

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20th October 2009

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

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

**Labour Group**

Councillors Bambrick and Lane.

OS/1. **APOLOGY**

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

OS/2. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th May 2009 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

OS/3. **PEER REVIEW REPORT**

The Committee was reminded of the decision to undertake an external Peer Review of the Overview and Scrutiny function. This was carried out by James Doble of Cherwell District Council and comprised the submission of documents, initial lines of enquiry and on-site discussions with a number of Members and Officers. The final review report had been considered at a Scrutiny Focus Session earlier in the day. The report was positive and confirmed the good progress that the Committee had made in undertaking Overview and Scrutiny at South Derbyshire. The document had been considered by Officers and an Action Plan prepared, to respond to suggestions and recommendations arising from the Peer Review. A copy of the Peer Review report and associated Action Plan had been circulated.

The first of the recommendations concerned the format of Overview and Scrutiny Review reports. It had been recommended that the Council consider adopting a reporting style similar to that used by Lancaster City Council in its Canals Task Group review. A suggested template, using the Council's design guidelines had also been circulated for the Committee's consideration. At the Focus Session, there was broad support for this template, whilst recognising that each review report would need to be tailored, dependant upon the review work being undertaken. The Committee had also selected a preferred colour scheme within the Council's design guidelines for all future Scrutiny work.

The next topic addressed concerned the work programme and corporate priorities. The Peer Review included recommendations about consultation on the Committee's work programme and the alignment of review areas to the Council's corporate priorities. At the earlier Focus Session, the Committee had discussed a slight revision to the scoping document, to highlight the relevance of reviews to Corporate Plan priorities. The adoption of a scoring matrix was also considered, to enable Members to compare proposed review areas against the Corporate Priorities. The Committee confirmed its acceptance of the revised scoping document and adoption of the scoring matrix.

The Peer Review suggested the adoption of a 'Call-in' checklist or protocol. This was in addition to the existing 'Call-in' procedure provided as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules. At the earlier Focus Session, this proposal had been discussed, but Members were minded to continue with the existing Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

The Peer Review report included recommendations regarding amendments to the Council's Constitution, to meet new requirements for Crime and Disorder Scrutiny, the Councillor Call for Action and certain matters that were excluded from consideration by Overview and Scrutiny. The introduction of a checklist or flow chart was also suggested, to ensure that other avenues were explored, before a Councillor Call for Action was initiated. Feedback was provided on the discussion of these matters at the earlier Focus Session. Members were minded to adopt the proposed slight revisions to the Constitution to address these new areas and it was noted that this matter would need to be recommended to the Council for determination.

The final recommendation from the Peer Review concerned Task Group working. The Review report recognised the approach taken to date with a lead Member being nominated to work with a lead officer, to progress reviews between meetings, reporting back their findings and recommendations for determination by the Committee. It was suggested that Task Group working offered the opportunity to carry out Scrutiny away from the formal Committee structure, involving a greater number of Councillors and without the need for formally constituted Meetings. At the earlier Focus Session this had been considered and the approach might be suitable for some review areas. It would be trialled to gather further information on a potential review area, concerning the Mobility Scheme and Youth Information Shop in Swadlincote.

The Committee gave further consideration to the proposals from the Peer Review, the associated Action Plan and the issues discussed at the Focus Session. A Member then spoke of the need for further training for Scrutiny Members. Thanks were recorded to Officers for the work undertaken, both on the Peer Review and their support to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**It was agreed: -**

**(1) That the Committee formally accepts the Overview and Scrutiny Peer Review Report.**

**(2) That the Committee approves the associated Action Plan and the proposals submitted to address recommendations within the Peer Review Report.**

**(3) That a report be submitted to the Council on the Peer Review Report and making a recommendation on the consequential revisions that are required to the Constitution.**

OS/4. **SCOPING OF REVIEWS**

It was reported that, at the earlier Scrutiny Focus Session, the Committee gave initial consideration to its work programme and to the scope of potential review areas. In addition to an ongoing review, known commitments and other review areas suggested previously, there had been initial consideration of the scope of a review of services delivered by the Mobility Scheme and Youth Information Shop in Swadlincote. It had been proposed to meet with the service provider, to gather further information before finalising the scope of this review and the document would then be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee.

**It was agreed: -**

**That the report be noted.**

OS/5. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed an annual work programme, which was reviewed at each Meeting. At the earlier Focus Session, Members had given initial consideration to the work programme and discussed a number of the potential review areas.

It was proposed to arrange an additional Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to be held at 6.00 p.m. on Thursday 5th November 2009, and that an additional Meeting also be arranged for 24th March 2010, to undertake the review work on Crime and Disorder. For the next Meeting of the Committee, the review areas to be discussed were the swine flu pandemic and an update on the Rosliston Forestry Centre Business Plan. It was also proposed for the December Meeting of the Committee to receive a presentation on the community's use of the new Etwall Leisure Centre and to receive an update on broadband provision.

**It was agreed: -**

**1) That the Committee holds additional Meetings on 5th November 2009 and 24th March 2010.**

**2) That the review areas to be considered at the next two Meetings of the Committee be approved, as outlined above.**

C. JONES

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 5.30 p.m.