

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12th September 2007

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

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

Labour Group

Councillors Lane and Mrs. Mead.

In Attendance

Councillor Mrs. Brown (Independent Member).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Mrs. Plenderleith (Conservative Group) and Councillor Bambrick (Labour Group).

OS/21. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st August 2007 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

OS/22. **FLOODING ISSUES IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE**

The Director of Community Services addressed the Meeting with regard to this matter. It was noted that a copy of an internal briefing note – “Flooding 26th July 2007”, had been previously circulated to Members of this Committee.

The Director of Community Services confirmed that the District Council and the County Council worked very closely together on emergency planning. He added that it was part of the District Council’s job to lobby for funding for flood defences. He confirmed that no properties were flooded during the prolonged recent rain.

It was very important that areas within the District were encouraged to organise their own self-help at times of emergency. Parishes were encouraged to prepare their own plans and identify issues, for which the Council provided information and support i.e. transport, medical help, vulnerable residents etc. This had also been discussed at a recent Parish Liaison Meeting.

It was reported that flood alert systems were also in place in the District and residents could sign up to this service, receiving a text or automated phone call when problems were expected. During times of extreme flooding, the District Council set up an emergency team. In addition, work and assistance was co-ordinated with other local authorities and also the voluntary sector.

The District Council also jointly funded an Officer with the County Council who worked on emergency plans, business continuity within South Derbyshire.

Councillor Atkin commented that the District Council had carried out an excellent job in dealing with recent floods. However, he was concerned with preventing any future problems. The Director of Community Services responded that flash floods were very difficult to deal with, due to their unpredictable nature. Critical water courses were inspected and kept clear by the Environment Agency. In addition, studies were ongoing as to where floods were likely to happen in the future. The District Council would continue to work with the Environment Agency to try to ensure that areas at risk were protected. It was confirmed that the District Council did not carry out any physical work with regard to flooding and flood prevention. This was carried out by the Environment Agency.

Councillor Atkin expressed concern at the overflow from reservoirs. He gave an example of Foremarke Reservoir where the water rose, culminating in problems within Repton. The Director of Community Services agreed to make further enquiries with regard to this query.

Councillor Atkin asked if it was possible that the water supply could be contaminated in South Derbyshire in times of future major flooding. The Director of Community Services responded that this was possible, although South Derbyshire had never experienced this. Councillor Mrs. Brown added that contamination of flood water did happen in the year 2000 in Egginton. At Hatton in 2000, the sewage pumping station had to be turned off to prevent the pumps from burning out and this had led to sewage contamination of flood water.

Councillor Atkin queried the strength of the Environment Agency's plans in preventing further flooding. The Director of Community Services advised that this would be an issue to be considered directly by the Environment Agency. He added that this was a very complicated area and it may be useful to get further information on how they assessed risk directly from themselves. Councillor Mrs. Brown added that the Environment Agency had provided studies, models and strategies, but only certain projects were implemented due to cost implications.

Councillor Lane remarked that although Parish Plans may be coming into existence, this would not be happening within the unparished urban core. He asked if there were plans to address this, as the area had recently suffered from flash floods. The Director of Community Services advised that there was an issue with drains and sewers and a discussion had taken place with Rob Brittan, the Emergency Planning Officer, who was currently considering identifying flash flooding in advance. Councillor Lane asked that a forum be established for the urban core to share knowledge on flash flooding with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent. The Director of Community Services added that the District Council was already considering this issue and would bring a further report to the next Meeting.

It was agreed that the Director of Community Services provide a report to the next Meeting on flash flooding in the District to include the urban core.

It was agreed that the Environment Agency be invited to the next Meeting.

It was agreed that an interim progress report on flooding issues in South Derbyshire be submitted to the next Environmental and Development Services Committee.

OS/23. **BROADBAND UPDATE**

The Policy and Best Value Officer gave an update to the Meeting on the current position with broadband. He reported that he had written to BT and had carried out an online broadband availability check-up which was circulated to all Members of the Committee. This had shown up a wide variation of broadband speed available for Members throughout the District.

It was agreed that the IT Manager be invited to the next Meeting of the Committee to enable a full discussion of broadband and the issues surrounding the availability of broadband throughout the District.

OS/24. **BRIEFING NOTE – PUBLIC TRANSPORT MATTERS UPDATE**

At the previous Meeting of this Committee on 1st August 2007, it was agreed to consult the Environmental and Development Services Committee about a number of public transport matters prior to the formulation of a response to Derbyshire County Council on the scope of its review.

The Environmental and Development Services Committee considered a report on this issue on 23rd August 2007 and confirmed the issues previously identified by this Committee, with the addition of a further issue relating to 'barriers to the use of public transport'. It was confirmed that the full list of issues were:-

- Bus services to facilities (such as hospitals) in the neighbouring district
- Communication and consultation with local residents about changes to bus services
- Bus services to the new Etwall Leisure Centre
- Train services from Willington Station (with parking facilities)
- Long-term funding of the Gold Card Concessionary Fare Scheme
- Concessionary fares for taxis (as well as buses) through the Gold Card scheme.
- Barriers to the use of the public transport system

In addition, Councillor Mrs. Mead suggested that the availability of urban area buses was added to this list, which was agreed.

It was agreed that these issues be forwarded to Derbyshire County Council, asking them to be included within the scope of the review.

OS/25. **DELIVERY OF COUNCIL SERVICES VIA THE RURAL POST OFFICE NETWORK UPDATE**

At the previous Meeting of this Committee on 1st August 2007, it was agreed that the Head of IT and Customer Services be asked to provide an update on the signposting of Council Services through the Members' Bulletin. It was reported that this update would be provided shortly within the Bulletin.

OS/26. **DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08 UPDATE**

At the previous Meeting of the Committee on 1st August 2007, it was agreed to register an interest in a number of projects being undertaken by Derbyshire County Council's Improvement and Scrutiny Committees. It was confirmed that a letter of interest had now been sent to the County Council, registering this Committee's interest and inviting any possible areas for collaboration.

It was agreed that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Bambrick make arrangements to visit Derbyshire County Council to discuss this further.

OS/27. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME – FEEDBACK FROM POLICY COMMITTEES**

Following the previous Meeting of this Committee held on 1st August 2007, a report was presented to all policy committees seeking their views on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme, particularly in terms of projects and priorities.

Feedback from policy committees was outlined in the following table:-

Project	Policy Committee responsibility	Policy Committee comments (if any)
Flooding	E & DS	High priority
Broadband availability	E & DS	Medium priority
Street-scene	E & DS	Low priority
Public / Community transport	E & DS	Refer to Derbyshire County Council
Partnership working /LAA etc.	F & M	Work programme noted
Rural Post Offices	F & M	Work programme noted
Budget	F & M	Work programme noted
Health issues	H & CS	Work programme noted

Councillor Atkin suggested that further action could be commenced by starting to explore further the budget process, particularly relating to the Overview and Scrutiny function.

It was agreed to invite the Head of Finance and Property Services to a future Meeting in order to commence consideration of the budget process in detail.

Councillor Atkin suggested that the Committee should gain a broader understanding of the PCT by considering at the current organisation, future plans, consultation process etc. Councillor Mrs. Farrington understood that the PCT was planning another reorganisation shortly.

It was agreed that the current position of the PCT be established for the next Meeting.

The priorities for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were agreed as:-

- Flooding – high

- Health – high
- Broadband – medium.

It was agreed that this Committee would focus on these issues until the end of the year. The Head of Policy and Economic Regeneration added that the responsibility for health scrutiny currently lay with the County Council, so this would have to be undertaken in conjunction with that authority.

It was agreed that a report highlighting when all previous outstanding Overview and Scrutiny items were due be included on the next agenda.

N. ATKIN

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 6.25 p.m.