

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24th March 2010

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

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

**Labour Group**

Councillors Lane and Mrs. Mead.

OS/26. **APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Bambrick (Labour Group).

OS/27. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings held on 20th January and 10th February 2010 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chairman.

OS/28. **BROADBAND**

A report had been submitted to provide an update on the Broadband Review and to make a series of recommendations. The report summarised the discussions and subsequent conclusions following a presentation given by BT and Openreach on 24th February 2010. It provided background on the Overview and Scrutiny work undertaken in 2008, the presentation made in 2009 and the subsequent updates to the Committee.

At a Meeting at the House of Lords, BT/Openreach agreed to carry out a review of the current infrastructure, specifically around the Etwall exchange which also covered the Hilton area. BT/Openreach agreed to meet Council representatives to discuss the area's broadband infrastructure issues and to present their findings on their review of the Etwall exchange. At the subsequent Meeting, the amount of information that the companies were willing to share was limited, as they considered it to be commercially confidential. The majority of questions asked by the Council could not be answered for the same reason.

Appended to the report were details of the exchanges covering South Derbyshire and broadband coverage from them. The information that BT/Openreach held about their assets appeared to be different to the Council's survey and subsequent investigation took place to research the discrepancies. Other issues covered were examples of councils who had

funded broadband infrastructure improvements in their areas, the contention ratio of the Etwall exchange and encouraging housing developers to consider prior to development the telecoms infrastructure issues.

Members discussed the report and the way forward with this review. Specific comment was made about the lack of broadband coverage in the Rosliston and Coton-in-the-Elms areas and the lack of information provided by BT/Openreach on commercial sensitivity grounds. Some information was still awaited from BT/Openreach. It was confirmed that another internet service provider (Talk Talk) was publicising the availability of its services through the Etwall exchange. The speed of broadband being quoted was in excess of the exchange's capabilities. Reference was also made to the Local Development Framework and the need to ensure relevant infrastructure was put in place to avoid the scale of broadband problems growing in the future.

A Member referred to the report recommendations and sought further information on how a number of these could be implemented. Specifically, on the Local Development Framework, it was questioned how a levy or Section 106 contribution could be secured for infrastructure improvements. This would need to be weighed against other levies imposed on developers. A further recommendation concerned raising the profile of this issue at the County level. Informal discussions had taken place at a recent Meeting of the Derbyshire Scrutiny Liaison Group. It was reported that no other councils had expressed an interest in becoming involved in this review area. A Member referred to the proposed Government levy to improve broadband infrastructure and there was also discussion about the European funding secured by Cornwall and North Yorkshire councils to improve broadband. A further issue raised was how the cost of improving the infrastructure could be evaluated. There was a need to liaise with those authorities that had secured funding to get an estimate of the respective costs for South Derbyshire. A Member requested that some of the report resolutions be reworded slightly.

**It was agreed:-**

- (1) That the Committee notes the ongoing work carried out in trying to improve the broadband infrastructure across South Derbyshire.**
- (2) That the Council continues to raise the profile of South Derbyshire, within BT/Openreach and other relevant organisations, in relation to the poor broadband service that is available in many parts of the District.**
- (3) That the Council investigates other methods of external funding for broadband infrastructure improvements. This would include working with other Councils across Derbyshire and the East Midlands to endeavour to improve the broadband infrastructure in the area.**
- (4) That a recommendation is made to the Environmental and Development Services Committee that appropriate steps are put in place in the examination of the Local Development Framework to**

**ensure that an appropriate telecoms/broadband infrastructure is available as far as possible for South Derbyshire.**

- (5) That the issue of the overall poor broadband infrastructure in the District is raised through Overview and Scrutiny at County level.**

OS/29. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2009/10**

The Draft Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2009/10 was submitted for Members consideration. Any feedback received would be incorporated in the document submitted to the May Meeting for final approval, before submission to the Annual Council Meeting.

**It was agreed that the Draft Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be received.**

OS/30. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed an annual work programme, which was reviewed at each Meeting. A copy of the current work programme was submitted for Members consideration. The budget scrutiny report had been submitted to the Finance and Management Committee on 16th February 2010. The Special Meeting on Crime and Disorder had been held earlier in the day to look at the Safer Neighbourhood project funding.

Officers explained plans for a focus session in June, to look at the Committee's work programme, the scoping of reviews and the appointment of task groups where appropriate. At the next Meeting, a report would be submitted on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, which was a new area that Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have a duty to consider. This would take the form of high level periodic statistical reports. There might also be the need to change the date of the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting, should the anticipated General Election be called for 6th May 2010. If so, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be held on Wednesday 12th May 2010.

**It was agreed that the work programme report be received and that the further updates be noted.**

C. JONES

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 6.40 p.m.