

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9th December 2009

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

Councillor Jones (Chairman), Councillor Mrs. Farrington (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Atkin, Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Plenderleith.

**Labour Group**

Councillor Lane.

The following Members were also in attendance and, with the approval of the Chairman, spoke to the Minute No's indicated:-

Councillor Lemmon - Minute No. OS/13.

Councillor Mrs. Patten - Minute No. OS/12.

Councillor Shepherd - Minute No. OS/12.

OS/9. **APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Mrs. Mead (Labour Group).

OS/10. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meetings held on 20th October and 5th November 2009 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chairman.

OS/11. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Lane declared a personal interest in Item 8 – Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, relating to the Shopmobility review.

OS/12. **BROADBAND REVIEW PRESENTATION**

Further to Minute No. OS/25 of 10th December 2008, on the review of Broadband in South Derbyshire, the Committee had agreed to continue to pursue British Telecom on the outstanding issues and to receive periodic progress reports. Consequently, Paul Bimson, British Telecom's Regional Partnership Director for the East Midlands and Carl Gange from Openreach (a stand alone company, providing BT's infrastructure) gave a presentation on the current situation and future plans for Broadband in South Derbyshire. They had been provided with a list of questions agreed by Members of the Committee prior to the Meeting, as detailed in the report, to which responses were provided.

The presentation provided details on broadband speeds, including the details of the Etwall exchange and Hilton area; broadband technology developments; broadband infrastructure update; broadband for business; Digital Britain; copper infrastructure and future proposals.

Arising from the presentation, a number of comments were made and questions raised in relation to the measurement of decibels; the timescale for improvements in the Etwall and Hilton areas; problems with cables to properties at the new development at Hilton; effect of future services and home mobile services; the capacity of exchanges; fibre-to-the-cabinet proposals for the District; administering an off-site test and advising of the availability of services for potential users. Detailed responses were provided.

Note: At 7.00 p.m. Councillor Atkin left the Meeting.

Several Members stated their disappointment with BT's proposals for the District and considered that there had been little improvement since the previous presentation received last year. South Derbyshire was one of the fastest growing areas in the Country, but poor broadband services impacted on attracting new businesses to the area. Details were also provided of partnership funding schemes being used in Cornwall and Yorkshire.

Note: At 7.05 p.m., Councillor Shepherd (in attendance) left the Meeting.

**It was agreed:-**

- (1) That a draft review report be submitted to the next Meeting for approval, including a recommendation that partnership funding be sought towards improving broadband service provision in South Derbyshire.**
- (2) That the Review report referred to in (1) above, is then submitted to the next available Meeting of the Council.**

OS/13. **ETWALL LEISURE CENTRE – COMMUNITY USE**

Members received a report outlining the community's use of Etwall Leisure Centre, following its transfer to the new facility, which was opened to the public on 5th August 2009. The report included details of the process adopted in the establishment and development of the swimming programme. Members were reminded of the joint use of the facility, whereby John Port School occupied the building in the day during term-time and the community had access during the evenings, weekends and school holidays. Although there was access to the health and fitness suite in the day during term-time, the School's requirements and issues relating to child protection limited public access to the swimming pool during certain periods.

Members were apprised of the facilities at the new site, the extended opening hours and management arrangements. It was noted that attendance figures were significantly higher than those at the previous facilities, including an increase in the number of people using the new facility during term-time.

Providing the facility had created the equivalent of nine new full-time posts. An outstanding operational commitment was the provision of a catering service, the preferred option for which was to sub-contract to a suitable specialist. Operational problems had been experienced with poor water circulation, which was currently being addressed.

Three main demands for swimming pool times had been identified – public swimming, club use and swimming lessons, together with other centre organised sessions. Existing commitments for usage of the pool, including timings, had been safeguarded. The amount of time available for public swimming at the new Centre was significantly higher than that at the old facility and had resulted in an increased number of people attending swimming lessons.

In the current financial year, there was a projected budget estimate overspend for the facility in the region of £100,000. This was due to the necessity to close the previous facility earlier than anticipated, because of a mechanical failure. In addition, a delay in opening the new facility to the public had created a six-week period with additional staff costs, without any income generation. Income generation from the health and fitness suite had also been over-calculated and there had been unforeseen expenditure on issues including a redundancy payment to a member of staff. However, the budget projections for the following financial year currently appeared to be very accurate. The issue of the projected budget shortfall would be considered by the Centre's Joint Management Committee at its next Meeting.

Members sought further information with regard to the franchising of the catering service and were advised that there had been four interested companies, two of which were local, although only one tender had been received. Concern was raised regarding the contractual arrangements for the catering provision, as it was considered that the amount requested was rather high in the current economic climate.

It was suggested that the Committee revisit community usage, including the amount of time that the facilities were actually used, after a six-month period. Members also wished to investigate the membership aspects further. In this regard, figures for the previous and current membership were requested. Details were also requested of young peoples' usage of the facility.

A Member commented that problems had been experienced with the changing facilities, when the public had to use a disabled toilet to change in and clarification was provided on this matter. Further issues discussed were increasing aqua-aerobics and 'adults only' sessions, opportunities for children's centre usage, youth programming and problems with the School's planning, which prevented other usage sessions being planned.

**It was agreed:-**

- (1) That the report be noted as a baseline position of community usage of the new Etwall Leisure Centre.**

- (2) That the community's use of Etwall Leisure Centre be reviewed further by the Committee in six-months time.**

OS/14. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed an annual work programme, which was reviewed at each Meeting. At the Scrutiny Focus Session, Members had given consideration to the work programme and discussed a number of the potential review areas. These had been agreed at the subsequent Meeting (Minute No's. OS/4 and OS/5 of 20th October 2009 refer). It was questioned whether any further consultation was required on potential review areas.

Consideration was given to the budget scrutiny work and Members were reminded of the arrangements for the previous year. It was suggested that the Policy Committee Chairmen could be consulted again on potential areas for budget scrutiny. It was also suggested that the Chairman of the Finance and Management Committee be invited to contribute to the budget scrutiny work.

Consideration was then given to the new scrutiny area of crime and disorder and it was noted that a dedicated Meeting had been scheduled for 24th March 2010. It was suggested that consultation be undertaken with the Safer South Derbyshire Partnership, to ascertain whether there were any specific areas that the Committee could add value to.

With regard to the Shopmobility / Youth Information Shop review, a Meeting had been held the previous day. The Director of Community Services reported on the outcome of that Meeting, the Minutes of which were circulated. It was noted, particularly, that the organisation required assistance with additional funding, premises and publicity, including website development. The Committee recorded its thanks to the Councillor who had brought the organisation's situation to Members' attention, following initial concerns about opening hours. In her absence, it was suggested that further consideration be given to this review at the next Meeting.

**It was agreed:-**

- (1) That the Policy Committee Chairmen be consulted on potential areas for budget scrutiny and that the Chairman of the Finance and Management Committee be invited to attend the budget scrutiny meetings.**
- (2) That, in line with the arrangements for previous years, a briefing be held at 5.00 p.m. on 20th January 2010, immediately prior to the Special Meeting, at which the General Fund and Capital will be scrutinised.**
- (3) That the Special Meeting on 10th February 2010 focuses on the Housing Revenue Account.**

- (4) That consultation be undertaken with the Safer South Derbyshire Partnership with regard to crime and disorder scrutiny, to ascertain whether there are any specific areas that the Committee can add value to.**
- (5) That the Shopmobility/Youth Information Service review be reconsidered at the next Meeting.**
- (6) That the revised work programme attached at Annexe “SMB1” to the Signed Minute Book be approved.**

(Councillor Lane declared a personal interest in the Shopmobility aspect of this item).

C. JONES

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.45 p.m.