

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2nd May 2012

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

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

Labour Group

Councillors Bambrick and Mrs. Mead.

In attendance

Councillor Wheeler (Conservative Group)

OS/40. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Mrs. Patten, Bell and Pearson.

OS/41. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Mrs. Plenderleith and Wheeler declared a personal interest in Minute No. OS/44.

OS/42. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st March 2012 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

OS/43. **REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 – QUARTERLY REPORT**

The Committee was reminded of the purpose of this legislation and the approval by Council in September of the Council's RIPA Guidance and Policy document. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was authorised to review the Council's use of RIPA and for the period February to April 2012 there had been no authorisations requested for the use of these powers.

It was agreed to note the report.

OS/44. **SERVICE REVIEW: GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

The Committee received a report from the task group for the Grounds Maintenance review. This was introduced by Councillor Atkin, who highlighted a section of the report on future commitments and the difficulties experienced through the design of soft landscaping areas on new developments.

Members were reminded of the appointment of a task group comprising Councillors Atkin and Bell, which met in February and initially agreed:-

- To review the current working practices and specification.
- To assess whether this was being adhered to and that quality was of a good standard.
- To spend time out with the Grounds Maintenance Manager to see the on-site operation at first-hand.
- To engage parish councils in this review and seek their views on service provision.

At that Meeting, Members also reviewed the service specification. Consultation took place with parish councils seeking views on the Grounds Maintenance service. Subsequently, the task group attended the quarterly liaison meeting with Derbyshire County Council, which included consideration of the Grounds Maintenance service. The Members also spent time with the Grounds Maintenance Manager and visited a number of locations around the District, to see how the service was delivered.

The report included sections on the cost of service delivery and income, including that from the County Council. The service specification was also provided.

Next, the report covered feedback and findings from this review work. The Members had found no major issues for concern in their analysis of the Grounds Maintenance service and had recorded their appreciation of the co-operation received from staff. Particular issues highlighted were the arrangements for spraying and strimming around street furniture, road signage and trees, together with the collection of cuttings and future commitments as highlighted earlier by Councillor Atkin. Details were then provided of the parish council responses to the consultation process. It was recognised that this had been limited and was proposed to revisit it through the Parish/District Liaison Meeting and further correspondence with parishes towards the end of the grass cutting season.

The report concluded with a number of action points that had been highlighted through the review process. These included amendments to quality control systems, defining the roles under the client/contractor split and liaison with a third party contractor to ensure a complementary service. Other initiatives were a targeted questionnaire with a prize draw to seek public feedback, the negotiation of a service level agreement with the County Council and to seek more information about pursuing a quality standard of accreditation.

In presenting the report, the officer confirmed that the County Council's funding which included Grounds Maintenance and gritting works remained intact for 2012/13. Further detail was provided with regard to spraying around street furniture to avoid damage by maintenance equipment. The officer also confirmed the commuted sum payments for new developments and clarified the points made regarding soft landscaping within new developments.

Members' comments and questions were invited. The first concerned maintenance standards at a housing scheme which the officer agreed to

investigate. Other issues discussed were the lack of feedback from parish councils and the accreditation secured regarding maintenance of the Maurice Lea Memorial Park. There are potentially several different accreditations and therefore it was proposed to investigate this further, before committing to pursue such an accreditation. There was also recognition of the depth of work completed by the task group on this review

It was agreed:-

- (1) That the Committee notes the report submitted on the extent and findings of the review.**
- (2) That the Committee approves the action points as set out within the report.**

OS/45. **FUNDED VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION REVIEW REPORT**

It was reported that this review area had been considered at a number of Meetings over this municipal year, most recently at the Special Committee on 25th April 2012. Following that meeting, a draft review report had been compiled for the Committee's consideration. It was proposed that the review report be submitted to the Housing and Community Services Committee in June. Members considered the draft report and for clarity wished to amend the figure relating to the Sharpe's Pottery, to exclude the funding element for the Tourist Information Centre. With regard to the section on findings, it was noted that the £100,000 identified was in reserves and not annual revenue funding. An example was given of how this funding could be used. The Committee wished to thank the Community Partnership Officer for his support to this review and to pass on thanks to the groups involved.

It was agreed:-

- (1) That subject to the amendment above, the Committee approves the Funded Voluntary Organisation Review report and agrees the recommendations contained within it.**
- (2) That the review report is submitted to the Housing and Community Services Committee in June.**

OS/46. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2011/12**

A copy of the Committee's Annual Report had been circulated. The document had been updated from that submitted to the previous Meeting and would require further slight alteration to include the Crime and Disorder scrutiny work from the Special Meeting, held immediately prior to this Committee.

It was agreed:-

- (1) That the Committee approves its updated Annual Report for 2011/12.**

- (2) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee be authorised to make final alterations to the document and that it is submitted to the Annual Council Meeting.**

OS/47. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed an annual work programme, which was reviewed at each Meeting. The Committee was reminded of the areas included in the initial work programme for 2012/13. Appended to the report was a copy of the work programme, together with a draft scoping document for the new review area concerning Swadlincote Town Hall and The Delph. The Committee considered this draft scoping document.

In reviewing the work programme, it was proposed to include a presentation on the Town Hall / Delph review for the Committee's Meeting in June. It was proposed to bring forward the updates from Leisure Services, including the Swadlincote Woodlands scheme to the Meeting on 12th September and that this Meeting be held at the Rosliston Forestry Centre. The Agenda for the October Meeting would include the Housing Benefit review update and a further report on the Grounds Maintenance review. Members were also reminded of the review area on Early Years Provision. The lead Member for this review, was satisfied that it could be concluded.

It was agreed:-

- (1) That the Committee approves the scoping document for the review of Swadlincote Town Hall/The Delph.**
- (2) That that the work programme be updated as outlined above.**

MRS. A. PLENDERLEITH

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.00 p.m.