

OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

21st February 2005

**PRESENT:-**

**Labour Group**

Councillor Harrington (Chair) and Councillors Bambrick and Murphy.

**APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Bale (Conservative Group).

OV/26. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st November 2004 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

OV/27. **REPORTS TO POLICY COMMITTEES**

Councillor Murphy reported that at its Meeting held on 15th February 2005, the Finance and Management Committee had received a report from the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, detailing a review of the budget proposals. He explained that the purpose of the report was to outline the Scrutiny Committee's views on the development of the 2005/06 budget and to make recommendations in respect of arrangements for future budgets (including monitoring and management). Several key issues had been identified:-

- ❑ The robustness of assumptions underlying base budgets
- ❑ The alignment of resources to corporate and service priorities
- ❑ The budget timetable and arrangements for consulting local people and other stakeholders on spending priorities and proposals
- ❑ The 'shifting resources' project and the delivery of the 'Gershon' efficiency savings
- ❑ The role of Policy and Scrutiny Committees in budget development and financial management
- ❑ Member training

Councillor Murphy then provided detail on some of these key issues. With regard to the budget timetable/consultation, he explained that the consultation process had involved presentations at Area Meetings and a meeting with partners hosted by the Finance and Management Committee. He stated that these meetings took place in January and therefore gave stakeholders very little opportunity of 'making a difference', as the budget had to be finalised by the end of February. It was reported that the Scrutiny Committee considered that consultation should be an integral part of the service and financial planning process and that it should start much earlier in the cycle, with an initial round of consultation during the summer, followed by feedback and further consultation in November and December. Information gathered at these stages could then be used to shape/inform the Corporate Plan and Service Plans. The Scrutiny Committee would be undertaking a special project on consultation which would also examine

relations with Parish Councils and the interface with the Corporate/Service Plan and budget planning cycle.

Councillor Murphy then reported that the Scrutiny Committee had recommended that all Members should receive appropriate training. It was noted that a meeting was to take place on 21st March 2005 with Councillors Carroll and Mrs. Wheeler, being the training representatives of the two Political Groups. Accordingly, it was agreed that these two Members be invited to attend the next Overview Committee Meeting along with relevant Officers to discuss training issues.

A report on the Best Value process would be submitted to the Finance and Management Committee shortly.

The Chair reported that the Community Scrutiny Committee was to submit a report on several issues to the Housing and Community Services Committee on 10th March 2005. These included proposed plans for play areas, neighbourhood wardens, sheltered housing and the Best Value Review of the Housing Stock Investment and Asset Management

#### OV/28. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was reported that proposed future projects for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee included the budget planning cycle, the scoring mechanism for development bids, the Scrutiny Committee's involvement in the budget process and the clarification of roles within the Constitution.

With regard to the Community Scrutiny Committee, it was reported that the Housing Division's Repairs and Maintenance Service was scheduled for inspection in June. In order to support Housing Services staff and the Housing and Community Services Committee, the Community Scrutiny Committee had agreed to undertake 'reality checks'. An informal meeting of the Scrutiny Committee had been scheduled for 14th March 2005, to which the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Housing and Community Services Committee, together with the Head of Housing Services would be invited. It was noted that this Meeting would be used to shape the reality checks. Rural Proofing had also been identified in the future Work Programme.

#### OV/29. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

##### **RESOLVED:-**

***That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.***

##### **MINUTES**

***The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st November 2004 were received.***

K. HARRINGTON

CHAIR