a public meeting of overview & scrutiny as well as the ability for Full Council to refer petitions to scrutiny for further investigation. The processes are in place to respond to any petitions that are received, such as the Cumberland House Museum petition that was recently debated at Full Council, following a presentation to it by the petitioner.

6. Conclusion

It is recognised that the Localism and Decentralisation Bill offers opportunities to change the way the Council takes decisions and hold the decision takers to account. Whilst implementation of any new arrangements is still likely to be a little while off, the Scrutiny Management Panel is, in the meantime, determined to ensure the process adds value wherever it can, not least in its policy development role. This approach will continue all the time that scrutiny remains an integral part of the Council’s political management structure.