

OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

1st November 2004

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Harrington (Chair) and Councillors Bambrick and Murphy.

Conservative Group

Councillor Hood (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Bale.

(Councillors Jones and Mrs. Mead also attended the Meeting and, with the approval of the Chair, spoke to Minute No. OV/25.)

APOLOGY

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

OV/20. MINUTES

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th September 2004 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

OV/21. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT (SCRUTINY COMMITTEES)

It was reported that the Council supported and provided training and development for Elected Members, but the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) had stated that "No structured plans were in place for the further development of Member capacity". The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in a recent paper on Structured Capacity Building had recommended that all elected Members should undertake Individual Learning Needs interviews and that all Councils should commit themselves to a formal programme of development. This Council had taken steps to comply with these recommendations and a draft Charter for Member Development had been produced for consultation.

The Employee Development Officer advised that Individual Learning interviews would be conducted by Deputy Leaders and the results of these interviews would determine the training programme. However, there were some specific issues identified at previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings which could be addressed prior to the proposed training programme.

It would be beneficial to have a number of short sessions on a range of subjects which would allow Members to decide if they wanted (or needed) to undertake more in-depth training on a particular subject. The proposed subjects were Performance Management, Change Management, Risk Management and Effective Meetings. It was suggested that short sessions for each topic could be organised in-house at Members' convenience. The Modern Members Development Programme could then be used to provide more in-depth training where necessary.

E-learning packages were now available for Project Management and a full range of IT courses. The two programmes available for Project Management were both supported by internet back-up and could lead to Prince 2 Foundation accreditation. A broad range of IT courses were also available which were internet based and would be accessible on Members' laptops in due course. However, Members emphasised that this type of training should not replace external and internal training sessions. Attendance at training sessions provided the opportunity to exchange ideas and network with peers, which was very beneficial. The Chair advised that E-learning would operate alongside external and internal training sessions and also commented that Members needed to be pro-active and request training when required.

RESOLVED:-

That arrangements be made for the Employee Development Officer to provide Members with in-house training sessions on the four topics identified above and any subsequent training.

OV/22. REPORTS TO POLICY COMMITTEES AND COUNCIL

The Head of Policy and Economic Regeneration advised that a report on Sheltered Housing was to be presented to the Housing and Community Services Committee and recommendations on proposed changes to the Council's Constitution were to be presented to Full Council on 4th November 2004 through this item now under consideration.

Members were reminded that earlier in the year, the Council had previously agreed to change the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules as follows:-

- ❑ Policy Committees or Full Council must respond to any recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committees within six months of the receipt of a report.
- ❑ Overview and Scrutiny Committees must report their findings to a Policy Committee or Full Council within six months of receiving a request for a review of a particular policy/service area.

These changes were intended to clarify the working arrangements between the different components of the political structure and to support and strengthen the developing Scrutiny function.

The Council's first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) report, which was published in June, highlighted the need to improve the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. This Committee had previously shared the concerns expressed by the CPA Inspectors and now proposed that the response times (as outlined above) be reduced to three months, i.e. two Committee cycles. It was considered that these changes would enable performance to be scrutinised more effectively, promote and assist the management of change and provide timely support to Policy Committees and policy development and review.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:-

That the Constitution (Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules) be amended to require:-

- ❑ Policy Committees or Full Council to respond to any recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committees within three months of the receipt of a report.
- ❑ Overview and Scrutiny Committees to report their findings to a Policy Committee or Full Council within three months of receiving a request for a review of a particular policy/service area.

OV/23. WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Policy and Economic Regeneration reported that the only outstanding item on the current Work Programme was the role of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council, which was to be considered further at this Meeting.

Councillor Murphy suggested that a future item for the Work Programme could be in connection with budget proposals and it was agreed that this issue be included as an agenda item for the next Meeting on 13th December 2004.

OV/24. 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.

ROLE OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL (Paragraphs 1, 7, 8 and 9)

The Committee considered the role of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council and agreed to make appropriate recommendations to the Finance and Management Committee.

K. HARRINGTON

CHAIR