

OVERVIEW COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

13th February 2006

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Harrington (Chair) and Councillors Lane and Murphy.

Conservative Group

Councillor Bladen (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Mrs. Hood.

In Attendance

Councillor Atkin (Conservative Group).

OV/22. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

The Chair asked the Principal Policy Officer to leave the Meeting.

The Chair referred to the Street Scene Review Report and felt there was some confusion on the way in which this would be progressed. The Overview Committee wished to be involved in this partnership working issue. From speaking to other Members, the Chair felt that the best way forward was to create a Working Group, to look at how to carry out the review. There was a need to agree terms of reference and lines of communication. Accordingly, the Chair nominated himself, Councillor Murphy and Councillor Bladen as a Sub Committee to work with Derbyshire County Council in progressing this review. This approach was agreed by the Overview Committee.

The Chair then voiced his concerns about the report submitted by the Deputy Chief Executive to the Environmental and Development Services (EDS) Committee. This report had not been referred to Overview Members before being submitted to EDS and he found that concerning. The Deputy Chief Executive interjected and was concerned where the discussion was leading. The Chair wanted to raise this issue as the report was from the Overview Committee. At EDS, the report was withdrawn. The Chair quoted from the Deputy Chief Executive's report and particularly the Annexed Overview Committee Minutes. The Deputy Chief Executive was intensely concerned that the issue was being raised in this forum. There had been extensive discussions with the Chair prior to the report's production. He was clear that he was passing on Overview's report and puzzled about the issue being raised. He agreed there were issues of concern relating to scrutiny. If the Chair was concerned about the report, this was an issue for the Monitoring Officer. The Chair responded that the report was from Overview Committee and he expected to have been consulted. The matter was raised at the Council Meeting also.

Councillor Murphy joined the discussion and was aware of the reported concerns. He felt it was an uncomfortable position. He added that the Chair had become more determined on this issue, having become aware of an email about the corporate way forward on this review project. He felt in reading the Overview Minute that its intention was different to the report to EDS. He felt there was no problem in discussing the issues in this forum, but hoped it could go forward in a positive way.

The Deputy Chief Executive was very unhappy that this issue was raised in an open session, felt it was inappropriate and was not willing to discuss this issue further, in this forum. It had been discussed with the Leader and there was a meeting scheduled for Friday to discuss the matter.

Councillor Murphy questioned why it was inappropriate to discuss this issue. The Chair reserved the right to come back to this in the future, but he was aware of the time spent trying to resolve issues. He felt that scrutiny was not operating properly at this time.

Councillor Murphy repeated that he would like to clarify the issue about discussing the report that went to EDS and wanted an explanation why it was felt inappropriate to discuss the matter. He wanted to know exactly what the issue was and whether it was inappropriate under the Procedural Rules or etiquette.

Councillor Bladen voiced his concerns about how scrutiny was operating. He made reference to the Council's structure as a fourth option authority and felt that scrutiny would operate differently under a cabinet structure. He was mindful that a further meeting would take place on this issue on Friday and that the Overview Committee did not have papers to discuss the issue at this time.

The Deputy Chief Executive felt he had written a report that reflected the action required from the Overview Committee Minute. If the Chair was unhappy this did not reflect the Committee's decision, he was happy to discuss this and felt it had been discussed already. He repeated that the Member could take this matter up with the Monitoring Officer. The Chair agreed to leave the issue until the planned meeting on Friday.

Councillor Murphy commented on the reasons that EDS Committee had deferred the report. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the decision was to defer this report, but no reason was given.

The Principal Policy Officer was invited to return to the Meeting.

OV/23. **REPORT FOR COUNCIL BASED ON THE DISCUSSIONS AT THE SCRUTINY GET-TOGETHER EVENT OF 30TH JANUARY 2006**

The Chair advised that he had circulated a report to all Members following the Scrutiny "get-together" event. As he had received no further comments, it was agreed that this report was a fair representation of the event that had taken place. He then circulated a base report on the current health of Scrutiny at the Council. This report included areas such as:-

- ❑ Context
- ❑ Are we fulfilling our design criteria?
- ❑ A lesson from an "excellent" Authority
- ❑ Scrutiny Workplan
- ❑ Work Programme for the coming year 2005/06
- ❑ Development areas and resource requirement.

The Chair believed that Scrutiny was making progress, but there were some difficulties. He felt that due to financial and other resource implications, South Derbyshire should benefit by encouraging relationships and working

alongside Derbyshire County Council. It was agreed to look back at the achievements of the Scrutiny Committee over the previous two years. The Principal Policy Officer outlined the work to date and agreed to provide a report to the Chair of the Committee by 20th February 2006. The Deputy Chief Executive requested clarification of how the report would be developed to arrive at the next Meeting. With the agreement of the Overview Committee, the Chair proposed that Councillor Murphy and himself complete a further report based on the information already gathered, for the next Overview Committee Meeting. He asked Members to contribute and to email the Principal Policy Officer by 17th February 2006. He asked the Officer to forward any further issues and the report on Scrutiny successes to himself by 20th February 2006.

K. HARRINGTON

CHAIR

The Meeting closed at 3.50 p.m.