

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14th MAY 2014

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillors Mrs Plenderleith (Chairman), Atkin (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Hood and Mrs Patten

Labour Group

Councillors Bambrick, Dunn and Pearson

OS/.29 **APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Mrs Mead

OS/.30 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on the 22nd January and 12th February 2014 were agreed as a true record.

OS/.31 **Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act**

The Committee received a report on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 since February 2014. This made it clear that RIPA was intended to regulate the use of investigatory powers and to ensure that they are used in accordance with human rights. With this in mind the Council has made only sparing use of these powers and members were informed that no use had been made of them over the last four months.

RESOLVED:

The Committee note the report

OS/.32 **Annual Report**

The Committee then considered its draft Annual Report for the 2013/14 local government year. This report outlined how the Committee had discharged its functions over the year and in particular, what issues the Committee had

looked at. In particular, the report highlighted the work that members had carried out on domestic abuse. The Committee had found out that there were many groups providing services to the victims of domestic abuse, but that there were doubts about their long term financial viability. For this reason members had agreed to raise the issue with the Police & Crime Commissioner for Derbyshire. The officers were asked to find out what response had been received from the Commissioner.

The report made it clear that the Committee had also carried out an important investigation into 'environmental volunteering'. What had emerged from this investigation is that a lot of activity is already taking place and that the Council is now actively seeking local companies to become involved in the scheme and asking them for suggested projects to work on.

Members welcomed the report, which it was felt reflected adequately the work that the Committee had carried out during the year.

OS/.33 **The Committee's Work Programme**

The Committee received a report setting out some suggestions on how the Committee might identify and agree possible issues to form the basis for its work programme during the new local government year. Once members had decided what issues that they wished to scrutinise and what questions they would like to address then, the report argued, officers would be able to produce some specific proposals for how the investigations should run. A range of internal and external stakeholders could then be consulted in order to gauge their views on how they should be carried-out.

Members considered a range of possible topics for the Committee to scrutinise, the councillors who would be responsible for carrying out the initial scoping exercise and in particular what lines of enquiry they would like to cover. At the conclusion of their discussion, they agreed a number of topics as the basis for their core work programme; which could be added to if other issues were identified by members during the course of the year.

The Committee agreed to look at the following topics and identified the members who would take lead responsibility for scoping the issues that should be covered by any investigations:

- Cemetery provision in the district. Members noted that the Committee had previously identified this investigation as part of its work programme, but that this had not yet been taken place. The Committee was informed by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services that work was ongoing on this issue. He agreed to submit a report to the Committee at its meeting in June.
- The Choice Based Letting System. In particular, members were keen to find out whether it was properly understood by those seeking to use it and

whether it had proved cost effective as a value for money measure. Councillor Dunn was nominated to scope the areas to be covered by the investigation.

- Electoral processes. The Committee had identified this as a potential issue for scrutiny. However, it was noted that Council would receive a presentation at Annual Council on the new system for individual electoral registration. This new scheme would require all adults to register in order to retain their right to vote. It was agreed, therefore, that the investigation be scoped following on from this presentation, so that the potential impact of the changes on what issues will have to address in order to ensure that people do register were properly understood. It was agreed that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee should take the lead in scoping this investigation
- Dental provision in the district. Members discussed examples of how people had been forced to travel to dentists at some distance for dental treatment because they were unable to register with a dental practice in South Derbyshire. There was concern that the problem could become worse, given the increasing population of the district. The Committee felt that this investigation would address an issue that was important for the wider community and complement the wider health scrutiny being carried out at a county-wide level. It was agreed that Councillor Patten should take the lead in scoping this investigation.

Members discussed other possible investigations and especially sickness levels of both of the staff directly employed by the Council and also those employed by Northgate. The Committee was informed that the Finance & Management Committee had already asked for information on Council sickness levels to be submitted to it on a regular basis. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee was content with this approach, but asked that the information about Northgate staff absences should also be submitted to the Finance & Management Committee. The Director of Finance & Corporate Services agreed to do this.

The Committee considered a possible review of leisure in the borough and in particular, whether we have the right leisure facilities and whether we are doing enough to enable hard to reach groups participate in sport and exercise. Members felt that there could be value in this, but felt that any investigation would need to be carefully thought through and not replicate any earlier work. It was agreed that Councillor Atkin should give some further thought to this in order to determine whether it would be suitable topic for the Committee work programme.

The Committee agreed to consider this and any further ideas for the work programme at its meeting in June.

Councillor Dunn thanks the chair for welcoming him to the committee and advised that he would be leaving the committee post Annual Council.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be agreed and submitted to Annual Council.

The meeting ended at 6.45pm

MRS. A. PLENDERLEITH

CHAIRMAN